

Corporation of the District of Maple Ridge

PUBLIC HEARING

July 24, 2006

The Minutes of the Public Hearing held in the Rotunda of Thomas Haney Secondary School, 23000 116 Avenue, Maple Ridge, British Columbia on July 24, 2006.

PRESENT

Elected Officials

Mayor G. Robson
Councillor E. Daykin
Councillor J. Dueck
Councillor A. Hogarth
Councillor L. King
Councillor C. Speirs
Councillor K. Stewart

Appointed Staff

J. Rule, Chief Administrative Officer
T. Fryer, Municipal Clerk
M. Murray, General Manager of Community
Development, Parks and Recreation Services
F. Quinn, General Manager Public Works and
Development Services
J. Pickering, Director of Planning
C. Marlo, Confidential Secretary

Other Staff as Required

C. Carter, Manager of Community Planning
D. Hall, Planner
B. Graham, Executive Assistant

MAPLE RIDGE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN BYLAW NO. 6425-2006

Mayor Robson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Municipal Clerk explained the procedure and rules of order of the Public Hearing. He advised that in accordance with the Community Charter, once the oral portion of the Public Hearing item is closed, no further oral comments can be received by the Municipal Council until it is either adopted or defeated. Written comments may be submitted up until 4:00 p.m. on July 28, 2006. The Public Hearing will conclude at that time. The by-law will be considered further at a future Council Meeting.

The Mayor then called upon the Director of Planning to present Maple Ridge Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 6425-2006.

The Director of Planning gave a power point presentation providing an overview of the Plan.

The Municipal Clerk advised that correspondence was received from Igor Zahynacz, L.G. Nelson & A.I. Millhouse, Trudi Desrocher, Kevin & Lori Josephson and Fred & Christine Voglmaier since the publication of the Public Hearing Notice.

Diana Williams

Ms. Williams spoke in opposition to industrial development on agricultural land in the vicinity of 128 Avenue and 203 Street. She advised that 2,000 signatures have been accumulated on a petition against such development. She questioned why there is a rush to remove land when the policy says that there is enough land for 10 years. She indicated that attitudes towards development and exploitation of resources must change. She handed in two submissions.

Pitt Polder Preservation Society, Duanne Vanderberg

Ms. Vanderberg identified that the mandate of the Society is to preserve agricultural land. She listed the possible reasons given in the Policy for excluding land from the Agricultural Land Reserve and identified why those reasons were not applicable to land in Maple Ridge. She submitted her presentation.

Annette LeBox

Diana Williams read a statement on behalf of Ms. LeBox. Ms. LeBox felt there was a lack of public transparency in the process as indicated by the refusal of Council to permit the Pitt Polder Preservation Society to speak as a delegation on the OCP at a Council Meeting. She referred to a survey of agriculture conducted by the municipality suggesting the questions were biased and confusing and not worthy of a municipality. She asked that a moratorium be placed on development of farmlands. Mayor Robson advised that the survey described by Ms. LeBox was not conducted by the municipality. Ms. Williams indicated that she had seen the survey on the District website. Mayor Robson reiterated that Council was not aware of such a survey. Her presentation was submitted.

Sheila Smyth

Ms. Smyth's four key points were to remove the urban reserve designation from Thornhill, preserve Jackson Farm as a park, place a moratorium on ALR exclusions and implement the Silver Valley Area Plan. She spoke of the need to control growth by ensuring that the appropriate plans are in the OCP. She submitted her presentation.

Gerry Pinel

Mr. Pinel provided an explanation of the causes and effects of global warming. He spoke in opposition to removing land from the ALR. He submitted his presentation.

Al Sather

Mr. Sather opposed the use of agricultural land for industrial purposes. He felt that the existing land zoned for that purpose should be revitalized. He indicated that the residential tax base percentage for Maple Ridge is in keeping with the percentage of other municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District and questioned who would benefit from an increase in the industrial tax base. He submitted his presentation.

Janet Kirkpatrick

Ms. Kirkpatrick asked that Council reconsider its procedures for multi-housing applications as developers are required to provide expensive studies before Council has seen the application. She presented an alternate process for those applications. She handed in two submissions.

Boiling Point Action Network for Climate Change Society, Gerry Pinel

Mr. Pinel provided information on solutions to the effects of global warming. He submitted his presentation.

Carly O'Rourke

Ms. O'Rourke described her feelings about the changes that have taken place along 240 Street and in Thornhill. She indicated that she is not happy with what previous generations are leaving to her and suggested that she would leave the community if development continues.

