

PAUSE AND RECONSIDER

Editor:

One of the speakers at the last public hearing for Silverback pinned our difficulties with this proposal on the limitations of the development approval process. I think he's right. We have treated this 1,600-unit comprehensive development application in the same way we review 30-house subdivisions, without taking proper account of the huge impacts on our community.

There are small towns all over North America that have been targeted by recreational resort developers, and few of them have enjoyed the "extreme makeover" that results. We could learn from their troubles and build the needed protections into our approvals. Sad to say, that isn't happening here. Where are the social and economic impact studies, the updated traffic studies, the environmental protection agreements, the affordable housing agreements? It's simply not good enough for the developer to say "just trust me."

There is space and opportunity for good development on the Silverback site. It needn't go down the drain. There just needs to be a pause and a reconsideration of how the development relates to its neighbours and to the entire District of Sechelt. Regrettably, the process has locked us into a single win/lose decision at the May 7 council meeting. It's not fair to councillors, and it's not in the best interests of Sechelt residents, most of whom have only the skimpiest notion of what's in the Silverback proposal and how it will affect us.

The right message to send to the developer would be a refusal by council to reconsider its April 2 vote defeating the official community plan amendment, along with an offer for open dialogue involving all stakeholders — preferably in the context of the vision plan.

Find a better way to make this decision, and we stand a far better chance of getting a decision we can all live with.

Sue Jackel, Sechelt

REID: OVER-COME BY AVARICE?

Editor:

It appears Mayor Cam Reid has decided to override the decision of Sechelt council and resurrect the Silverback project, in spite of the almost unanimously negative input received during the public hearing process. He and some oth-

ers are overcome by avarice at the prospect of receiving a cash advance against future development charges. This willingness to barter the future livability of Sechelt for cash in hand undervalues our community terribly.

Reid's position stands in stark contrast to that of Gibson's Mayor Barry Janyk, who recently rejected a project purely on the grounds that his electorate remained unconvinced of its merit. Projects of this magnitude should not proceed simply because a mayor has the power to make it so. It's incumbent on the proponents of a development, working with the professional staff and political leadership of a community, to convince the public of its merits before it goes ahead. If they cannot, then they must accept that fact and move on. Simply claiming to represent some vast majority that, for unknown reasons, remained silent during the public process is, to paraphrase Dr. Johnson, "the last resort of scoundrels." Trading Sechelt's future for cash is the very definition of the term sell-out.

I implore the four councillors who stood with the people to remain with the people and again reject this out sized and ill-placed development.

Tom Morris, Sechelt

LETTER WRITERS SHORT ON FACTS

Editor:

The two letters (*Coast Reporter*, April 25) in favour of Silverback were both from folks who either did not show up or did not speak up at the public hearings. They are short on facts.

The residents are not antidevelopment. They are pro good development. The project has been around only about four years. The 15-year-old reference is to an earlier development proposal that the public favoured. Why did the Sunshine Coast Regional District write an official letter to the public hearing asking for postponement while water was sorted out?

It is not an outright contribution of \$8 million. It has free hook-ups for at least five years for all the 1,600 homes and there is no guarantee that there will be any charges after that.

A \$4 million infusion of residential taxes comes with the offset of additional police, roads, hospital and other infrastructure costs. There would be services for the 3,000-plus new residents.

There is no commitment to increasing the water line

diameter to Sandy Hook. Any legal commitment to a golf course was removed from the agreements at the request of the developer. Do we now just trust he will build one?

The timing of affordable housing policy is not relevant. That is like saying that since Silverback was proposed four years ago it will not have to comply with the current and new blasting bylaw or the new pesticide rules. You do not grandfather in non-compliance.

I hope the four thoughtful councillors who rejected the project will resist undue pressure and continue to act in the best interests of Sechelt.

Michael T. Hertz
Sechelt

ALTERNATIVES TO SILVERBACK

Editor:

I recently attended a conference in Victoria where a keynote speaker from Massachusetts talked engagingly about new ways of designing healthy communities, walkable communities, communities where the focus is on safety, cultural and physical activity and mixed land use with mixed income housing — not so different from the themes in the District of Sechelt vision plan or the District's Smart Growth workshop.

Why do we think that Silverback type developments are the only way to go? Why wouldn't we want the most innovative and creative ideas in development? Why would we choose to encourage urban sprawl with huge infrastructure costs when there are so many alternatives — much cheaper, much more pleasing alternatives? Why would the District spend thousands of dollars to bring in innovative planners and then choose to ignore their (and the community's) ideas? Why is the mayor choosing to ignore his own council's direction from a majority vote?

I think we deserve better. For those of you who think that Silverback is something we need, check out Docksider Green, an amazing project being built on industrial wasteland in Victoria. This waterfront development wowed everyone at the Chicago Construction Conference last fall and yes, it is built by a Canadian company in a small capital city in B.C. It is being heralded as the most advanced sustainable design in North America — "a greenprint for homes of the future," and has been featured in newspapers across the country.

And if you want to hear

about more exciting ideas for our Sunshine Coast communities, watch for Larry Frank's presentation in Sechelt on June 10. Is it possible for us to use those exciting ideas and lead the way into the future instead of just following along with the past, doing things as they have always been done?

KJ Carlyle, Sechelt