

Richmond School - Update # 3 February 26, 2007

For those who may not have heard, it seems that we, the area residents, have been given a reprieve – School Board officials have now decided to talk to us before making up their minds as to the future of Richmond School lands.

This “turnaround” in position is attributed to the keen interest the residents have shown on this issue and the follow-up lobbying that has been done by community representatives. Last week, the representatives of the Camosun Community Association, the North Jubilee Community Association and the Friends of Bowker Creek joined forces, with School Trustee Charlie Beresford and Trustee Bev Horsman, to help convince the Board that the process followed to date has been rushed; that the community has not been sufficiently informed as to what is going on; and, that better decisions for this property might be made if we all talk to one another.

Mike McEvoy, the Chairperson of the School Board further stated that there would be no firm timeline for deciding on the fate of school lands, until the public is adequately consulted. Unfortunately, the Board has not yet decided how this dialogue with the public will be conducted.

The decision by Board Trustees to talk to us is a big step forward for them and a big opportunity for us. The unanimous vote for this public process by the Trustees appears to signal an era of true cooperation and trust - for both sides. Hopefully, this initiative will translate into a more acceptable definition of “cost accounting”, with school lands truly being regarded as the “public resource” as stated in their policies, and perhaps, most important, that their concept of “consultation” meshes with ours.

The challenge before us is to ensure that the public process decided upon is fair and offers residents and their representatives ample opportunity to get involved so that both school interests and longer term community and environmental interests are taken into account. It is, therefore, important that this process not only be seen to be fair, but that it is fair. This, to our minds, means that there should be no preconceived conclusions as to any outcomes from this process, and that all options should be up for discussion, if not resolution.

With your help, participation and support, our efforts will be coordinated. We need your comments and ideas. We need to be together on this. Keep tuned for our next public meeting.