

RDEK Presentation “Community Conversation on Sustainable and Responsible Development”

RDEK Area A Board of Directors Meeting - July 8, 2022, Cranbrook, BC

Thank you Directors and Staff for the opportunity to address you this morning. I also welcome and appreciate participants from our Community Conversation on Sustainable and Responsible Development on June 14, who are joining us in person and on Zoom.

My name is Lee-Anne Walker. I am a long-time resident of the RDEK Area A, having lived in Sparwood, FAR and the Hosmer region. With a Masters in Environmental Management, I’ve spent my career as an educator and community-based watershed manager. I am also a grandmother, mother and community volunteer directing my knowledge and passion on active stewardship initiatives like implementing the project outcomes from the RDEK Area A and Tourism Fernie Sustainable Tourism Project specifically with the Ambassador Wild and Elk River Amenity initiatives.

I am here today because community feel there is a lack of representation of community values and disregard for sustainable development practices when processing development applications in the RDEK. Residents of this region care and are recently engaged because of the Galloway Lands application by Handshake Holdings.

Community concerns about this development are, and continue to be:

- Fire protections and water access
- Road access and transportation network impacts
- Wildlife impacts on habitat and movement corridors
- Environmental impacts on sensitive areas like Lizard Creek
- Of particular concern are Social impacts like perpetuating the widening gap for things like affordable housing
- Recreational impacts on summer and winter trails

When the RDEK approved the 1st and 2nd readings, moving to public hearing, despite much public opposition, people prepared again to express their discontent, BUT the applicant pulled their application one day prior to the required timeline for notice on the Public Hearing. Community did not celebrate any sort of victory that they withdrew their application, they know the developer will be back.

I am so proud that we have a culture in our region of ‘can and will do’, ‘stand up for our values and quality of life’ and ‘care for disadvantaged populations like young people, disabled citizens and seniors’. It is precisely these concerns and desires that sparked community to sharpen our clarity of what sustainable development looks like and what values must be upheld as we grow; **and we will grow!**

Instead of the proposed Public Hearing for June 14, engaged citizens hosted a community conversation on responsible and sustainable development. Broad, open invitation to public throughout the RDEK and RDEK Board of Directors was distributed and everyone was welcome. Some of you responded and attended, thank you, along with at least one representative from Handshake Holdings.

70 people gathered in person at the Fernie Seniors Centre and 90 more on line from throughout the RDEK. Bob Sandford, renowned author and world leader on sustainable development catalyzed our conversation. We listened to this expert and each other verbally and from written submissions. Questions were posed, discussion ensued, feedback was recorded and a summary report completed, which you all have in front of you. A small group of volunteers took the time to summarize hundreds of comments. This report has also been distributed to all of the 160 participants. It summarizes our thoughts, and now we ask you to consider them with integrity!

RDEK residents want:

- Responsible, sustainable development – prioritized ahead of growth.
- The RDEK to set high standards and metrics for how to achieve this and measure our progress against best practices for sustainable development including:
 - Conservation of sensitive areas and wildlife habitat
 - Public safety before, during and after construction of developments be they fire or traffic concerns
 - Public access to the natural environment
 - Broad spectrum of housing options including low income and seasonal worker housing
 - Integrated regional planning within a broader context viewing individual applications as part of the whole puzzle.

Community are committed to working with you on this! To do this we want to see leadership from our elected Directors that supports a responsible and sustainable development vision. We encourage you to have courage to say no, rejecting applications for rezoning inconsistent with our collective vision and priorities in the RDEK. Directors, we encourage you to work with your dedicated and professional staff to improve development planning approval, with accountability to a process that is fair, transparent and ensures reflection of community values.

This informal community of citizens who care about living, recreating and thriving in the RDEK for generations to come, have 3 specific requests. Please refer to these on our Executive Summary pages 4-5:

1. First, that the RDEK respectfully respond to the concerns in this report with a plan for how they will be addressed;
2. Second, help community better understand the development application process. One idea is that the Manager of Development Services host an RDEK “Lunch and Learn” zoom workshop.

3. Third, consider hosting sub-regional meetings or open houses for OCP review and update. Even though some updates have been done, context and growing issues like Climate Change, Affordable Housing Crisis, and runaway Inflation has. East Kootenay residents are asking for an opportunity to discuss rural area OCPs that reflect more robust wording on responsible and sustainable development.

It would have cost thousands of dollars to get this type of feedback from your constituents and hundreds of staff hours. Please use it and engage with us! We want to be part of the solution with you.

As cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead once said *'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has.'* Thank you for your time and consideration. Any questions or clarification required?

Comments from RDEK Directors Following the Presentation:

Chair Rob Gay: OCP amendments are intended to get people involved. Advisory Committees have been formed around specific developments with events that get around 40-50 out, drawing community attention. This input is beneficial.

Susan Clovechok, Area F: She can see that there is an opportunity for engagement and education of the public on how the development process works and what's involved. For example, there are several OCP amendments required for Area F. These take 1 1/2 -2 years for staff to do, requiring professional knowledge and expertise.

Mike Sosnowski, Area A: Suggested the RDEK post on their website explanation of the development process, particularly amendments to the zoning bylaw. Staff member, Michelle Bates said that they could engage the public with a page on RDEK Planning 101 providing an overview and frequently asked questions answered. Sosnowski comments that there is room for improvement on engagement,

especially for bigger developments. He would like to see bigger development proposals hold information meetings and provide the RDEK with public feedback earlier in the process so that the APC has a better idea of the concepts and community concerns. Sosnowski made a motion that the RDEK Board make it a strategic priority to improve this process for next year. Michelle Bates said that this could lead to amending the development approval bylaw.

Rob Gay, Director: Stated that Public Hearing is not Public Consultation.

Ange Qualliza, Mayor Fernie: Talked about the City of Fernie procedure bylaw to hear from the public impacted from development, which mimics the RDEK public hearing process. Within timelimits, council and staff listen to presentations, then staff summarize the themes of complaints/concerns/issue thus providing decision makers with a neutral perspective of impacts to residents. This professional advice is important to decision makers.

Stan Doehle, Area B: Sees the importance of OCP amendment process in place as it is required for Jaffray and Elko.

Susanne Ashmore, (alternate for Jane Walter): Thinks that the public should lead this process and elected officials follow. RDEK areas need robust, diverse APCs to give advice to elected officials offering broad perspectives.

Don McCormick, City of Kimberley: Noted that now development is without opposition. It is important that the development process is fair and equitable. People need to realize that if the decision doesn't go your way, that you were at least heard.