

Casey Grundy

From: Richard Helm [Richard@ctlwestrans.com]
Sent: October 11, 2009 6:59 PM
To: Casey Grundy
Cc: directors@bowenyouthcentre.ca
Subject: Ideas Forum - presentation by Bowen Youth Centre
Attachments: IDEASforum.pdf

Attn: Casey Grundy, Bowen Island Municipality
cc: Directors, Bowen Youth Centre Society

We are writing in response to the request for presentations to the Ideas Forum, October 22nd, 2009 regarding the Bowen Island Official Community Plan review. In this letter we will describe the background of the Bowen Youth Centre and then provide some commentary regarding our priorities and interests as may be relevant in the revision of the OCP.

Background

The Mission of the Bowen Youth Centre is: *"To advocate and facilitate youth-driven programmes and experiences that promote health, personal growth and community connection"*

The Bowen Teen Centre was established as a non-profit society in 1991 by a group of parents and youth determined to provide more services for youth on Bowen. The name was recently changed to Bowen Youth Centre (BYC) to reflect a growing interest from the pre-teens youth on Bowen. The BYC works closely with Bowen Island Municipality (BIM) in the operation of the drop-in Centre located at 650 Carter Road and most of the programming for BYC activities is now carried out by youth workers who are employed by BIM and under BIM supervision. BIM provides core funding for basic drop-in centre programmes during 2 nights per week, and the BYC Society supplements the core funding to provide additional programmes throughout the year. The BYC raises the money by fundraising events and from grants and gifts. The physical space of the Children's/Teens Centre at 650 Carter Road was created through various grants, donations and volunteer help in the early 1990's with the intent to provide long term sustainable housing for both groups. The current situation is that BIM is paying a commercial lease to the Children's Centre on behalf of BYC and half of the space originally built as a Youth Centre is being used for Recreation Programmes for exercise classes. BYC operates many programmes from other locations to reach out to as wide a cross section of youth as possible. Activities range from afterschool tutoring to Kayak expeditions, acting, music, golf, pottery, writing, community service, dances etc. The purpose of providing youth worker supervised programmes is not merely to provide entertainment for youth on Bowen, but primarily to provide a range of healthy activities on Bowen which create opportunities for youth to interact with positive role models and a support network. This is especially important at a stage when youth naturally expand their horizons beyond their family home. Some of the programmes are meant to challenge or be educational, others are opportunities for socializing in a safe environment.

The role of the Bowen Youth Centre Society has shifted away from employing youth workers and running programmes to primarily fundraising and advocating for community resources for Bowen Youth. BIM has really "stepped up to the plate" recently in this respect and we applaud their efforts which has been the good work of the Recreation Department in employing scarce resources as efficiently as possible. Many municipalities fully fund their youth centres. Bowen Island is still reliant on the fund raising efforts of the BYC society to operate and we see that as an ongoing responsibility and opportunity to obtain grants and other funding not available to the Municipality.

Interests

The BYC is essentially a Bowen youth "watchdog" /advocate, and a fundraiser. History shows that on Bowen, when things are going well with youth on the island, the community takes youth social and recreation services for granted. When the situation among Bowen youth turns for the worse, then the community comes rushing in to help out for short periods of time. We notice a cycle of volunteerism, charity and an willingness to provide public resources, and conversly the symptoms of declining resources. Our interest is to ensure a constant, predictable and adequate level of resources for all youth on Bowen.

The require resources include:

- Access to a permanent Youth Centre as a primary facility as a "base camp" for operations and activities, and to other physical spaces and facilities from time to time to run programmes for other ages or interest groups.
- Sufficient funds (provided by BYC and BIM) for youth workers to operate a drop-in Centre and a wide range of other programmes to of interest to a broad cross section of Bowen Youth.
- More accessible transportation options for to move youth safely within and to/from the island (probably in the form of subsidized charter services).
- A strong, regularly updated data base of social, health, educational, spiritual and community resources which is tailored to easily accessible by Bowen youth and parents (This has recently evolved in the form of the Bowen Youth Coalition pulled together by BIM, BICS, BYC)
- An enhanced culture of intergenerational inclusion within the community.
- Possibly more on-island facilities (such as gym/theatre/field space)

Priorities

Our priority is to create and entrench a long-term, sustainable plan for the provision of youth services on Bowen. This would be supported by core funding, permanent affordable accommodation, a set of policies within BIM to ensure a basic level of youth services and a commitment among the relevant organizations to regularly assess, and advocate for, the needs of Youth on Bowen. This commitment should be structured so as to survive the event of changing political winds or periods where there is a lack of volunteerism, so that every generation of Bowen Youth will have available sufficient community resources.

The writer proposes that supporting better access to public and chartered transportation will, in some cases, be more economical than trying to duplicate many of the expensive facilities which are already located on the North Shore. An indoor swimming pool and skateboard park for example are located within a few miles of Bowen Island and we should explore the notion of investing in transportation - even if through subsidy versus the cost of building and maintaining certain infrastructure. Of course there are amenities which are required and all recreation amenities built on Bowen which are required will have positive spin-offs for youth.

Youth workers on the ground and sufficient transportation to access facilities will go much further at this stage for youth on Bowen Island than large infrastructure projects. \$20,000 per year of

additional youth programming on Bowen Island would provide a substantial benefit to a wide range of Bowen youth and is a small budget item compared with some of the large infrastructure projects being considered presently. Youth programming also provides valuable employment for youth workers on Bowen who, in their early twenties, are forced to consider moving off of the island for meaningful employment elsewhere. One of our challenges is to provide steady employment to sustain our talented and dedicated youth workers.

Please confirm timely receipt of this letter.

regards

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