

March 6, 2013

Steelhead residents running out of time to stop gravel pit proposal

Vancouver (CP) - Residents of the community of Steelhead just north of Mission, B.C. have until Friday, March 8, 2013 to bury the Ministry of Mines with their concerns to prevent the approval of a proposed 880,000 tonne gravel pit in the heart of their community.

Steelhead Community Association (SCA) chair, Mark Diamond said, "It is up to the community now to get this thing stopped. As an association we have limited resources and have done all we can. Both the provincial and municipal governments are stakeholders in our community hall and are well aware of the situation."

"Our community hall is like the spotted owl, or green frog," says Diamond, "it is unique to this community and if this permit is approved then maximizing the ongoing, revenue generating opportunities are jeopardized. What do we say to the Parks and Recreation staff that have approached us to run programs out of our facility; what was once the perfect place for a yoga or fitness class is now negatively impacted by noisy gravel trucks rumbling by and the air is fouled by toxic diesel fumes."

At a Mayor and council meeting in February, Diamond said, "The business plan for our community hall is to generate funds as a non-profit Society so that we can give back to the community, and to date we have raised, through grants, fund raising and donations, a little more than \$230,000."

Mike Younie, director of development services for the district of Mission filed a report to Mayor and council, in which he states the economic benefit of a sand and gravel pit on Thomas Avenue to the District of Mission will be approximately \$238,000 based on tonnage over four years.

In his closing remarks to Mayor and council on February 4, 2013, Diamond said, "The Steelhead community has already put this amount of money into Mission and will continue to generate more in the years to come, and we ask you to consider this, which project is giving more back to the district."

Diamond, a 19 year resident of Steelhead, indicated the economic viability of the community hall is a huge opportunity but pales in comparison to the environmental impact of the proposed gravel pit.

The developer, Dean Hodgson, in his comments to a CBC radio audience last week left listeners with the impression that the only concern residents should have about his project is whether it can be seen or not from their respective properties. He didn't mention the ill effects of 80 tandem truck trips a day on a one-road-in-one-road-out community with blind corners and road engineering standards that were never intended for that kind of workload.

There was no discussion of the potential destruction of the water table and ruining the well water of residents by digging a 10 meter deep crater. Hodgson gave no indication as to the amount of noise and air pollution that his project will subject residents to, by producing six days a week, eight hours a day, over a period of four years.

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