

Development will help Highlands

Voters made their choice about Bear Mountain in the last election

BY MARK CARDINAL

Vicki Husband's reference to the "speeding" Bear Mountain Highlands development ("Bear Mountain: Enough is enough," May 3) is misleading. Bear Mountain's Highlands plans, or that of its predecessor, have been under discussion with the Highlands since 1992 and progress has been slow.

Husband's reference to "high-density dwellings" is also misleading. The proposed plan is light in density and fully respects nature. It is less than one-tenth the density of the adjacent Bear Mountain project in Langford.

Nor does it threaten to undermine the way of life of Highlands residents. The project has such minimal impact that most Highlands residents probably don't realize it has been under construction for the past year.

In 2003, Bear Mountain offered to construct a hotel in the Highlands, but could not obtain timely support from

the council of the day. Our former mayor has constantly opposed Bear Mountain zoning and access to required regional services.

On the other hand, opponents complain that Bear Mountain has not built a hotel or commercial development in the Highlands to generate a commercial tax base to take the pressure off residential taxes.

A hotel and commercial buildings require adequate services. How can one call for commercial construction to boost taxes, yet oppose both the zoning and servicing?

The predecessor landowner gave the Highlands the property for a municipal office and other property that the Highlands was able to sell for regional parkland to generate cash used for the construction of its municipal office. This was partially in exchange for support for what is now essentially the Bear Mountain plan.

Opponents were quick to accept the gifts, then turn around with ade-

quate notice to the public and oppose Bear Mountain's position on the urban containment boundary at the Capital Regional District.

Without Bear Mountain, the Highlands financial position is questionable. The Highlands needs the commercial growth for its financial security and the best location for that growth is on its southern boundary where it least impacts the remainder of the community.

Highlands residents are paying what might be the highest property taxes in the region when compared to the level of services provided. The community has two outdated firehalls, a marginal municipal office, no community hall and financial reserves that are insufficient by municipal standards. The community cannot implement a number of parks and trails initiatives due to lack of funds and Highlands roads are deteriorating.

On the other hand, with approval of Bear Mountain's zoning, the commu-



Peter Daniel and his dog Reilly enjoy the view from Gowlland Tod Provincial Park in the Highlands. Mayor Mark Cardinal says the Bear Mountain development is appropriate in its present location and will benefit the municipality.

Debra Brash/Times Colonist

nity has recently been able to make a significant contribution to its fiscal reserves.

Highlands council is operating in a fiscally responsible manner in accordance with a plan that safeguards the natural and green environment of the vast majority of Highlands. Bear Mountain is not only about financial decisions, it is about locating High-

lands growth where it is most appropriate.

When Husband says enough is enough, she is correct. This issue was debated in the last municipal election. Husband should respect that democratic process.

Mark Cardinal is the mayor of Highlands.

LETTERS HYBRIDS

Free needles don't create addicts

Re: "Needle exchange adds to problems," letter, May 7.

I suspect that the writer has never known someone with a drug addiction.

Nobody wants to be an injection drug user. Free, clean needles therefore cannot be described as an incentive. The allegation that free, clean needles will lead to an "increasing population of injection drug-users" is simply ridiculous. Would anyone jump off a cliff if you were offered free snacks at the bottom?

We are not speaking of a part of society that we can just ignore, or shake our collective fingers at. The problem is also much more than policy-makers alone can deal with.

We need a population that is not afraid to consider that a black-and-white approach drug addiction will not suffice.

Chris Fretwell,
North Saanich.

U.S. rescue helicopter a welcome sound

Re: "Rescues without borders," May 5.

I can speak wholeheartedly to the relief of hearing a U.S. navy Seahawk helicopter overhead on April 29 in the Sooke Hills, when my hiking buddy broke her hip.

I'm now especially aware of the level of co-ordination it requires to bring about such a rescue.

In this case, the RCMP, the Rescue Co-ordination Centre of Victoria, the Provincial Emergency Program, the Juan de Fuca Ground Search and Rescue, the U.S. navy, the B.C. Ambulance Service and mutual aid search and rescue groups from Metchosis and Victoria, the Canadian Coast Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard in Port Angeles all rallied to avoid what would have been a very bad night in the bush for my friend.

In our society, and with such neighbours, where if disaster strikes, all is not lost.

Liz Williams,
Victoria.

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

► Mail: Letters to the Editor, Times Colonist, Box 300, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2N4

► Fax: 250-380-5353

► E-mail: letters@tc.canwest.com

Letters should be no longer than 250 words and may be edited for length. Include your name, address and telephone number. We won't publish anonymous letters.

Copyright in letters and other materials accepted for publication remains with the author, but the publisher and its licensees may freely reproduce them in print, electronic and other forms.



A letter-writer points out that much green technology comes at an environmental cost.

Times Colonist staff

Hurdles ahead for green cars

Re: "Wish I had a green car," May 6.

While the improvement in gas mileage plus the reduction in emissions are both admirable goals, the environmental movement is setting itself up for failure because of inherent conflicts between their idealism and the world of reality.

Each hybrid engine requires about 50 pounds of nickel, plus 30 to 80 pounds of what are known as rare earth minerals.

