

More input needed on city's mobile park policy

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Port Alberni council members have voted to consult with mobile home park owners prior to approving a new policy for any future redevelopment.

The policy has not had a smooth passage since council directed city staff to draft a set of options to determine how developers may proceed with subdividing or changing the usage of existing mobile home parks.

One key element is the issue of compensation for tenants, many of whom are unable to relocate their homes.

The issue arose when the owners of the former Falls Road park applied to redevelop the site into a high-end condominium complex. Under existing provincial legislation, mobile home park owners are required only to provide tenants with the equivalent of one year's pad rental.

Many long-term residents on the site discovered they were unable to relocate their units, due to age or modification, and have now been displaced, effectively losing the investment in their homes.

On Monday evening, councillors were given three options to consider. Option A contains no specific proposal for additional tenant compensation.

Under option B, the park owner would be required to compensate tenant/owners whose homes cannot be moved, to the value assessed by the B.C. Assessment Authority. Under option C, only tenant/owners who actually use the home as a principal residence would receive compensation.

The matter came in for some heated debate, with councillors defeating a motion to approve option B.

After subsequently defeating a motion to approve option A, as recommended by city staff, council resolved to consult further with mobile home park owners prior to approving any policy.

Speaking to the Times on Tuesday, Coun. Ike Patterson said redevelopment of mobile home parks has become a hot-button issue in the province, pitting landowners against tenants, some of whom have lived in the parks for many years.

"It's a very touchy situation. You have people who have property. Do they have the right to develop it?" Patterson asked. "We definitely need to get input from the mobile home owners."

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