

District could kill Bamberton project

Three months to address concerns, or scrub controversial development

By Carla Wilson, Times Colonist January 29, 2011

The future of the \$1.5-billion Bamberton mixed-use development is uncertain now that regional district staff are saying one option is to deny the proposal.

"The application appears to be at a cross road where a decision is needed as to whether or not the application should proceed," said a Cowichan Valley Regional District staff report.

It outlines two options for Three Point Properties' bid to develop 630 hectares on the Saanich Inlet on the north side of the Malahat. One recommendation is to deny the application, and the other option is to give the Victoria developer up to three months to bring in a proposal showing how it would provide more detailed information and address several issues.

Three Point wants to build a 3,200-residential unit development over 25 years, creating a community of 7,200 people with parks and trails. Commercial and industrial uses would also be part of the project to transform the former cement plant.

On Monday, the CVRD's electoral area services committee will consider the report. While the Bamberton concept is attractive, it has shifted away from a mixed-use waterfront village to a more conventional development along the TransCanada Highway, the report said.

Concerns include the need for updated assessment reports, interim commercial and industrial use on the waterfront seems contradictory to the long-term vision for the site, and commitments for amenities to service development are limited and conditional, potentially resulting in a future community that is underserved, the report said.

The applicant's desire for flexibility in zoning and other matters conflicts with the CVRD committees' desire for certainty, the report said.

Ross Tennant, president and partner in Three Point Properties, is hoping committee members will give him more time.

"We are in the process of trying to find out where those areas of consensus are and then formulating a plan that we can present at the meeting on Monday, which would be to say, 'Let's move forward on those areas where there is concurrence and let's identify those areas where there are gaps and let's work together to try and resolve those.'"

General agreement exists on some of the commercial and industrial aspects of the proposal, which would generate jobs, while there's disagreement within the residential plan, he said. The property is now has industrial and forestry zoning. If the rezoning is denied, Tennant is not keen to pursue those uses. Three Point has spent \$25 million taking down the old cement plant and remediating the site, he said.

