

**Council considers mobile home policy**

Proposal would offer trailer-park dwellers more protection in the face of future redevelopments

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Port Alberni city council members have been asked to consider a draft policy to guide the future redevelopment of any mobile home park.

City staff were directed to prepare a report in response to the controversial redevelopment of the former Falls Street Mobile Home Park.

Residents at the park were evicted on Sept. 1 and many encountered extreme difficulties finding a place to relocate, or were forced to leave their homes behind.

Council had the option of approving one of two options at last night's regular meeting. City planner Scott Smith said the policy, however it develops, cannot be imposed retroactively.

"This is a council policy, not a bylaw. There's a big difference," Smith said. "This would guide council, the public and redevelopers through the approval and public hearing process."

Smith noted that the province already has the Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act in place. The proposed policy guidelines would give council a few extra options, he said.

The first option contains four clauses setting out the responsibility of the applicant to provide residents with a letter of intent prior to the application going before the advisory planning commission, to give first right of refusal on any of the new homes and to provide tenants with comprehensive information on their options for relocating.

The second option contains two extra clauses, including a comprehensive tenant compensation package based on assessed value of their homes, plus a requirement for the redeveloper to maintain 15% of the existing homes.

"Council has the option to consider either, or a combination of both," Smith

said.

Former Falls Road resident Debbie Molloy calls the draft options "pretty drafty."

"I realize it's too late for us, but I also realize that other people could have to go through what we went through," she said.

Molloy believes the problem with mobile home parks is systemic.

"There's no incentive for a current park owner to improve their infrastructure, nothing from the cities or the province," Molloy said. "At this stage, with all the parks dating back to the same decade, their infrastructure is deteriorating."

Molloy said that while a municipality has a responsibility to enforce standards for electrical and underground infrastructure in apartment buildings, for example, there is little or no enforcement on mobile home parks. That makes them easy targets for redevelopment, she said.

"If the owner is only keeping it as a holding property, waiting for the value to go up, they can wait for the park to deteriorate and then make their grand entrance with redevelopment plans," Molloy said. "It's happening all across the country."

Smith said that, at the moment, there are no further applications in the works for redeveloping mobile home parks. There are currently five existing mobile home parks within city limits, for a total of 164 units.

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