

A Social Community, A New Community Centre

By Pieter Dorsman

We are a 'social' community. That above all has been the recurring theme this past year when we consider what the various community centre consultations have told us. Our seniors – or seasoned – citizens want a place to gather, others want to get together to watch a hockey game, another group of residents wants to see our library as more than just a place to grab a book and check it out and the historical society wants to share with all of us our village's rich past. In the absence of a village pub and given that the beach is only operational for a few months per year, Lions Bay residents feel strongly that they want to be together under one roof to create art, perform, exercise, learn or just have a coffee and chat.

On November 13 the Community Centre Taskforce completed its community consultation sessions, which consisted initially of preliminary hearings that resulted in the PERC Report in June and which will give us a report from CEI Architecture just before the holidays will get underway. The latter will not only summarize what the new facilities could possibly look like based on community feedback, but also what it will require in dollar terms to realize the community's vision. This has not been a light undertaking and the taskforce has gone a long way to ensure that residents were heard, consulted with and above all that the creative process it generated was condensed in a few workable programs and plans for a new facility.

The feedback we got throughout the year did not only come through the meetings moderated by PERC in the first half of the year and CEI in November. The taskforce met with and received detailed feedback from many user groups and I personally was approached many times with ideas, thoughts and viewpoints from residents. All of this feedback made its way into the two basic plans that will be formally presented in the CEI report. The first option is to have a new community centre housing an enlarged hall, village office, library, kitchen and three multi-purpose rooms all wrapped into one building with open spaces and a patio. The second option is more or less the same with a smaller hall but here an enlarged gym at the school site will give the village the right to use the school site for sporting and major village functions. A sub-option looks to the future by exploring what is in option two by adding day and child care space at the school site.

Let me again emphasize that nothing is cast in stone and no decisions have been made. We have been through the consultation phase and there is a consensus on the basic parameters of the project. We as a committee need to digest this, consult with potential funders and assess relevant grant opportunities upon which we can make a recommendation to council sometime early next year. Only then will we know if and how we can move forward, what the facility will look like and how it will be financed.

One of the things that we have tried to communicate throughout this process is that we could not answer all the questions that came up and all the concerns that were rightfully put forward by community members. Only by embarking on the journey would we be able to find these answers and find possible solutions to questions ranging from a practical issue like parking to the more complex nature of financing. We have traveled a fair bit and have learned a lot, not just about a new community centre but also about the deeply social and caring character of our community.

The taskforce wants to thank everyone in the village who has spend time on this important effort over the past year and I want to thank Brenda Broughton, Marek Sredzki, Lori Atherton, David Shore, Edward Langford, Ruth Simons and Eric Gerlach for their commitment: the long hours, ideas, open communication and above all their willingness to interrupt work and family life to put this all together. At the same time we could not have done this without the continued support of the village staff and the expertise of Kevin Pike of PERC and Richard Bolus and Mark Hentze of CEI Architecture.

We will continue our journey in the New Year and hope to take the next steps in realizing the vision of a new community centre for Lions Bay.

Community Centre Mission Statement

"Lions Bay Community Centre is the hub of Village activity and community life, and the source for our administrative, recreational and cultural needs. Designed as a signature building or set of buildings that will comprise a multi-purpose hall joined with meeting, program, childcare, educational and office spaces that will fulfill the aspirations of all residents."

"The Centre encourages our volunteer tradition, challenges our minds, inspires our artists, nurtures our children, attracts all generations and creates an effective atmosphere for the operation of our Village government. It is where we gather, collaborate, and celebrate the goals and values of this life we share in Lions Bay."

More Information

For those interested the original community centre questionnaire, the PERC report and CEI report (which upon completion will be available shortly) can be found on the village website dedicated community centre page here:

http://www.lionsbay.ca/community_centre.html