128th Avenue Group, Randy Cooke

Mr. Cooke asked that Council reconsider its decision not to include this group of properties with those being sent to the GVRD for exclusion from the Green Zone. He cited reasons the group feels this is appropriate including the fact that servicing is already in place and their proximity to transportation and transit.

Hendrik Meekel

Mr. Meekel spoke in opposition to development of Thornhill. He felt this is a mistake and that the GVRD would not approve this. He submitted his comments.

Janet Dmitrieff

Ms. Dmitrieff expressed her disappointment with contradictions contained in the OCP. She felt the public is not being treated fairly and pointed out that the public had been told by staff that this OCP would not expand the urban boundary. She then read from a staff report concerning an application for exclusion of Jackson Farm from the ALR that suggested the application should not proceed as the property is outside the urban boundary. She handed in three submissions.

Neil Dmitrieff

Mr. Dmitrieff opposed the designation of Thornhill as an urban reserve suggesting that this leads to land speculation. He referred to the Vision principles contained in the OCP and made suggestions of wording changes. He handed in two submissions.

23000 Block of Lougheed Hwy., Peter Kenward

Mr. Kenward provided his legal opinion of the District's ability to change the Green Zone and suggested wording for the Regional Context Statement that would enable to the District to make changes. He submitted a presentation package.

Margaret Eggen

Ms. Eggen indicated that most property owners had no idea and were not notified as to what the Green Zone designation meant. She asked that Council work together with owners to rectify the situation. She felt that a study needs to be done to determine what lands are viable for agriculture and for the Green Zone.

The Bellinghams, Smart Centres, Chuck Brook

Mr. Brook suggested that the properties he represents on Powell Avenue are no longer suitable for agriculture so do not meet the definition of the Green Zone. He also noted their proximity to

urban residential development. Allowing these properties to develop could eliminate the need for an urban reserve in Thornhill.

Michael Sather, MLA

Mr. Sather questioned Council's intention regarding development in the ALR. He felt the previous OCP gave some indication but the current version contains no statements on this. He was pleased with the inclusion of the requirement for an agricultural plan. He expressed concern about extending the urban boundary along 128 Avenue west of 224 Street and indicated he would oppose such a plan.

Peter Neudorf

Mr. Neudorf spoke of his personal experience farming in Maple Ridge and indicated that there are few farms in east Maple where a living could be made. His lands are his pension plan and he asked that Council address the Green Zone issue in a manner that is fair to everyone.

Bernice Rolls

Ms. Rolls felt that the OCP should not be adopted just because it has taken so long to prepare. She pointed out that there are inconsistencies in format, contradictions, errors and omissions that would leave much to speculation. She felt the Visioning process had not been completed properly and that Principle 10 had been ignored in the process. She expressed her desire for Council to ensure that an OCP Public Hearing is never held in the summer again.

Urban Development Institute, Jeff Fisher

Mr. Fisher expressed the concerns of the members of the Institute about the Green Zone. He hoped that the District could amend the Green Zone if land is identified for removal. He spoke of the need for land in the District that is job-related.

Note: The hearing recessed at 9:03 p.m. and reconvened at 9:13 p.m.

Silver Valley Neighbourhood Association, Dr. Shiraz Mawani

Dr. Mawani reiterated the Association's suggestions from the previous Public Hearing pointing out where the issues they identified have been addressed and where they have not. He submitted the presentation.

Roy Josephison

Sheila Smyth read a statement from Mr. Josephison opposing use of the ALR for industrial land. He felt that identification of industrial land should follow the visioning process not proceed it. He indicated that Principles 16 and 19 were not satisfactory. His presentation was submitted.

Harrison Mohr

Mr. Mohr expressed his disappointment that the rural residential designation was removed from Thornhill. He asked that Jackson Farm be left in the Green Zone as a sanctuary and that the dikes remain untouched by industrial development. He suggested that the industrial land base be expanded when the need is real and not because of a perceived need.

Alouette Field Naturalists, Joan Domer

Ms. Domer presented suggestions on the how the OCP could support the natural environment of Maple Ridge. Those suggestions included keeping the Greenbelt intact, preserving Jackson Farm as an historic farm, including more green space in the urban development promoted by Smart Growth and by protecting the rivers and parks. A copy of the presentation was submitted.

Leigh Hodgins

Ms. Hodgins spoke against the designation of Thornhill as an urban reserve and of the ramifications of doing so citing her personal experience with a nearby rental property that was being used as a grow-op. She suggested that the focus be on in-fill development and clean up of the downtown core. She asked that Thornhill be designated as rural residential and that the Grant Hill aquifer be protected. She submitted two presentations.

