



Metchosin Rejects Solutions Aimed At Resolving Land Controversy

Boys & Girls Club Suggests Land Purchase Option and Long Timelines

VICTORIA, B.C. – Proactive solutions aimed at meeting charitable needs and community requests have unfortunately been rejected by the District of Metchosin, leaving the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Victoria Foundation with very few options as it seeks to expand service to society’s most vulnerable citizens.

At a public hearing Monday night, the Boys & Girls Clubs Foundation made two recommendations aimed at resolving an issue involving a 40-acre parcel of land the Club is hoping to sell. First, the charity suggested the District of Metchosin consider responding to citizen requests by purchasing the land as a community asset. Second, the charity suggested any decisions be adjourned to a later date to allow for further conversations about the future of the property. Unfortunately, both solutions were rejected in a unanimous decision.

“Within just 19 days, Metchosin targeted our property, held a surprise meeting without notification, and proceeded to pass a new bylaw aimed at devaluing our land,” said Foundation treasurer Wayne Jensen. “We have been members of this community for more than 35 years so it is hard not to feel anything but bullied by our municipal leaders.”

The club has always been transparent in its desire to sell one 40-acre parcel of its 98-acre property sometime over the next few years. All potential buyers, including conservation groups, municipal/regional governments and community members, have fair and equal purchasing opportunity. The children’s charity never intended to develop the land or divide in into smaller lots.

“Council has imposed a strict one-year deadline on us. Rather than seeking solutions to conserve the land, the only option we have if we want to preserve its value is to follow council’s direction and fast-track development of this property,” Jensen said. “This was never our intention.”

Late last week, the club was forced to react to council’s land amendment by submitting an application to subdivide the 40-acre property into as many as seven lots. The charity does not have a mandate to preserve property for conservation purposes.

The Boys and Girls Club is a non-profit organization that has operated nature, wilderness and educational programs on the 98-acre property in Metchosin for more than 35 years, providing life-changing experiences to thousands of young people. Early on, the property was critical to serving significant youth justice needs but since then, changes in young offender laws and an evolution in youth needs have reshaped community priorities.

The charity has always strived to be good neighbours and exceptional stewards of the land. But costs to maintain the pristine property, including equipment, trail improvements, insurance, safety enhancements and professional arborist services, amount to tens of thousands of dollars every year – money which is diverted from critical programming for children and youth.



**Boys & Girls Club
of Greater Victoria**

More than a year ago, the non-profit charity decided to sell the 40-acre parcel of the property. It was a thoughtful, considered decision aimed at meeting the increasing challenges of today's children, youth and families across southern Vancouver Island. In early 2020, the Foundation made formal application to divide the property. This was followed by widespread communication with the community, municipal council and staff, supporters, donors and the media.

"The eventual sale of this property will help fund more services for the region's young people," Jensen said. "We care about the region's young people and we will be there for them whether they need quality out-of-school care and summer camps or homelessness prevention assistance, substance use counselling or mental health programming. Obstacles may stand in our way but our commitment to the wellbeing of the region's children and youth remains strong."

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