

On 3/25/2018 6:31 PM, Tony Law wrote:

Hi Exec:

Just thought you should be aware that the following is being shared on Facebook - includes significant perspectives about IT processes.

Dragonfly Commons Affordable Housing Project Update:

We want to take this opportunity to bring everyone up to date on Dragonfly Commons, an affordable not-for-profit housing development which is aiming to provide affordable home ownership for Salt Spring workers. We have been working as volunteers on this project for about two years along with our steering committee, all of whom have expertise and interest in helping to develop affordable housing.

For the most part, until recently, things have gone well. We have received a lot of support from everyone we have hired to work on the project, most of them have provided their services either for free or at a greatly discounted rate and we have also received a lot of encouragement from many Islanders. This means a lot to us, we have invested a lot of time, money and effort on this project and it is nice to know that it is also important to others.

We are often asked how the project is coming along and we thought that it is time to let the larger community know where we are at and to explain a bit of what the process involves.

On a positive note, we were inching along faster than most affordable housing projects in the province. As a result we optimistically expected to be able to build this calendar year but we have had several delays recently that have made that impossible. The first major delay in our rezoning process was due to the plethora of referrals sent out to other agencies (more than 25) plus 14 First Nations groups - any agency or group can ask for extensions and some did, in one case (PARC) two extensions were asked for causing us over three months of delay - so what should have been our second reading in January still has not happened. Compounding matters, the Trust has been extremely short staffed and our planner has had very little time to work on our project so everything has been taking a lot longer as a result.

These delays are very frustrating and things have just gotten worse for us, we found out a few days ago that we have lost our planner, he has retired unexpectedly, and now we are in limbo because the Trust is so back logged that they have no planner to assign to us until one is hired. Ironically, they probably won't be able to hire someone for months because of the lack of housing on SSI. We understand that the Trust is overwhelmed by applications and desperately short staffed. However, if we want affordable housing these delays are unacceptable, especially as costs for building are going up dramatically, about 25% per year.

Other than the time it takes, the other problem with affordable housing has to do with keeping it affordable. As we stated earlier, construction costs are skyrocketing and we, as well as other affordable housing projects keep being hit by fees that make affordability a real challenge. For example, we understand the \$5500 rezoning application fee to the Islands Trust, although we wish they would waive it as they can for community projects, but what hurts even more is the extra \$4290 that the Islands Trust requires, to look over our application again, as part of the subdivision process. Then there is the \$10,500 subdivision fee that we have to pay to the Minister of Transport (MOTI). Then there is the cost of the Affordable Housing Agreement (the legal document that ensures the affordability model is on title in perpetuity). Even though we have spent countless hours drafting the agreement, the Islands Trust lawyers have asked for a \$9000 deposit (to start with) to review this document. To add insult to injury, there is the CRD PARC Commission which has voted to charge us cash-in-lieu in the amount of \$15,000 even though we explained to them that we will be donating approximately half of the 10.5 acre property to be protected by a covenant. PARC's mandate states that they can request, from a new

development, either 5% of the land being developed or 5% of the value of the land as cash-in-lieu of land. We are prepared to offer approximately 50% of the 10.5 acres being developed and even offered to find another agency to deal with the protective covenant if they did not wish to take it on. They have decided that they want the cash and will accept no other alternative, their argument being that they will no longer accept land, only cash and they are worried that if they do not take the cash from us they will be setting a precedent - we argued that they ought to be happy to set precedent that they will waive the cash requirement in the case of an affordable housing development which is prepared to donate half of the land being developed.

It is well understood that the need for affordable housing on the Island is becoming critical and there has been much talk of support however not enough actual support or creative problem solving. Kisaie Petersen, on behalf of the Housing Council, spoke at the recent Trust Council meeting, regarding the state of affordable housing on Salt Spring. Because each project has unique problems that require different creative solutions she provided three examples of things the Islands Trust can do to facilitate affordable housing.

Kisaie proposed: a) have a senior Islands Trust planner dedicated to affordable housing, with an attitude to help the developments build the homes, rather than being so risk-averse that the brakes are applied anytime a novel approach is attempted; b) have the draft Water Supply Process document revised - as is, it asks Croftonbrook to spend in excess of \$100,000 before even receiving their rezoning - putting the cart before the horse! and c) follow their own mandate to use their land-planning tools to HELP affordable housing. We could soon have 30 small homes (Dragonfly) plus 54 units of rental housing for seniors, low-moderate income individuals and small families and people experiencing homelessness (Croftonbrook) plus 24 two and three bedroom units for families (Salt Spring Commons), all within the next year if all these hurdles were not put in the way.

In general, our local government is doing as good a job as other local governments in the province, however that does not mean that they can't be better. When you get the chance take the time to let them know how important it is to prioritize affordable housing so we can build it now and not in some distant future.

For more information about Dragonfly Commons please check out website and let us know if you want to be added to our update list: <http://dragonflycommons.com/>

Tami and Fernando Dos Santos
Dragonfly Commons Housing Society
An Affordable Neighbourhood on Salt Spring Island

Tony Law
/Hornby Island Local Trustee/
/Chair, Trust Fund Board/
[/tlaw@islandstrust.bc.ca/](mailto:tlaw@islandstrust.bc.ca) <<mailto:tlaw@islandstrust.bc.ca>>
/(250-335-1155)/