



Boys & Girls Club
of Greater Victoria

March 15, 2021

Remarks to District of Metchosin Public Hearing

By Wayne Jensen, Treasurer, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Victoria Foundation

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Mayor Ranns and Members of Metchosin Council, for this opportunity to address you tonight.

My name is Wayne Jensen and I am a director and the treasurer of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Victoria Foundation.

When I began volunteering with this charity, I never imagined we would be on the front lines dealing with some of society's toughest challenges such as families in despair, youth at risk of being homeless and supporting widespread mental health issues.

I also never imagined I would be in front of this council dealing with an issue like this. As a Board dedicated to the best interests of our region, we have some serious concerns about the land use amendment bylaw before you tonight. Specifically, I believe there is a fatal flaw in the amendment you are considering that neither serves this community nor our non-profit organization. While the intention appears to be land preservation, I will describe how this amendment will actually fast-track a subdivision.

Let me explain. I know our executive director has already outlined the history of the property, but I will add some relevant context.

Our Foundation made a considered decision in 2019 to sell a portion of our property in Metchosin. Many elements were considered in this decision including usage, ongoing maintenance costs for this land and finally we asked ourselves how we can best meet the growing needs of children and youth in our region. We felt the sale of at least part of the property was the financially responsible thing to do to serve more young people.

We began the process with district staff in early 2020 but we set no timetable. Our hope was to sell the property within a few years, allowing any potential purchaser plenty of time to consider their options, including those wanting to purchase the property for land conservation or other community purposes.

Our goal, which we have stated many times, was to sell one 40-acre parcel. We are not developers and had no intention of subdividing the parcel into smaller pieces. Unfortunately, recent events have significantly changed things.



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of Greater Victoria

In recent months we have seen protests and petitions, and our children's charity has been publicly smeared for our well-intentioned actions. We own a property and we sought to sell it - and yet we somehow have been accused of secrecy, betrayal and wrongdoing.

An online petition has been started in reference to this matter. I thank the organizers for sending me some of the comments which have been made from people as far away as Calgary, Ontario, Miami, Tennessee and England.

In fact, of the 174 comments we received, just three were from people in Metchosin, which I found very interesting.

Regardless, we have heard loud and clear that many people want this land preserved. This council also appears to want the land preserved.

But what we haven't heard is anyone offering a solution. We haven't seen any community fundraising, we haven't been contacted **directly** by the municipality, regional government or nature conservation groups regarding purchasing it.

The only solution being discussed is that our children's charity should preserve the land. People believe that we should continue to carry the annual costs of this property, hire the arborists and pay the liability insurance. Unfortunately, our mandate does not include preserving land for conservation purposes. We are a charitable organization dedicated to social service. Selling this land, and shedding the maintenance costs, will do an immense amount of good for the children and youth of this entire region. Our goal does not preclude another organization from taking on its preservation.

For us, things dramatically changed 18 days ago. Late one evening, we saw on social media that this council had planned a special meeting for the next day, Feb. 24, targeting only one property – ours. Without any official notice to the Foundation, as the landowner, this council passed first- and second- reading on a land amendment that would “downzone” and severely de-value our property. Within 15 minutes, you agreed to a motion that would strip our property of its value.

We have been a part of this community for more than 35 years and I will admit to you that members of our charity felt blindsided, bullied and deeply disappointed. I do not believe this represents actual procedural fairness nor does it even have the perception of fairness. I hope other Metchosin landowners are paying attention because if this can happen to a children's charity, it can certainly happen to you.



Boys & Girls Club
of Greater Victoria

Regardless, faced with severe time limitations, we were left with only one option: We had to scramble to retain the value of this land so that we could continue to serve future generations of children, youth and families. That meant doing what we never intended – submitting plans to subdivide the property into building lots.

This demonstrates the flaw in this bylaw amendment. Rather than preserving this property and exercising our long timelines, this bylaw will fast-track a subdivision. If this amendment passes we will have only one choice – to subdivide the property, seek a developer partner and begin the work of tree clearing, and road construction. To meet council's objective, this work will have to happen within one year.

I'm not sure that's what your constituents want to hear – but that is exactly what your amendment will do.

Tonight we want to continue listening to the community. But at the end of the evening, I would like council to consider two possibilities:

First, if the preservation of this property is important to council and the community, the District of Metchosin should consider purchasing it. We would be willing to have that conversation.

Second, we are recommending an adjournment of this decision to a later date, to allow for important conversations to continue, without the pressure that requires us to start clearing and road building immediately. I suggest adjournment, because I understand once you close the public hearing, you cannot discuss the property or the bylaw with us or anyone else until the bylaw is passed.

In the end, I want the public and members of council to be very clear on what this vote entails:

If you say “yes” to this land amendment tonight, you will be fast-tracking the development of a subdivision on this land.

If you say “no” or choose to adjourn this decision, you will allow for further discussions, consultations or open the door to a land conservation organization purchasing the property or for you to purchase it as a community asset.

I thank you for the opportunity to address you.