

To: Mayor and Councillors

From: Councillor Harold Steves

Re: Historic Japanese floating netshed house.

Date: Dec. 19, 2011

(a) Netshed: At a recent Parks, Recreation and Culture meeting staff were asked to look into a proposal to have a floating Japanese netshed located in Steveston Harbour. (See attached letter) It is a traditional combination netshed and house built circa 1910 to 1920 and was lived in by the Tamaki family on the Delta side of the river during the 1920's.

Originally there were hundreds of these netshed houses along the river at Steveston, built on either stilts or on barges. In the 1950's one of these floating netshed houses was anchored at the mouth of Steveston Harbour and used by a Cash Buyer who bought fish directly from the fishermen as they returned to the harbour from fishing. The last floating netshed house was tied up adjacent to the Hong Wo Store in the 1970's.

Typically the netshed house had living quarters at one end and a netshed at the other. The fisherman would tie his boat up alongside. Large sliding doors opened at either side of the netshed so nets could easily be loaded on or off the boat. The nets would be hung from the ceiling for storage. There would be an area for mending nets indoors out of the rain and somewhere in the vicinity there would be space for a bluestone tank. Amazingly this netshed house is in excellent condition and still has the large sliding doors on either side, the original siding, and original tongue and groove fir floor in the living quarters.

Because of the extra length due to having a netshed at one end the owner has been unable to find a floathome marina that can take that size of vessel. She is offering the vessel to the city if some means can be arranged and would be willing to provide caretaker services, etc.

There are two locations where a historic netshed would be an asset, Scotch Pond and Britannia Shipyard. There were similar floating netsheds at the Britannia Shipyard and it would compliment the historic zone with its stilt houses. However, the Britannia already has a caretaker living in one of the stilt houses and another living on his boat. There is none at Scotch Pond.

(b) Historic Sakamoto Fishing Boat: At the same time, Steveston Fisherman Bud Sakamoto has been considering donating his historic fishing boat to the Gulf Of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site. It is fully restored and operational and is located in Scotch Pond but will require maintenance every couple of years which could be done at the Britannia Shipyard.

(c) Garry Point Park Plan: The final Phase 5 of the Garry Point Park Plan proposed that a "Marine Interpretation Centre" be located adjacent to Scotch Pond at the east end. This was to include natural history and small boats that could be used safely on the inside waters of Sturgeon Bank without having to venture into the river from Steveston Harbour. It also envisioned a "traditional Japanese house" in the Japanese garden that could serve as a museum.

DISCUSS

Proposal: Negotiate with the owners to locate the floating netshed at Scotch Pond with the Sakamoto boat alongside to be used as a caretakers suite and interpretive centre. Second choice Britannia Shipyard.

Hello Mr. Steves, my name is Rhianna Featherstone. Your name was recommended to me by several people as being someone who could help me.

I own a beautiful old floating netshed with living accommodations. At the moment I have it moored on Mitchell Island but the landlord wants the space for another business venture and I have to move right away. I have been searching for months for somewhere to go but not having any luck. The building was not originally designed as a typical floathome and as such does not physically fit into any of the local floathome communities. I need to find a unique location for it.

I work in Steveston in the old Hepworth building and love the fact that so much of Steveston has been restored and preserved, reflecting its rich heritage. My netshed would fit in perfectly with the look of places such as Finn Slough and The Britannia Shipyard. I was looking at Scotch Pond and think my shed would fit in beautifully at the back end. I am renovating it in a style that reflects it's past, trying to achieve a sense of an old homestead on the water for example, the kitchen is all old vintage appliances and the lighting is stain glass. I have put this place together totally by recycling building material and buying only used fixtures from Craigslist or thrift stores. It is very important to me that my home reflects my values of walking softly on the planet by recycling as much as possible, by having a composting toilet system and by being as green as possible.

Once I have the interior finished, I would like to use it as a center to teach people skills like cooking on a woodstove, making homemade butter, canning food, living off the grid, herb walks to identify the local flora and fauna as well as classes on natural healing methods (I am a Registered Massage Therapist and have studied herbal medicine making) I would also be happy to be in that location as a security presence at night. I love working in Steveston and want to live within walking distance of my office.

www.westrichmondmassage.com

The link www.eclecticark.blogspot.com will take you to my blog called "The eclectic ark" that I am writing about the netshed. Once you are at the blog, scroll down past the drawing and there are tabs underneath. Click on the one called "the ark" to see pictures of my home.

I have been doing some research on it and it was owned by a Japanese family called Tamaki in the 1920's on the water side of a property that once housed one of the first schoolhouses in Delta. It would be a shame to see this beautiful place destroyed because it had nowhere to go. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how I can save it and if there might be a place for me in the Steveston Community.

Yours, truly, Rhianna Featherstone
604 780-4986



2.3.4

Japanese Garden

The garden could consist of two parts, a wet garden with pond and appropriate features and dry garden with gravel beds and other symbolic features. The two parts of the garden could be separated by a structure resembling a traditional Japanese house. This could serve as a museum of Japanese history in the area, bonsai display, etc.

It is possible the garden could be developed to become a well known feature of the park to the extent that a small fee could be charged to help offset the maintenance costs. A traditional Japanese garden will require extensive maintenance and this cost must be considered in any decision to proceed with development.

2.3.5

Marine Interpretive Centre

The park is ideally suited for an outdoor education facility. Its location on the Fraser, the delta, Sturgeon Bank and its settlement history makes it a prime vehicle for both natural and historical interpretation. A small biological station which could be used by classrooms during the school year and by park visitors at other specified times would provide a very complementary facility to the school system and the Richmond Nature Park.

The availability of Parks Canada expertise at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery provides an ideal opportunity not only to utilize Parks Canada's resources but also to build a complementary program between the park and the historic site.

The facility will be located on the Scotch Pond extension. It is perceived as being a very simple structure with room for a small classroom, displays, washroom and service/storage. Suggestions have been made to include a group of non-motorized boats, eg. flat bottom punts, to provide classroom access to Sturgeon Bank and water safety drills.

The program could be established by the science teachers of Richmond who could use the resources of Parks Canada, West Water Research, UBC, Small Craft Harbours, DPW, GVRD and other government agencies.