



Fraser Valley Regional District

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Electoral Area 'E'

Open House and Directed Discussion

May 10th, 2010

Chilliwack River Valley

Chilliwack Fish and Game Protective Association Hall

MEETING NOTES

Present:

Staff: Lisa Grant, Planner, Dawn Smith, Planner

David Lamson, Director Electoral Area 'E'

Members of the Public: 50-60 (approximately)

As an introduction to the Electoral Area 'E' Official Settlement Plan update, the Regional District hosted an open house and directed discussion on the evening of May 10th, 2010. The purpose of the evening was to (1) introduce the project, (2) inform people how they could be involved and (3) to gather input on community values and issues. Each of these three topics provided an avenue for community members to express their opinions.

Several common themes emerged throughout the evening. Each is summarized below (not presented in order of importance):

1. Environment

The environment was a focus of community members during the open house and also in the directed discussion portion of the evening. Protecting watercourses, fish populations, the natural landscape, ecosystem, the night sky and air quality were values expressed throughout the evening. The concept of decision-making based on the watershed rather than or in addition to political boundaries was suggested as a potential new approach.

Respect for the land needs to be fostered and promoted, especially to visitors. As a recreation corridor, visual impacts from logging were highlighted and suggested that re-planting programs need to be in place and cutblocks should not be permitted to extend to roadways. There was a wide range of concern regarding resource extraction in the watershed and how to balance this with the strong recreation and environmental values of the corridor.

Community members felt that 'green' power should be investigated to inform residents about the pros and cons of these alternative options. Overall the consensus was there is not enough information and/or lack of understanding concerning these alternative energy

sources. A final item suggested that cosmetic pesticide use should be banned in the plan area.

2. Recreation

As a major recreation area in the Fraser Valley, some residents estimated that the Chilliwack River Valley has an estimated 5 million visitors a year. Managing a large number of recreation users is a concern and should be addressed by the plan.

A variety of issues were identified during the open house and directed discussion portions of the evening. They include the number of recreation users, lack of facilities and services (washrooms, garbage collectors, clear signage/wayfinding) and has become a nuisance for residents in the area. Instances of motorized vehicles on the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) were raised as an issue. Others felt the TCT should accommodate all ability levels. Moreover, a balance should be achieved for motorized and non-motorized users groups in the river valley. This may include greater separation of users (i.e. motorized vs. non-motorized).

Because recreation is a major activity in the river valley, greater visitor awareness and management of the backcountry are essential. A desire to restrict wilderness campsites was expressed throughout the evening. Community members advised that unregulated use of the backcountry and wilderness campsites increase the potential for forest fires and places all residents in the Chilliwack River Valley at risk.

Throughout the evening a common theme emerged, hours and operation of Thompson Park. Some felt the space is underutilized and not serving the needs of the community through restricted hours, lack of facilities and no space for children (playgrounds). This is a space that many residents identified as a community asset that should be enhanced. Generally, it was felt that children needs were not being met for recreation and space.

3. Safety

Three themes emerged as safety concerns for the Chilliwack River Valley. The first is neighbourhood safety. This includes local crime and the need greater enforcement of bylaws, a police presence relating to matters such as noise, vehicle speeds and unpermitted burning. The second theme evolved around traffic and concerns associated to heavy industrial trucks traveling on Chilliwack Lake Rd. The idea of a secondary access route was proposed, however, this matter is something firmly in the domain of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The final item related to safety is an extension of the traffic concerns. Many community members mentioned during the open house and the directed discussion the need for bike lanes as a method to improve pedestrian safety along Chilliwack Lake Rd. Specifically, bike lanes between Vedder Crossing and Tamahi Bridge.

4. Maintaining/protecting rural lifestyle

Identified as a value maintaining the rural character of the area is something many community members want the plan to strive to achieve. Key characteristics/values included:

- Peaceful community
- Natural landscape
- Maintaining farmland

- Connection to the area and local history
- Clean air
- Open space
- Night sky (preventing light pollution)
- Protect quality of life
- Protect local economy (i.e. bed and breakfasts)

Generally, there was a desire to focus on recreation and social values and not industrial/resource uses. Growth should be slow and moderate in nature, not at a pace seen in municipalities.

5. Hillside Development and Hazards

Acknowledging that the river valley is located in a mountainous area, concern was expressed over the potential impact of hillside developments and hazards associated with this terrain and location near the Chilliwack River. Concerns were raised about the location of development near unstable slopes and mobile home parks. Although not all of the development is located in the Regional District, areas like Ryder Lake and Promontory have raised concerns. Community members recognized the need to work together to prevent natural hazards, but also felt that a review of hazards should be undertaken.

6. Resource uses

In light of the recent logging and mining applications, residents expressed concern over these activities happening in their communities. A variety of themes emerged. The first is the aesthetics of resource extraction; mainly, visual impact of cutblocks in the River Valley. A second theme is noise associated with different activities and if restrictions can be put in place. Implications from industrial activities on the watershed from forest logging and mining activities were the third theme expressed by community members. The final theme is consultation with residents concerning proposed resource applications. Residents recognized that these are crown applications, but expressed the wish that the Regional District help facilitate more consultation. It is acknowledged that each resource use brings its own host of issues.

7. Services

The servicing category covers a number of topics. These include: the need for more recycling opportunities, emergency services reflecting local needs and serving recreation users better. A second access route, so that in cases of emergencies residents can get out while emergency personnel come in. Finally, that Thompson Park serves the local needs of residents.

Appendix A

Part One

Open House:

The open house was a drop in format with posters allowing people to write down their opinions. Listed below are notes from the three poster community members were invited to share their ideas.

