



## **600 RESIDENTIAL UNITS PLANNED FOR WILLOW BEACH**

OSOYOOS TIMES-June 22, 2011

By Karissa Gall - Osoyoos Times

“Here we go again.”

At Osoyoos council’s June 21 regular meeting, Mayor Stu Wells addressed, with a note of condemnation, a request to expand the Northwest Sector Sewer Project to service 600 additional units at Willow Beach.

The request came from Tim Ankenman of Ankenman Marchand Architects – the firm involved in the Willow Beach Development – and called for council’s permission for his company to hire TRUE Consulting, the firm that provides engineering and planning consulting services to the Town.

Ankenman wrote that he wished to hire TRUE Consulting to determine the cost of upsizing and replacing a pipe currently planned for the Town’s Northwest Sewer Project.

If the upsizing of the pipe were to take place, the capacity of the sewer line would be increased and would be able to accommodate an additional 600 units proposed for the Willow Beach property at the head of Osoyoos Lake by the company that took ownership of the property two years ago, Sprott Resource Lending Corp.

The property’s previous owners, Georgia Laine Developments Ltd., had purchased the property in June of 2007 for \$23 million and intended to build a 1,088-unit resort on the property.

In April of 2008, the president of Georgia Laine Developments, Robert Wilson, signed an agreement with the Town to [contribute \\$950,000 to the Northwest Sewage Project](#) if the Town would extend its sewage system to service the resort.

However, Georgia Laine Developments’ resort project was [abandoned due to poor economic conditions](#) after an application for Official Community Plan (OCP) and zoning amendments from the developer to the Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) for the purpose of building the development received third reading in August, 2008.

The property was [listed as for sale in April, 2010](#), but a Vancouver-based real estate company told the Osoyoos Times that the land was recently taken off the market.

The RDOS board of directors rescinded third reading of the original OCP and zoning amendments for the proposed 1,088-unit project on June 16, 2011.

When the property was listed as for sale last year, Barry Romanko, the Town’s chief administrative officer, said any sale of the property would not affect the sewer project because the developer’s financial contribution to the project had already been received by the Town.

As it stands, the Willow Beach Development will be serviced as an extension to the Northwest Sewer Project – but only for the roughly 40 existing residential units occupied by mobile and manufactured homes on the property. Further high volume development would have to be serviced through the development of a second sewer line and lagoon system.

“I am actually appalled that we got this letter,” said Coun. Michael Ryan after Wells introduced a report which included Ankenman’s request.

“This would contribute to sprawl outside our borders. We’ve just completed a regional growth strategy plan that is in direct opposition to this request.

"We have repeatedly decided that we are concerned about the health of the lake and we have very, very carefully doled out the connections for this line and it's preposterous to even ask us to do this."

Following Ryan's comments Wells weighed in once again, saying that the Town can't afford to give away any more of the capacity of the current sewage lagoon system.

"We're full tilt," he said. "I would be dead against those 600 units going into that lagoon."

At the same time, he expressed concern that when the Town does not provide sewage system service to the development, the units will be "plugging it into Osoyoos Lake or the Okanagan River channel."

"We have the right motion here to deny this, but it doesn't mean the problem is going away," said Wells. "If those folks want to do 600 units and the regional district is still passing treated outfall into water bodies... I think we're in a real tough situation here."

Wells said the best solution would be if the developers built a second sewage system by the Osoyoos Landfill, as per the initial plans for the sewer project when Georgia Laine Developments planned to build a 1,088-unit resort.

"That was going to work," he said. "That's where they've got to go. Get the stuff out of the lake and get up there into system No. 2, which would really help tying into Osoyoos and future growth."

Ryan agreed that the initial plan for the sewer project was best and that council should "use every, every opportunity we have and all the leverage we can muster with the (Okanagan Basin) Water Board and with the regional district to emphasize that these things must be done properly."

In the end, council decided to turn down Ankenman's request saying the Town is not interested in changing the sewer project to accommodate additional capacity for the proposed development at Willow Beach.

Town staff had also indicated in a report that allowing Ankenman's company to hire TRUE Consulting could also be a conflict of interest since TRUE is the Town's engineering consultant firm.

Ankenman told the Times that the 600 units that will be built at Willow Beach are to be residential in nature and a mix of mobile homes, condominiums, single family residences, beachside residences and public amenities.

Out of the 600 units, 350 are to be either mobile homes or RVs so as to put less of a strain on the sewage system.

He said his company has submitted an application to the regional district for the necessary rezoning and OCP amendments.

Donna Butler, the RDOS's development services manager, confirmed that her department has received some information from Ankenman and said the department is waiting on Ankenman as he actively works to provide outstanding information to complete the application file.

She estimated that once the application file is complete, the process, which includes a public meeting, could take several months or could possibly continue into next year.

When asked what the implications for the project would be if the Town is not interested in changing the current sewer project to accommodate the expanded development, Ankenman said that "the Town doesn't really dictate the land use, we just wanted to know if the Town would agree to cooperate with us in serving (the units).

"If they don't we'll be looking at other private systems. There's a lot of technology out there."

*reporter@osoyoostimes.com*