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To The Galiano Island Local Trust Committee,

RE: Crystal Mountain Forest Retreat proposal

Recently I had a telephone call from a neighbour of the proposed Crystal Mountain Forest Retreat. His question was if I had any involvement or invitation to attend with the upcoming neighbourhood meeting which was being called to explore options of the Retreat Center staying within the Forest 3 zone. His call was because he remembered that I had suggested this possibility quite awhile ago, at a local trust committee meeting and that suggestion was recorded in the minutes. I have had no invitation to attend.

As one member of a local trust committee who first received this application I have been very interested in following it's progress. [REDACTED] spoke to me before her death that such a forest retreat idea was compatible with development within the forest zone.

At the time of the initial application we were just about to send Bylaw # 124 to public hearing and the local trust committee felt the forest retreat planning would have to wait. We were however confident that the forest retreat as accessory forestry uses in the endangered Coastal Douglas Fir forest could be a good fit.

I would like to support the continuation of the Crystal Mountain Learning center as an accessory forestry use within the F3 zone. In order for this to happen I suggest that the key is the layout and design of the **"one accessory house"**.

I appreciate that modifying existing design dreams is not easily approached. However the forest retreat center designers have the confidence of the community that they can, using their creativity, adjust their vision. I sincerely hope this to be true.

I offer a suggestion using the planning reference:

**"A Pattern Language : Towns -Buildings-Construction"**

Center for Environmental Structure, Berkeley, California  
Oxford University Press 1977

Section 91: Traveler's Inn

(pages 449,450) bold/underlined my emphasis.

**One house** designed along "India's pilgrim's inn, or the Persian caravanserai. There people eat, and meet, and sleep, and talk, in one great space, protected from danger by their mutual company.

The inspiration for this pattern came from Gita Shah's description of the Indian pilgrim's inn, in "The timeless way of building";

*In India, there are many of these inns. There is a courtyard where the people meet, and a place to one side of the courtyard where they eat, and also on this side there is the person who looks after the Inn, and on the other three sides of the courtyard there are the rooms – in front of the rooms is an arcade, maybe one step up from the courtyard, and about ten feet deep, with another step leading into the rooms. During the evening everyone meets in the courtyard, and they talk and eat together – it is very special-and then at night they all sleep in the arcade, so they are all sleeping together, around the courtyard.*

*And of course, the size is crucial. The atmosphere comes mainly from the fact that the people who run the place themselves live there and treat the entire inn as their household. A family can't handle more than 30 rooms.*

*....within the general scheme of outdoor spaces, made positive according to the "Patterns Positive Outdoor Space (Section 106)" and "Hierarchy of Open-space (Section 114)", it is necessary to pay special attention to those smallest ones, less than 30 or 40 feet across – the courtyards-because it is especially easy to make them in such a way that they do not live.*

*The courtyards built in modern buildings are very often dead. They are intended to be private open spaces for people to use- but they end up unused, full of gravel and abstract sculptures.*

*There seems to be three distinct ways in which these courtyards fail.*

- 1. There is too little ambiguity between indoors and outdoors. If the walls, sliding doors, doors which lead from indoors to the outdoors, are too abrupt, then there is no opportunity for a person to find himself halfway between the two – and then, on the impulse of a second, to drift toward the outside. People need an ambiguous in-between realm – a porch, veranda, arcade which they naturally pass onto often, as part of their ordinary life within the house, so that they can drift naturally to the outside.*
- 2. There are not enough doors onto the courtyard. If there is just one door, then the courtyard never lies between two activities inside the house; and so people are never passing through it, and enlivening it, while they go about their daily business. To over-come this, the courtyard should have doors on at least two opposite sides, so that it becomes a meeting point for different activities, provides access to them, provides overflow from them, and provides cross-circulation between them.*
- 3. They are too enclosed. Courtyards which are pleasant to be always seem to have "loopholes" which allow you to see beyond them into some larger, further space. The courtyard should never be perfectly enclosed by the rooms which surround it, but should give at least a glimpse of some other space beyond.*

