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The Tri-City News

Coquitlam's Fraser Mills site to be used in construction of Port Mann



Premier Gordon Campbell announces the construction of a new 10-lane Port Mann Bridge during a press conference last month.

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By Janis Warren - The Tri-City News

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Coquitlam's oldest industrial site may soon be the staging area for the new Port Mann bridge project.

On Monday, city council approved in principle plans by builders Kiewit/Flatiron to use the former Fraser Mills land to cast, store and transport parts of the new bridge — by truck and barge — over a five-year period.

But the work is not expected to get in the way of a residential and commercial development

planned for the site.

Dave Gormely, the Beedie Group's director of development, told The Tri-City News yesterday the move won't slow waterfront plans by his company, which owns the 89-acre property. Last November, city council rezoned the land for Beedie to build up to 3,700 residential units plus commercial, light industrial and institutional space for a new village.

Gormely said the first phase of development is planned for another section of the property.

Jim McIntyre, Coquitlam's general manager of planning, said the lease is for 35 acres at Fraser Mills, with operations by Kiewit/Flatiron due to start in October. Potential site uses include:

- piling, to make the ground level for pre-casting;
- assembly of steel bridge deck sections, pipe-pile splicing and rebar-cage fabrication;
- use of a 45-tonne tower crane (118 feet high) to move materials;
- installation of a concrete batch plant; and
- storage of 50,000 gallons of fuel.

All structures are expected to be gone by 2014, according to a city staff report.

As per the Local Government Act, the Beedie Group will host a public consultation on the proposal at 6 p.m. on April 16 at Place des Arts (1120 Brunette Ave.). Among those to be formally consulted include surrounding businesses, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the city of Surrey, the Maillardville Commercial and Cultural Revitalization Advisory Task Force and the Como Watershed Group.

Once the city receives the feedback, council is expected to amend the official community plan to grant a temporary industrial use permit.

City council and staff were generally pleased with the application, given that the multi-million dollar project will create 120 jobs and direct spin-offs for the neighbourhood.

"The property is quite ideally located," McIntyre said at Monday's land use committee. "The site is vacant and under-utilized."

"If this private property owner is willing to do this, then it's beneficial to the whole community," Coun. Mae Reid said, adding, "It is the most logical spot to do this."

Still, Coun. Selina Robinson said she worries about future traffic tie-ups in the area, especially with Gateway building the new King Edward Overpass, for which Kiewit is responsible.

At the city council meeting, Coun. Fin Donnelly voted against the proposal because of the potential for traffic congestion and because the temporary permit will require approval from B.C.'s lieutenant governor as it's for five years, not the usual four years.

"I think this is highly unorthodox the way this is being handled," Donnelly said.

McIntyre said the traffic — about 40 heavy trucks a day, plus 400 employee vehicles — "is not inconsequential, however, we don't feel the amount of traffic at this site will be fatal or inappropriate."

Yesterday, Mayor Richard Stewart told The Tri-City News the traffic could "be a mess" but "there's a bright light at the end of the tunnel when it's all done."

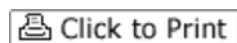
Fraser Mills was once home to the largest sawmill in the British Empire, attracting workers from mainly Quebec, who were instrumental in the formation of Maillardville.

The \$3.1-billion Port Mann/Highway 1 project is expected to be complete by the provincial Gateway Program by 2013.

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