If hybrid vehicles are going to be produced in the tens of millions, where are these metals to come from? The environmental movement is anti-mining. Yet vir-

tually all current nickel consumption is used in the process of stainless steel and alloy applications. New demands for hybrids will have to be met by new production.

In addition, virtually all rare earth metals come from China and its domestic demands are increasing so rapidly that almost no additional supply will be available for North American markets — unless new supply is created by increased mining activity in Canada plus the U.S. and Mexico.

The application of new technologies would also require, as the article put it,

being able to "bypass the gas station in favour of recharging their vehicles overnight from a standard household outlet."

When thousands — or millions — of those plugs are inserted into outlets, nothing will take place if there is not sufficient electric power. Yet, the environmental movement hates nuclear power and new hydroelectric dams and power plants and refuses to permit offshore drilling. Where is all this new power to come from?

Leonard M. Melman,
Nanose Bay.

That curious pause is called 'thought'

Re: "Baird out of step on the need for emission charges," May 8.

David Reevy quotes Environment Minister John Baird's reflections on a conversation with climate scientists as follows: "They paused for a long time, because they're scientists, you know, they're not in a policy role."

It's likely that during that pause the scientists were engaged in a process called "thought," with which Baird is apparently unfamiliar. Scientists use this process to help ensure that their statements are consistent with the observed facts and directed toward the most useful outcomes.

If Baird were to use this approach in

a policy role, we might be a little more optimistic about our future circumstances. Dave Macmurchie,
Shawnigan Lake.

Men's group needs funding aid too

There is a lack of funding for men's programs on Vancouver Island in general and the Nanaimo Men's Resource Centre in particular (www.nanaimomen.com).

Last fiscal year the provincial Ministry of Community Services provided \$49.2 million to women's organizations and nothing to men's organizations.

I think that more attention and funding should be focused on the needs of men, and the Nanaimo resource centre, to help reach this under-served group.

The funding for the valuable programs offered by women's organizations needs to be balanced by resources directed toward the often unspoken needs of men. Jim Richardson,
Victoria.

Why not a rebate for motorcycles too?

I support the idea of rebates for fuel-efficient cars, but why not extend this idea to other fuel-efficient modes of transport?

I drive a motorcycle with a small displacement engine all year.

I fill up my tank for \$9 and that lasts me two weeks.

Where is my rebate?

Hailey Finnigan,
Victoria.

Governments make strides with service

I would like to applaud what I see to be a change in attitude in all levels of our government toward becoming more helpful and service-oriented.

Based on long experience I have entered government offices expecting long waits, disgruntled employees, confused and confusing procedures and otherwise poor service.

But to my delight this has recently not been the case.

In getting my driver's licence renewed and my two sons getting their driver's licences the experience at the ICBC office has been unfailingly friendly and efficient.

In a recent hearing at Victoria City Hall regarding a building permit, while the decision did not go the way I hoped, the staff and elected officials were always helpful, pleasant and professional.

We have just moved to Saanich and thought we had low water pressure. We phoned and within two hours had a crew at the house checking the issue and discussing it with us.

Finally, I had some garden waste to bring to the Saanich municipal yard and phoned to check the hours. I was told that during the spring it was open until 8 p.m.

These are just a few examples of what I perceive to be a new attitude in government to be more "customer-focused."

I would like to congratulate the elected officials and managers who decided to make the changes and the staff who made it work. If this is a new face of government, then I like it.

Paul Welle,
Victoria.

Delays in treatment don't save money

There is a statement in the lead editorial of May 3 that is so un-Canadian: "It costs the same to complete ballistics tests on a gun whether they are done promptly or delayed for months."

This flies in the face of all our beliefs. We all know that putting something off a long time makes it cost less.

It is most apparent in the medical services area. We know that one can't get a hip replacement now because the health system can't afford it.

Of course, if the patient is made to suffer for a year or two, then the hip replacement will be affordable.

Maybe we could apply this same system to affordable housing. A young couple can't afford a house? No problem. Let them live on the streets under a bridge for a couple of years and a house will then be affordable.

John Freeman,
Parksville.

EUROPE YOUR WAY

BEST OF BUDAPEST

Budapest possesses a rich and fascinating history as well as a vibrant culture.

Includes: 4 nights 3-star hotel, breakfast daily, roundtrip transfers, Budapest Card (entrance to museums & use of public transportation) and a Folklore evening with dinner & wine.

4 nights
vacation from
\$455 CDN

GOLDEN PRAGUE

Considered one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.

Includes: 3 nights 3-star hotel, breakfast daily, roundtrip transfers, 1/2 day guided walking tour of Prague, full day tour to Karlovy Vary spa town & 2 tickets to the Opera.

3 nights
vacation from
\$595 CDN

BCAA
TRAVEL
GUARANTEE

IF YOUR VACATION'S
NOT RIGHT,
WE'LL FIX IT

Call 310-8286 for your local office
Click bcaa.com/travel

Visit • Victoria (NEW LOCATION): 1262 Quadra Street (free parking at the back)

• Millstream (NEW - NOW OPEN): Millstream Shopping Centre

• Broadmead Shopping Centre • Nanaimo: 6581 Aulds Road • Courtenay: 1599 Cliffe Avenue