

March 11, 2008

Re: Public Hearing regarding Garden City Lands ALR status

I wish to voice my strong opposition to the proposed removal of the Garden City Lands (GCL) from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The GCL provide one of the few truly open and natural settings in the middle of an ever-growing city. We need more open space, not less. The GCL should be kept within the ALR and used for any permissible uses under that designation: for example, an urban agriculture education centre as proposed by Kwantlen, parkland, sports fields, or just plain open space.

With the international concern over global warming, it is inconceivable that removal of this land in the middle of the city already short on green space can be a good idea. It is only good for those who will profit from the high rises that will go up.

The City has tried to claim, through this deal they have worked out, that we will get this large tract of land for city use. But this just cannot be the case, since the MOU stipulates that the city land will not be contiguous. We the citizens do not want to pay for the greenery that goes in and around the high-rise complexes. It is unconscionable that the City continues to portray the City's proposed portion as one large area. It is misleading.

I don't believe the citizens to date have had a fair opportunity to learn about the Garden City Lands. Early this year the City did a phone survey of a number of residents to get their input on the proposed development. I myself was called for the survey, and was surprised when they never asked the question if I was in favour of removal of the lands from the ALR. Instead the questions were geared towards asking the participants what sort of development they would want. I had to eventually opt out of the survey, since I could not voice my concern over removal of the lands. Hence the survey ended up being skewed in favour of those who were either not familiar with the whole issue, or who wanted the lands removed from the ALR for development. Those of us who knew what was at stake and who did not agree with commercial development of the lands did not have a voice.

This biased public polling was continued with the Open House on the GLC development. As pointed out in the Richmond News of March 4 of this year, the questions were heavily slanted in favour of development.

Surely the removal of such a large tract of land from the city deserves a full and unbiased survey among the residents. As someone who graduated in mathematics and statistics, I can categorically say that the survey conducted by the city of Richmond would not stand up statistically. But the results did show, even with the built-in bias, that residents have

not been fooled, and that they are overwhelmingly NOT in favour of developing these lands.

Those of us who want to retain the lands in the ALR are motivated not by profit, but by concern for the environment, livability, and food security which is surely what life on this planet is all about in the long run. I would ask the ALC to listen to the voices of the citizens of Richmond first and foremost.

*B. Huisman*

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