

VOICE NEW WESTMINSTER
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MAYOR'S FORESHORE PARK PLAN SPARKS CONCERNS

New Westminster, B.C. - *Voice New Westminster* has learned through a variety of sources that the City of New Westminster has been negotiating to purchase the Westminster Pier property located between Sixth Street and Elliott Street on the New Westminster waterfront. Sources say the city intends to use the property for a foreshore park and a destination for pocket cruise ships.

Voice New Westminster Mayoralty candidate, **Blair Armitage**, says *Voice* fully supports the creation of a properly planned foreshore park on New Westminster's waterfront but adds that he and many others in the community are greatly concerned to hear that negotiations for the sale of the Westminster Pier property are nearing the completion stage without any public consultation or planning.

"This purchase deal looks like it's been put together quickly to meet the deadline of a looming election," says Armitage. "It looks like the mayor is trying to conjure up an election goody to dangle before the voters without any regard for logical planning, just like he did with the Plaza 88 development prior to the last election."

Armitage says the mayor's hype about the Plaza 88 development and how it would save the downtown has proven to be without substance and any fresh pre-election hype about a foreshore park should be viewed with caution as it could be equally devoid of substance. There is also a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the replacement of the Pattullo Bridge which could easily impact on any plan for a foreshore park.

"The recent Delcan report on the replacement of the Pattullo Bridge states that a location for a new Pattullo Bridge must be identified, and the Westminster Pier property could easily be impacted by that," says Armitage. "It's highly inappropriate for the mayor to be proceeding with a property purchase and offering up the promise of a new foreshore park at election time when the property could ultimately be expropriated for the new bridge - where's the planning and the respect for the input of citizens?"

Armitage points to the recent planning charrette for the downtown and waterfront which supposedly sought input from the public on creating "a fun, vibrant and unique Downtown." Armitage says a number of citizens participated in good faith in this

planning charrette including *Voice New Westminster* council candidates **Steve McClurg** and **Susan Wandell**.

"The mayor has blindsided the staff and citizens who participated in the downtown planning charrette," says Armitage, "These people believed they were providing input into future decisions affecting the downtown and waterfront, but they were really working under the mere pretence of public consultation and the planning charrette was more of a planning charade."

Armitage says the mayor has a cavalier attitude toward logical planning, as exemplified by the hasty pending purchase of the Westminster Pier property, and shows complete disregard for public consultation. Offering some further examples, Armitage cites the controversy surrounding the sale of the Windsor Hotel property (and the lawsuit currently pending against the city by the hotel's previous owner) and the expropriation notice that was served on the property adjacent to Plaza 88 for an Arts/Community facility that was decided upon without any public consultation.

"The mayor has been taking it upon himself to unilaterally decide how things will be in New Westminster," Armitage says. "There is no consultation, there is no transparency, and that has to change if we're going to move forward in this city in a sustainable, planned way that produces real results."

With respect to the purchase of the Westminster Pier property, *Voice New Westminster* recommends that the following steps should be taken:

1. That the City of New Westminster should acquire an option to buy the Westminster Pier parcel of land with the stated intention that it plans to use the property for a foreshore park and a pocket cruise ship destination.
2. That after an option to buy has been acquired, the city should engage in a transparent and comprehensive public consultation process regarding the proposed use of the property.
3. That all owners and occupants of properties in the vicinity of the proposed foreshore park should be notified in writing of the proposed consultation process.
4. That all necessary amendments to the Official Community Plan (OCP) and all necessary zoning issues be dealt with completely prior to the city exercising its option to buy the Westminster Pier property.
5. That the intentions of TransLink with respect to the construction of a new Pattullo Bridge be determined prior to the completion of a purchase of the property.

Voice New Westminster was formed twenty-one months ago to support a broadly-based, non-partisan slate of candidates for mayor, council and school board.

Voice New Westminster is comprised of residents from all parts of the city sharing a common vision for a reinvigorated and sustainable New Westminster.

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Attachments & Online References

- www.VoiceNewWestminster.org