



CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN - A SOCIETY FOR EASTERN AND WESTERN STUDIES  
 A REGISTERED CHARITABLE AND EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY  
 20300 Portier Pass Road, Galiano Island, British Columbia, Canada



COPIED TO

PLANNER

LTC

DEPUTY SECRETARY

Monday, January 18, 2016

Respectfully submitted; To the Galiano Island Local Trust Committee,

After some time to consider the discussion at the LTC meeting on Dec. 7, we would like to speak to a few of the points made concerning Crystal Mountain's rezoning proposal.

**1) It was stated that the only way the rezoning can go forward is through land subdivision and that land transfer is the only community benefit.**

We are unclear about the underlying assumptions by which title transfer is being considered. We understand that such a recommendation came from a forest advisory committee during the OCP review in 2010. The following quote is from the report:

*"We also agree that the LTC should require, whenever possible, maintenance of large forest areas, and discourage subdivision to less than 50 acres (20 hectares). We are in substantial agreement that subdivision of less than 50 acres should only be permitted through a process of community benefit, with the benefit of greatest value being donation of land for community forest, wilderness preserve or park (pg.4)."*

While pointing in a clear direction, the language used suggests not a single and exclusive outcome but a scale in judging community benefit. Note that Crystal Mountain's intentions are that the whole of its lands remain a forest, unfragmented by subdivision and protected by a forest restoration covenant as a community benefit.

There is specific language in the OCP and LUB referring to public benefit and support for well-considered, site specific, unique proposals for accessory use of forest zoned land. This language refers to retaining large forested parcels, volunteerism, low impact small scale forest related activities, educational use, ecosystem based land use planning and ecological restoration. These values are the backbone of the Crystal Mountain proposal.

Further, given that the forest ecosystem is the core priority of the retreat centre, that the design has been drafted on a thorough ecosystem based assessment, and that the commitment to a sustainable forest restoration plan will be fully secured by covenant, then the retreat centre use qualifies as accessory use to the forest. The land supporting the study and practice of meditation is an amenity available and accessible to the local and wider community. As an organization with federal charity status, Crystal Mountain is recognized (and required) to work towards the public benefit.

So from our point of view the proposed retreat centre is a 100% community benefit.

Also, how can a recommendation for land donation to permit subdivision become a condition to drafting bylaws, where no subdivision is proposed?

**2) There was a question about CMS Forest Meditation Retreat Centre being a commercial operation.**

The dictionary definition of commercial is "acting with sole or chief emphasis on saleability, profit, or success; related to or used in the buying and selling of goods and services; concerned with earning money; relating to or based on the amount of profit that something earns."



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This is a definition that describes neither the activities nor motivation of Crystal Mountain Society, a nonprofit charitable organization, nor the operation of its proposed Forest Retreat Meditation Centre. All that CMS accomplishes is through the strength of community donations and sustained volunteer effort.

We would refer you to the Mt. Tuam Retreat Centre on Salt Spring Island. This facility is listed under Other Community Land Uses in the OCP and as Rural Upland Zone 1 in the LUB. Crystal Mountain, like Mt. Tuam, collects fees to cover costs, with additional funds received as charitable donations and acknowledged with a receipt for tax purposes.

Following this example, would the Crystal Mountain Forest Retreat Center be more appropriately zoned as a 'Community Facility'?

**3) It was stated at the LTC meeting that there is great opposition toward this application and that Crystal Mountain's rezoning proposal would not have community support regardless of the benefits proposed.**

Our experience has been quite the opposite. Through Crystal Mountain's open house last summer, after meetings to inform the community of the proposal at both the north and south end of the island, and after several days engaging many people at a table in the local shopping area, we have heard from over 100 people that they strongly support our application and would like to see the proposal succeed.

#### **4) The question of site-specific zoning**

Since acquiring 20 acres of land 35 years ago, we have been in conversation with the trust about the kind of zoning we would require to create a forest meditation and retreat centre. We were asked to look at church zoning, though the notion of a single building of worship, parking considerations, etc. left that as an inappropriate fit. We were asked to consider ourselves as visitor accommodation, now with a commercial focus. But we are not proposing to build multiple dwellings for residential or commercial use.

We have studied the forest and carefully designed our site plan to be consistent with the desires of the community as expressed in the OCP. By doing so we have come to see that this proposal is a unique initiative and a community benefit, especially for those who share our belief in the value of contemplative time spent in a natural environment.

Our hope is that the LTC will consider the Crystal Mountain application as a unique proposal, and as an opportunity for great benefit to the Galiano community.

Thank you for your consideration,

Crystal Mountain Rezoning Committee

Stephen Foster, Janice Oakley, Kim Lenglet, Libby McClelland, Helen Foster and Leslie Cain