

On second thought, Silverback approved

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Developer contribution now \$11.2 million

Silverback has crossed the last political hurdle on the road to building the development in Sandy Hook — and the bridge is burnt behind it.

On Wednesday night at the Seaside Centre, council voted 6-1 in favour of adopting the official community plan (OCP) and rezoning bylaw amendments needed to give the 1,600-unit, 162-hectare golf course development the green light. Only councillors Keith Thirkell and Warren Allan opposed the motions (though Allan's abstention technically counts as a 'yes' vote).

By the end of the night, the District had gained \$3.2 million for affordable housing (roughly a one per cent donation of cash in-lieu of housing), assurances that development cost charges will kick in after five years or 575 units

are built, a guarantee the golf course will be built and a guarantee that the \$8 million contribution towards sewer facilities is not merely a loan.

The packed building was a sea of more than 100 citizens wearing their opinions on their shirts — those sporting a "Yes - Silverback" tag appeared to slightly outnumber those wearing a "Sechelt is Not 4 Sale" tag. Mayor Cam Reid said public opinion had led him to invoke Section 131 of the Community Charter, bringing the OCP bylaw back to the table within 30 days of its defeat on April 2.

"By bringing this back for consideration, I'm offering council the opportunity to clarify their decision," said Reid when kicking off the two-hour discussion over the motions. He explained the housing contribution would be collected as \$1.2 million prior to issuance of the development's first building permit, followed by \$1 million in each of the two subsequent years. Before council passed the recommendation, developer Gabriel Khoury stepped forward from the crowd

to offer his thoughts.

"This will be a [total] donation of \$11.2 million ... we will abide with whatever decision council passes," said the developer, who was making his first appearance before council in 15 months. Responding to questions about process, administrator Bill Brown said council is "within its right to take additional items with the consent of the developer," except for increases to density or relaxation of building setbacks.

The fact the news came as a surprise to some councillors illustrated the obvious divisions council has formed around the Silverback issue.

"This is a strange new addition to this process that I would have welcomed five weeks ago," said Coun. Darren Inkster. "I'm more comfortable with this project now, but why are we negotiating at the tip of the spear? Why didn't we talk about this already?"

"You didn't ask," responded Reid, drawing murmurs from the crowd.

"It sounds like we need to take this back and have a look at the

entire servicing agreement that could incorporate these components," said Thirkell, noting a cash in-lieu contribution for affordable housing should be 10 per cent, or \$32,900,000, according to the District's policy. His motion to have the policy apply to Silverback was voted down.

Throughout the night Allan drew both raucous applause from the 'no' crowd and vocal jeers from the 'yes' crowd by speculating on secret meetings held by some councillors over the past month.

"I'm not buying this last minute song and dance — our builders have enough work to last another seven to 10 years," he said, before verbally sparring with Coun. Ed Steeves over the intent of a letter from the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) asking council to postpone adoption of the bylaws. Council eventually passed a resolution to have the SCRDC confirm their water transmission, treatment and supply plans within 90 days.

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Coun. Mike Shanks, who had voted against the bylaw on April 2, appeared focused on detailed clarification of fine print within the servicing agreement throughout the discussion. He also drew ire from Thirkell for insinuating the councillor had made "three or four" manipulative demands of the developer, allegations Thirkell angrily denied.

"To enlighten councillors Allan, Inkster and Thirkell — what's happened in the last two weeks? Somewhat of a reality check has happened," Shanks said, noting residents on the sewer system could face fees as high as \$690 each year should council fail to adopt Silverback. Reid said the project will mean \$5 million in tax benefits to the District each year.

Council also passed the rezoning bylaw by a 6-1 vote, with Thirkell oppos-



GREG AMOS PHOTO

Art Phillips, project consultant (left) and Silverback developer Gabriel Khoury were on hand to witness council's decision.

ing and Allan abstaining. After the adoptions, *Coast Reporter* got a reaction from Khoury, the Calgary-based developer.

"I'm glad it's approved — I expected this to happen last May," he said, before affirming that the Fred Couples-designed golf course will "definitely go ahead — it's the piece de resistance," he said. He

expects a three to five year build-out for the "mixed use main street village" section on the waterfront north of Porpoise Bay Provincial Park and three years to build and mature the golf course.

"To start on the subdivision, we must have the golf course completed," he said. Khoury added Sechelt's building community was a catalyst in bringing the project back for a second final vote.

"We met directly with the builder's association two weeks ago — they're supporting us because we're supporting them," he said.

No formal agreement is in place to use local labour and supplies, but Khoury said he'll use local builders before looking off-Coast for workers.