

**South Cowichan Parks Meeting  
May 31, 2010  
Cobbleccino's Café, Cobble Hill BC**

Present

Roger Burgess  
Gord Dickenson  
G. Gutensohn – Recorder  
John Krug  
Ian Sparshu – Chair  
Margaret Symons  
Kerrie Talbot  
Bill Turner  
Lynn Wilson

Meeting commenced 7:03 p.m.

Agenda: Cowichan Valley Regional District  
Rehabilitation of the Historic Mill Bay Church and Hall  
Feasibility Study April 22, 2010  
BRADLEY SHUYA ARCHITECT INC.

It was acknowledged that the report was very comprehensive and provided 2 options:

1. Rehabilitating the church and building a basement under it and demolish the hall. The church would be relocated on the lot to allow for a septic field and parking. The cost is estimated at \$660 thousand;
2. Rehabilitating the church and hall. The cost is estimated at \$328 thousand.

The report was discussed at length and the following points raised:

- While the report was very thorough it provided only 2 options and both seemed quite expensive;
- Does the cost justify the benefit to the community and should the community be consulted again? While there was strong community support to own and preserve the facility, the cost may be higher than what people anticipated;
- Could costs be reduced through volunteer labour and materials?
- Funding through a modest tax increase is a possibility but this should be set aside to look at other options;
- The problem with adding a basement to compensate for the space given up from the hall tear-down is that basements are best suited for storage. It would not be as useful as the hall space;
- Any raising and lowering of the church should take into account access for wheelchairs;
- It is important to preserve the historical character of the church: wood shingles, siding, interior floors and eave troughs, restored ceiling height, restored wainscoting etc. While it is important to preserve the period character it would be cost prohibitive to restore it to heritage status;
- Mechanical upgrades are very expensive so any heating/venting solutions should be as economical as possible;

- Having onsite parking would spoil the churchyard ambience. There is ample roadside parking;
- There is no community water hook-up nearby and well drilling would be expensive also; there may be contamination;
- The South Cowichan Parks budget figures need to be confirmed (\$75K/year and capped at \$140K? There may be a \$95K reserve that can be utilized) , but the both options exceed those budgets by a long ways and local historical societies have not the financial capacity to assume such costs;
- Despite funding challenges, there is substantial public support for and expectation that the church will be preserved in some fashion;
- This location is the historical centre of Mill Bay
- The hall has no historical value but does provide space for local groups to conduct activities. However it is not up to code and may be as much of a liability as it is an asset. The hall generates no user revenues. There is other community space available (Mill Bay Community League Hall) but they may already be fully booked;
- Removing the church and hall and developing a garden / greenspace would be an economical solution that would still preserve part of the heritage (the graveyard), and the public would still use. This solution has many advantages but may not meet public expectation to preserve the church.
- It comes down to a matter of priorities; given the expense the focus should be on highest public priority. The public is very much in favour of saving the church for current and future generations, so the challenge is how to do that and still be affordable;

The consensus reached from the above discussion was:

- Both options are cost-prohibitive and yet there is strong public sentiment to preserve the church. Any decision should focus on the highest priorities as follows:
  - Scope down the project by preserving the original church only, and remove the hall and library. This will mean dealing with costs related to the smaller original footprint (about 800 square feet);
  - A smaller project means more opportunity to utilize volunteers to keep costs down;
  - Focus first on items that will prevent further deterioration of the building – probably starting with the foundation;
  - Any restoration should preserve the historical character of the building, but not attempt to achieve heritage status;
  - Do not incorporate a parking area within the church yard;
  - Plan for the eventual development of the church yard into a park-like setting that incorporates the graveyard.

It was moved and seconded

1. That the project scope is limited to the rehabilitation of the church only, and that the church library and the hall be removed;
2. That any restorative work adhere to the heritage character of the church, using materials authentic to the age of the church to the extent practical;
3. That the first priority be to place the church on a concrete foundation;
4. That there be no parking lot established on the church grounds. The church grounds should be developed in the future into a park-like setting;

MOTION CARRIED

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.