Kevin Hodgins

Mr. Hodgins requested that Jackson Farm remain designated as park and that Thornhill be called rural residential with a minimum lot size of 5 acres. He saw no benefit to leaving Thornhill as urban reserve and asked for an explanation of the benefits of such a designation. He felt the designation would lead to drug labs on properties with absentee landlords and subsequent dumping of chemicals into the ground. He felt that the Grant Hill and Whonnock aquifers should be included on the natural features map. He submitted two presentations.

Blue Mountain Kanaka Creek Conservation Group, Mike Gildersleeve

Mr. Gildersleeve indicated that the Group feels that Blue Mountain is deserving of more mention in the OCP particularly given the support of the District and the public to protect the eastern shore and the importance of the watershed to the communities below. He felt the OCP provides an opportunity to preserve and protect such an environment.

Joel Deyoung

Mr. Deyoung expressed his support of not allowing Jackson Farm to be developed for residential use and urged council to maintain these lands as park.

Simon Challenger

Mr. Challenger spoke of the importance of keeping the ALR and the Green Zone in tact. He felt that Thornhill should be taken out of the urban reserve and lands to the north east where there is already existing development used instead. He also felt that the Albion flats would be better used for recreation than for "big box" development. He expressed concerns about the impact on Webster's Corner of gravel extraction on 256 Street. He did not see a need for more industrial land but rather for an effective strategy. He submitted his presentation.

Stuart Pledge

Mr. Pledge felt it was an error to designate Thornhill as urban reserve arguing that development would occur sooner than expected and would lead to the removal of agricultural lands from the ALR south of the urban reserve lands. He asked that Jackson Farm be designated park and the current urban boundary be maintained.

Tim Wittenberg

Mr. Wittenberg echoed the comments of the previous speakers and stressed the need to protect the horse trails. He suggested it was time to stop talking about getting the Agricultural Community together and just do it.

Bill Archibald

Mr. Archibald indicated that the Haney Horsemen feel that they are a recreational group and the trails should not be included in the transportation section. He read a letter from his wife speaking of the poor air quality now in Maple Ridge that prohibits their daughter from visiting the community. They are considering moving from Maple Ridge because of this. He submitted the letter.

Nigel Smith-Gander

Mr. Smith-Gander expressed his concerns with the designation of Thornhill noting that when it was first determined to be urban reserve the intent was to build the Fraser River Crossing in that area but that is no longer the case. He suggested that the District undertake to retain mature trees when land is developed and questioned why the area to the east of Thornhill is not being considered for industrial land. He submitted two presentations.

Claus Andrup

Mr. Andrup spoke in opposition to WalMart development. He felt that the most important item in the OCP is the content of Area Plans. The strength of the OCP will emerge through Area Plans. He submitted his presentation.

Ricardo Cordoni

Mr. Cordoni felt that the OCP doesn't go far enough to address urban sprawl. If land speculation is allowed to continue we will have an ongoing juggernaut between those with vested financial interests and those who value the historical and natural integrity of the area. He spoke specifically to Principles 34, 22 and 19. His greatest concern was the pressure that is being put on the farming community to sell, suggesting that it is time for an independent office responsible to agribusiness. He submitted his presentation.

Jean Sunada

Ms. Sunada spoke in opposition to the urban reserve designation of Thornhill and to the need to protect the aquifer. She asked that the aquifer be added to the natural features map with a notation that the boundary is not confirmed. She submitted three presentations.

Betty Von Hardenberg

Ms. Von Hardenberg asked that Thornhill be re-designated as rural residential and that the OCP define how the aquifer will be protected. She pointed out that on the map it is indicated as Urban and not as Urban Reserve. She advised that the Province has maps that show the boundaries of aquifers and questioned why the aquifer could not be included on the natural features map. She urged Council to adhere to the LRSP. She handed in four submissions.

Klaus Von Hardenberg

Mr. Von Hardenberg provided information on studies and programs implemented in Langley to protect their water supply. He questioned how the cost of water would be impacted if service is extended to Thornhill. He handed in four submissions.

Christian Cowley

Mr. Cowley opposed the designation of Thornhill as Urban Reserve and the removal of the park designation from Jackson Farm. He spoke of the ability to farm on smaller parcels and asked why everyone talks about protecting agriculture but not about increasing agricultural output. He submitted his presentation.

