

39 Ridgemont Ave.
Fernie BC V0B 1M2

Board of Directors
Regional District of East Kootenay
Cranbrook BC

Re The rezoning of the Galloway lands

To whom it may concern:

I have survived a house fire and from that I learned the value of a back door, an escape route. The subdivisions in Fernie all have at least two points of access/egress. During the flood of 1996 we lost one of the bridges allowing access to the airport subdivision, we were able to use the second to get equipment in and people out. Without that second access the outcome of the flood would have been far more serious. If memory serves it was some months before the second access was restored. The local subdivisions all have at least two access/egress points, Alpine trails has Burma Road, Montaine has two separate routes and an emergency exit. To suggest that we develop a new subdivision with a single access, and that through a subdivision not designed for significant traffic and at an altitude that makes road maintenance challenging is, to my mind, irresponsible.

I have driven from the local fire hall to where I believe the road to the Galloway lands would intersect with Highland Drive at a time of very low traffic. My time was just shy of ten minutes I expect an ambulance or fire truck with the benefits of lights and sirens might shave a minute or two off that time but they would still have to negotiate the road into the subdivision. To my mind a very long time to wait for emergency help. No one suffering a heart attack would survive. A second access off Highway 3 would, of course dramatically reduce this time.

The Galloway Lands proposal calls for, at this point, seventy-four houses, (not homes as these are unlikely to be primary residences), all on septic fields and wells. As I understand it there is no planned tie in with water and sewer utilities. Obviously the failure of one septic system could compromise the viability of many or all of the wells in the subdivision.

As I understand it there has been no study to confirm that the water table can sustain seventy-four houses. If memory serves, when Riverside was being built, (just below the proposed Galloway lands development), the excavation of the site to pour the footings flooded and had to be pumped out. This resulted in the wells on Vanlerberg Road being drained. The developers paid for hotel rooms for those affected so they could shower. The lesson, to me, is that the water table is both finite and fragile. Prior to rezoning we have to know if the land will remain stable with seventy-four properties drawing water or personal use.

I am deeply concerned that there is no plan for fire suppression. We all know that with climate change there is a frightening increase in the incidence of wildfires. Those subdivisions

built at the forest interface suffer the worst. We need only to think back to the fires in Kelowna in 2002 with the loss of 244 homes to understand that the very best fire smart strategies and aggressive fire suppression plans are critical prior to and rezoning of the land.

I do not believe enough attention is being paid to the wildlife corridors that contribute so much to the quality of life in the Elk Valley. In recent articles and letters in the Globe and Mail, Canmore is the “canary in the coal mine”. With maximum development in every possible direction here is no room left for wildlife. To quote Joni Mitchell, “ You take paradise and put up a parking lot”.

In closing I would like to remind the directors that they are elected to act in the best interests of the present and future residents of this beautiful area. I would respectfully ask that no rezoning be approved until these aforementioned concerns are addressed. I also ask that the directors ask of themselves, if this project goes ahead will they look back upon it in 15 or 20 years and take pride in their legacy?

Finally I would like to remind the directors that there is another option on the table. That being the proposal to expand the Mount Fernie Provincial Park. Obviously this is an option I would prefer, I would also suggest that such a legacy would be far more worthy of pride.

Sincerely
David Bird
Fernie BC