

Youbou quiet after kart track decision

Vote-swapping controversy leads to board chair Mary Marcotte's second look at the issue

By CHRISTINA MARTENS
CITIZEN STAFF

The Capital City Kart Club's engines have been stalled after the Cowichan Valley Regional District board upheld its decision not to allow go-kart racing to continue in Youbou.

Last month, the nine Area Directors rejected the Capital City Kart Club's application for a temporary commercial use permit, effectively ending racing at the site. The six municipal directors were not permitted to vote on the land use issue.

Because of the controversy surrounding the decision, it's impact on the whole region and the fact the board's integrity was called into question after rumors of "vote-swapping" began circulating, the four mayors who sit on the board and five other area directors asked Board Chair Mary Marcotte to exercise her prerogative to revisit the motion.

Under Section 219 of the Local Government Act, the Chair is allowed to bring a resolution back to the floor for reconsideration but must do so by the next meeting.

Marcotte recently used that power to bring back a resolution regarding Arbutus Ridge. Prior to that, the Section had not been put to use since 1991.

"I've been harshly criticized for my decision," said Marcotte, who is also the Area Director for North Oyster.

Marcotte said her integrity was called into question because of her decision to deny the application and that she would not be reelected as board chair if she ran for the position in December because of it. "My palms have not been greased nor

am I voting in favour of a director."

Marcotte voted to deny the request, she said, because she doesn't believe the former TimberWest mill site is a suitable place for go-kart racing.

"I'm not against go-karts. I'm just in favour of putting go-karts in a suitable place," she said.

Cobble Hill Director John Middleton was incensed by the fact someone insinuated he told Youbou/Meade Creek Director Brooke Hodson that he would vote in line with Hodson if Hodson supported his motion to deny the Arbutus Ridge rezoning application when it came to a vote.

Middleton also accused go-kart club members of lying when they said he told them he would support their effort.

"I will not be bludgeoned by lies into a position," he said.

Quoting several letters from the Island Karting Forum website — a site that is not associated with the Capital City Kart Club — which ridiculed the directors and the board Middleton said he would not "condone that sort of behaviour."

Middleton added that he was one of only a handful of directors to attend a public meeting in Youbou earlier this year and clearly heard the residents oppose the application.

"If we can't look after the local people we aren't looking after the region," he said.

Mill Bay/ Malahat Director Mike Walker said he wouldn't support a two-year application for similar reasons.

"There was no support from the APC (Advisory Planning Commission) and no support from the residents," said Walker.

Shawnigan Lake Direc-

tor Rick Spencer, however, said it is up to the board to support activities for youth, even if they are noisy.

"Youth development is a noisy prospect," he said.

Spencer said his constituents regularly complain about jet skis, water skis and soccer.

"We have a requirement to provide our youth with opportunities but it seems we are willing to support you as long as it's quiet," he said.

Saltair/ Gulf Islands Director Rene Beaudin echoed those sentiments and suggested the youths involved in the club be allowed to race until the end of the season.

"These young people are our future. They'll be sitting in these chairs some day," he said.

Cowichan Lake South/ Skutz Falls Director Joe Allan said the directors need to set aside their emotions and personalities and vote on the application based on land use.

"It's unfortunate it's gotten tense," he said. "This should be based on land use not personalities."

The application is to allow go-karts to use the property, which is zoned Industrial, said Allan. "I thought it was a good use on that land."

Allan hinted now that the property is not being used a log chipper could go in.

The real problem, said Allan, is that there are no facilities for motor sports.

Cowichan Station/ Sahtlam/ Glenora Director Loren Duncan agreed.

"This board is dysfunctional. We failed to get a rec park together. I'm seeing fingers wag on this when hands weren't raised on the rec park."

decision to support the residents and the APC.

"The people of Youbou are tired of getting attacked," he said. "I find the abusive verbal attacks by some members of this board deplorable."

In the final vote, Beaudin, Allan, Spencer and Cowichan Bay Director Mike Tansley were outvoted and the motion not to approve the application passed.

Club vice-president Roger Walker said he was prepared for the directors' decision but was shocked by the criticism targeted at the club.

"I was very disappointed with how we were attacked," he said. "It became a personal issue."

The board's decision has shut down the club for this year and may do more long-term damage. "It's going to devastate our club and may splinter our club," he said.

Walker was also disappointed with the actions of one of the club's supporters at the meeting.

Following the vote, Ted Stevens, looked at Hodson and said, "This isn't over yet, Brooke."

Stevens was a major supporter of the moto-cross club which was forced to fold several years ago when they were denied a place to race.

"I was very unhappy he made that comment. I would rather walk away with dignity," said Walker.

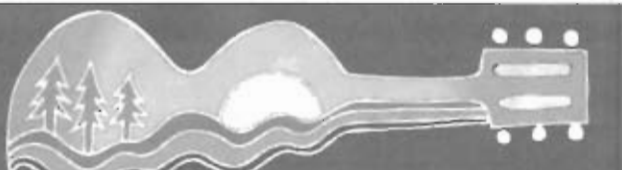
Although disappointed that this year's season is over before it started, Walker said the club isn't giving up hope.

"We have been actively looking for a piece of property from Mill Bay to Nanaimo," he said.

The club has had several offers of leased lands and is also looking at putting a track on First Nations land because reserve land doesn't require rezoning.

"There's lots of potential. We're not giving up," he said.

With no new information Hodson stands by his



CANADA DAY!