Fave Ketola

Ms. Ketola echoed the comments of previous speakers regarding Thornhill and Jackson Farm. She indicated that the proposed OCP sounds good but Silver Valley sounded good too. She felt the problem with any plan is adherence to it. A plan is only as strong as the intention behind it. She suggested that the developers who own Jackson Farm consider donating it back to the community as parkland or offer it to the District at a reduced price. She handed in two submissions.

Klaus Heinze

Mr. Heinze spoke of the need for people to work together to protect our air, land and water. He opposed designation of Thornhill as Urban Reserve.

Gerald Andrews

Mr. Andrews expressed frustration with the politics of the OCP and with being labeled a “nimby”. He indicated he is not opposed to development that will enhance the community as a whole but to development whose only purpose is to line the pockets of a few developers. He asked that Council let the public know what they stand for and what their opinion is and that they have faith in their constituents. He submitted his presentation.

Roy Stini

Mr. Stini felt the OCP is well written but doesn’t address the degradation that development does, citing Albion as an example. He asked that Council stop unnecessary labeling of areas before knowing if they will be needed. He indicated that Council doesn’t support the principles of the OCP and wondered how the principles can be protected from Council. He submitted his presentation.

Rob Hornsey

Mr. Hornsey was supportive of protection of agricultural lands and Blue Mountain and of the comments made regarding Thornhill and Jackson Farm.

Beryl Eales

Ms. Eales spoke of the effect of speculation in Thornhill on assessed values using three specific examples from the assessment roll to demonstrate how property values have increased. She cited the social impact on that community in terms of an increased number of rental properties that are

becoming grow ops and the reduction in the number of people who can afford to buy homes. She asked that the designation of Thornhill be changed to rural and that the Grant Hill aquifer be included on the natural features map. She submitted her presentation.

Gavin Roache

Mr. Roache felt that the Plan had improved to a degree from the previous version but was still a recipe for “Mary Hill” type of development. The Plan will lead to more removals from the ALR and more speculative land purchases. He indicated that at the Visioning sessions he heard the need for strong boundaries, more land in the ALR and no urban development in Thornhill. Despite public wishes Thornhill is still marked for urban sprawl. He spoke of the need to make sure implementation issues are resolved in Silver Valley before starting on Area Plans for other parts of the District. He is looking for a plan that reflects the views of the community. He submitted his presentation.

Smart Centres, Peter Kenward

Mr. Kenward reiterated his legal opinion of the District’s ability to change the Green Zone and the changes he recommended to the Regional Context Statement that would enable the District to amend the Green Zone without GVRD approval. He noted that his opinion differs from that of Mr. Young, the District’s solicitor. He recommended that the Regional Context Statement be changed so it makes it clear that amendments can be made without GVRD approval.

Chuck Brook

Mr. Brook expressed his support of Mr. Kendall’s suggestions. He indicated that he did not attend the hearing as an advocate for Thornhill but after his own review, and listening to the people, he felt that urbanization of Thornhill does not fit in with his definition of Smart Growth.

Smart Centres, Mike Gilman

Mr. Gilman addressed the need to increase non-residential development to reduce the District’s dependency on residential property tax and to build a complete community. He submitted that Albion Flats is an appropriate location for this type of development. He spoke of the need to amend the Green Zone so that the OCP can be implemented. The Regional Context Statement is one of the most critical pieces of the OCP.

Michael Sather, MLA

Mr. Sather addressed several myths that he believed needed to be refuted. He felt the Council of day knew what it was doing when it set aside property in the Green Zone and that the minutes of meetings show they were cognizant of the effects. He contacted the Agricultural Land Commission to find out if there is any data to support comments that agricultural land in Maple Ridge is not suitable for farming and to obtain information on a study claimed to have been done by Mr. French. He was advised that no study has been done by Mr. French but that Mr. French had submitted some data to the ALC. He advised that the ALC is not suggesting land in Maple Ridge is not suitable for agriculture.

Diana Williams

Ms. Williams found it interesting that Council was being advised at the Public Hearing on ways of getting out of the Green Zone and questioned if anyone had brought this up at the Visioning exercise. She felt that the OCP is not a plan but a compilation of ambiguous statements. She indicated that studies should take place before the plan is adopted not after.

Janet Dmitrieff

Ms. Dmitrieff drew attention to specific instances of what she felt were contradictions within the Agricultural Principles of the Plan. She referred to articles by David Sands and stressed the need to preserve farm land. She noted that although the development community claims the land on Jackson Farm is marginal for farming, it was farmed by Mr. Jackson for most of his life. She felt that no more agricultural land should be removed for housing or industry. She submitted her presentation.