*Here are several examples of courtyards.....Each one is partly open to the activity of the building that surrounds it and yet is still private. A person passing through the courtyard and children running by can all be glimpsed and felt, but they are not disruptive. Again, notice that all these photo's of courtyards have strong connections to other spaces. The photographs do not tell the whole story; but still, you can see that the courtyards lookout, along paths, through buildings, to larger spaces. And most spectacular, notice the many different positions that one can take up in each courtyard, depending on mood and climate. There are covered places, places in the sun, places spotted with filtered light, places to lie on the ground, places where a person can sleep. The edge and the corners of the courtyard are ambiguous and richly textured; in some palaces the walls of the buildings open, and connect the courtyard with the inside of the building directly.*

*Therefore:*

*Place every courtyard in such a way that there is a view out of it to some larger open space; place it so that at least two,three or more doors open from the building into it and so that the natural paths which connect these doors pass across the courtyard. And, at one edge, beside a door, make a roofed veranda or porch which is continuous with both the inside and the courtyard.*

.....

The rooms of the "accessory house" could have doors that open both to the courtyard and also to the forest paths beyond (with verandas continuous on the outside of the building as well). Quiet meditative souls would not find this disturbing.

I hope Crystal Mountain Forest Retreat will consider this design concept for an accessory residential dwelling.

Such a design would not fracture the forest ecosystem and could be managed within the five acre foot print allowed for with an accessory house and buildings within the Forest 3 zone.

Such a design would perhaps be acceptable to the neighbours as the potable water needs and septic disposal concerns would be managed as one unit and not spread throughout the forest ecosystem in the form of 30 small huts, larger service buildings, camping and a caretakers residence.

Water catchment and storage would be essential.

Such a design would still impact the neighbourhood and the entire island with traffic concerns, fire prevention capabilities, emergency preparedness strategies, ferry capacity and the most important - concern for groundwater at a density far beyond one residential house on fifty acres.

The neighbours concerns for the meditation retreat attendees filing down a path from the Retreat Center daily to the beach access on Trincomali Channel are very real, perhaps meditators could be encouraged to keep their meditative state while also enjoying the beach. The residential neighbours are very concerned about the influx of many Retreat Center residents as bathers, in many varieties of bathing suits (if any), disrupting their enjoyment of their waterfront lots on a regular basis.

In reverse such an F 3 design would prohibit the Galiano community neighbours from enjoying their quiet meditative walks through the forest as the forest would be privately held and access restricted.

The Crystal Mountain Forest Retreat proponents are requesting a separate community of meditators be made within the Galiano community as a whole and also have those meditators enjoy the benefit of a public beach access outside their Retreat. The Trustees and Crystal Mountain Retreat proponents need to reflect on this in-balance and offer a solution. One suggestion would be to offer 1 public trail through the retreat center's lands to the Stupa, another would be to apply to close the beach access.

I believe in order to justify the density of the Forest Retreat is asking for, that a covenant preventing residential use on Crystal Mountain's adjacent residential lot be attached to title (the lot that contains the Stupa).

If I am correct that the Crystal Mountain Society do not charge money for their retreats is it feasible to think that accessory residential use administered by a caretaker does not have to be justified as a "Home Occupation" ? Perhaps another way would be to have Crystal Mountain Retreat participants join the membership of the Crystal Mountain society and become corporate owners - sharing in the ownership and up-keep of the Crystal Mountain residence.

However, should money be changing hands for a service and where people are sleeping over-night then it is likely best that Crystal Mountain consider rezoning to the Rural Residential / Heritage Forest type option and then further rezone into a commercial "Inn".

I do not support removal of the Crystal Mountain Forest Retreat from the Forest 1 zone into a new zone where "the highest and best use" as defined by The Assessment Authority will be residential.

Preservation of a forest land base has been a goal of the community since the first community plan was written and supported by every subsequent community plan review.

It is too much to ask and to expect that the people of Galiano will be in-favor of a proposal that suggests reducing the forest land base in an endangered Coastal Douglas fir forest that they have struggled so long to preserve.

*"The past was a struggle, the present is a legacy, the future will be our judge"* Margaret Griffiths.

Thank you for listening to my suggestions and my concerns.

Debbie Holmes