Values

- Water quality
- Recreation
- Protect fish and wildlife, specifically, nutrient levels (cooling/oxygen level control) and fish bearing
- Natural visual landscapes
- A peaceful community with limited industrial traffic
- Natural ecosystem, specifically, forests, rivers ect. as a learning opportunity
- Wildlife
- Non-motorized recreation, other than fishing (i.e. hiking, peaceful camping, swimming)
- Pedestrian safety along Chilliwack Lake Road
- Air Quality
- Bicycle safety on Chilliwack Lake Road
- Keep farmland, not housing

Issues

- Burning garbage
- Need ditches cleaned
- A lot of recreation users
- Very popular for outdoor activities
- Ban cosmetic pesticide use
- Establish bike lanes between Vedder crossing and Tamahi Bridge
- Unsafe road with industrial traffic/trucks constantly driving by
- Waste/lack of facilities (washrooms) on the river banks for recreation users
- Need more recycling opportunities
- Preserving and restricting natural wildness areas (i.e. replanting cutblocks)
- More bylaw enforcement (i.e. burning of plastics)
- Motorized vehicles on the Trans Canada Trail pose a potential fire hazard
- Logging and gravel
- Residential development on top of slopes (i.e. Ryder Lake area)
- Please do not increase traffic (industrial gravel- no, no, no!)
- Safety , backcountry use and public roadways
- Floodplain issues should be thoroughly reviewed at governments expense
- No Playgrounds
- Limiting motorized recreational vehicles
- Pedestrian safety
- Unstable hillside opposite existing housing (subdivisions on the hillside)

- Unstable hillside opposite seniors mobile home parks
- Crime and grow-ops
- No visual buffers from logging in the interest of tourism and recreation

Opportunities:

Working together to achieve....

- To prevent natural hazards
- To keep the area clean
- Walking trails that remain walking trails
- Safe neighbourhoods and roadways
- To make a part of Thompson Park a playground for children
- Preservation of this beautiful valley
- Thompson Park needs better access/ always closed. Needs to serve the community better
- Greater awareness of recreation users (impacting east of Tamahi Bridge)
- To re-establish multiple use values when extracting resources

Appendix B

Part Two: Directed Discussion:

The directed discussion comprised the second part of the evening. Staff and the Area 'E' Director introduced the project, explained what an Official Community Plan is, how community members can be involved in the planning process. The group was split into two groups. A series of questions were asked to help identify what is important to their community, issues affecting the community and what does your community look like in the future. Below have the answers provided by each group.

Lisa's Group

What do you want to stay the same in your community?

- Peace and quiet
- Clean air
- Open space
- Rural character
- Walking and hiking trails
- Fish and rapids (Chilliwack River)

What do you like about your community?

- Connection to the local area director and subsequently the local government
- Recreational opportunities
- Water quality
- Air quality/clean air

What could improve your community?

- Separate recreation activities, need clear signage and more of them
- Noise
- Light pollution (dislike), want to see the night sky
- Restricting hours for noisy activities
- Decision making based on watershed area rather than political boundaries

What do we want to stay the same?

- Preserve what we have today
- Protect the quality of life of residents as they are today
- Protect local businesses and employment (i.e. bed and breakfast operations)
- Promote local businesses/ recreation corridor

What issues are affecting your community?

- Houses are disappearing
- 5 million recreation users annually, this is a big increase
- Improve education for visitors (i.e. garbage disposal)
- No more wilderness campsites. Informal sites increase fire risks

- Need more control on camping
- More funding for monitoring camping and toward fire prevention. This needs to be self-sustaining
- No gravel trucks

What should be addressed in the Plan?

- Recreation corridor, more should be added
- Investigate 'green' power (i.e. run of the river operations)
- Can we restrict watts (49 mega watts) in the community? Explore energy conservation
- Protect free flowing river (Chilliwack River)
- No clear cuts to the road (create buffers and view corridors)
- Focus on recreation and social values rather than industrial uses
- Space for children (i.e. playgrounds)
- Improve intersection at Vedder and Chilliwack Lake Road (City of Chilliwack intersection)
- Truck traffic and heavy equipment
- Bike lanes
- Open Thompson Park more often
- Increased and early consultation with the public concerning provincial approvals for resource extraction. The Regional District should help to facilitate
- Dyking and mudslides

Dawn's Group

Like's

- Nature/trees/wildlife
- History
- Came home to roots
- Affordability vs. places like Vancouver
- Stars/ dark skies
- River rafting
- Air quality
- Access to Trans Canada Trail for all abilities
- Privacy
- Lakes nearby
- Recreation fishing
- Aroma of nature

Stay the same

- Farmland to remain farmland
- No more residential/suburban development
- Preserve forests/ whole valley
- No clear cuts, focus on small woodlot operations
- Growth ok, but not fast like urban areas
- Services to reflect need (i.e. schools)

Change

- Grow op's
- Crime

- Speeders
- Manage ATV use
- Open Thompson Park washrooms
- Resources to manage backcountry
- Stop dumping (garbage and cars)
- Outside visitors sometimes don't respect the area
- Extend management beyond Tamahi Bridge
- No ATV perspective vs. management – Place for everyone
- Need more CVPS volunteers
- Call for services, fire, police for recreation users
- Crime; local too, lack of police presence.

Others

- Dykes- routine maintenance not practical (need engineer), boundaries are unknown
- Emergency access routes, community should have an alternative access route
- Wildfire hazard, management needed
- Respect land; discarded cigarettes, litter in the forests
- Impact to watershed/river forest from logging/mining
- Flooding and mudslides