Betty Von Hardenberg

Ms. Von Hardenberg provided details of a study of the aquifer that a group of Thornhill residents has undertaken to develop baseline information on water quality. She indicated that this study is being done with the assistance of the Province and with help from Langley. She indicated that the initial tests have shown that they have good water at this time. She expressed her hope that the District would support this study. She handed in her presentation.

Jean Sunada

Ms. Sunada spoke of the importance of preserving the ALR noting that food originates from the soil and not from stores and that agriculture can generate revenue in other ways. She felt it important to leave undeveloped space for future generations and to leave behind a small footprint. She submitted her presentation.

Neil Dmitrieff

Mr. Dmitrieff pointed out that the main culprit for climate change and decreased air quality is human activity. He cited the benefits of developing a compact community given the increasing costs of oil.

Christian Cowley

Mr. Cowley asked that Council resist the urge to comply with requests to change the Green Zone. He pointed out that while there is a designation of land as an Urban Reserve there is no designation in the OCP of land as a Commercial Reserve.

Dr. Mawani

Dr. Mawani suggested that changes be made to strengthen the tree by-law. He expressed his concern that the Plan will mean nothing if there is no mechanism to monitor progress. He spoke of the need to have an on-going method for the public to dialogue with Council. He asked that the first page of the previous draft that provided background information be retained in the current version.

Bernice Rolls

Ms. Rolls was concerned that affordable housing is not mentioned in the Plan with specific numbers of units as has been done by Surrey. She suggested that if there is no Committee tasked with finding solutions to homelessness that there should be and that this should be considered within the OCP. She noted that the Grant Hill aquifer is not mentioned in the policies or objectives and is not on the natural features map. She questioned why a quote from a proponent of large formal retail is included in Principle 22.

Beryl Eales

Ms. Eales pointed out reasons why Albion Park not a suitable play area for children. She asked for the true percentage of land that is included in the Green Zone. It was her belief that Golden Ears Park is included in the 73% statistic that is most often quoted. She commented on the validity of the petition to retain Jackson Farm as a park.

Klaus Von Hardenberg

Mr. Von Hardenberg felt that the Stantec recommendations were not included in the OCP. He indicated that the Province has defined the boundaries of the Grant Hill aquifer and it is actually bigger than shown by the District. He questioned the decision not to include the aquifer on the natural features map noting that the map must go forward to the GVRD. He felt that the GVRD would miss the aquifer and not make a proper decision on the Plan.

Henrik Meekle

Mr. Meekle expressed his frustration with the rush to complete the Public Hearing. He felt that designating Thornhill an Urban Reserve is a mistake and that the GVRD will throw it out. He would like Jackson Farm to remain a park.

Klaus Heinze

Mr. Heinze felt that the process of the Public Hearing had been positive and had realized that you can't make decisions when you don't know the facts. There is a need to live in the now and face our own realities.

Duanne Vandenberg

Ms. Vandenberg expressed her appreciation of the submission that were made and hoped that the Hearing was not so much about hearing concerns but about paying attention to those concerns. She submitted her presentation.

Stuart Pledge

Mr. Pledge asked that when making decisions affecting future land use Council consider all the principles of the OCP. He felt that identifying aquifers should happen immediately. He saw it as a contradiction to say in the Regional Context Statement that the District will protect the Green Zone and at the same time submit properties for exclusion. He suggested that a fraction of the energy being extended on how to remove land from the Green Zone be used to consider how to remove land from the Thornhill Urban Reserve.

Bernice Rolls

Ms. Rolls suggested there was an error in section 4.3.4 and that Thornhill is not an historic community.

Betty Von Hardenberg

Ms. Von Hardenberg read from a letter submitted by the ALC in response to the previous draft requesting modifications to the Plan. She could not find those changes within this version of the OCP. She asked that Council ensure their commitment to these requirements and make changes to the OCP. She submitted her presentation.

Carol Addy

Ms. Addy suggested it would have been better to have extended the Public Hearing to an additional night so people would have listened more attentively to what was presented. She was not sure if everything presented was heard.

Having given all those persons whose interests were deemed affected by the matters contained herein a chance to be heard, the Mayor declared the oral portion of the Public Hearing closed at 12:22 p.m. He advised that the written portion closes at 4:00 p.m. July 28, 2006.

G. Robson, Mayor

Certified Correct

T. Fryer, Municipal Clerk