

Mobile home owners win a battle, but not the war

By Jason Luciw - Kelowna Capital News

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Some manufactured home owners have scored a minor victory in their lengthy battle against a company that is seeking to devalue their units before it redevelops the trailer park.

The residents of Green Bay Mobile Home Park showed up at a B.C. Assessment review panel hearing on Wednesday, ready to challenge Green Bay Landing Inc. and owner Ted Wenner, who had requested B.C. assessment lower assessed values in the mobile home park.

Wenner submitted a brief written statement to the panel but the letter did not offer any reasons for his request. Wenner was neither present at the hearing nor did he send anyone to speak on his behalf.

Residents were more than ready to state their cases, however. All 20 of them in attendance at the hearing wanted assessments to reflect the true market values of their homes, based on what units have been selling for at similar manufactured home parks on the west side.

The residents said mere mention of redevelopment has deflated their home prices.

That “cloud” hangs over the park, they said, preventing them from selling their units for a fair price.

At greater stake though is how little they could stand to be compensated if Wenner eventually follows through with redevelopment plans and evicts the tenants from his land, leaving them no place to relocate their units.

Last year, Keith Funk of New Town Planning services, acting as Wenner’s agent, said his client eventually hoped to put “modern manufactured homes” on the site.

Wenner currently has no development application before West Kelowna council. Although residents argue Wenner could file a redevelopment application at any time.

West Kelowna council has a policy, based on provincial tenancy laws, which says Wenner must pay his tenants assessed value for their homes as compensation, should he evict them to subdivide or redevelop the land.

A passionate Sheila Walshe said her attempts to have her home properly assessed have been going on for years, and she's literally sick and tired from the process.

"It's a farce," said Walshe. "I'm not sleeping, I'm losing weight and I mean we're all suffering."

Home owner Joni McBurney provided the panel an example of the kind of devaluation going on at the mobile home park.

In 2008, her assessment dropped to \$39,700 from \$64,900 in 2007.

Yet the home located behind her, with fewer renovations, was reassessed at \$82,000 after the owner there challenged her assessment. McBurney said that her home should be assessed at \$85,000 to \$100,000.

And resident Jenny Mohr presented the panel with figures showing what homes at other parks, in similar condition to her own unit had sold for.

Mohr noted that mobile home values have increased dramatically in recent years because of the (once) hot real estate and the fact mobile homes remain one of the few affordable housing options in the valley.

The assessment review panel has asked deputy Okanagan region assessor Reuben Danakody to review 2007 and 2008 values for similar manufactured homes and report back to the panel so it can consider proper assessment values for the Green Bay units.

Danakody said his work should take about a week.

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