

IAN JACQUES/EDITOR

Gibsons council received a briefing report on the George Hotel application at its July 23 committee of the whole meeting.

Director of planning Andre Boel said the report was a chance to update council on the application process to date and the next steps in the process.

On Feb. 1, Klaus Fuerniss Enterprises Inc. applied for a zoning bylaw amendment and development permits for form and character, for geotechnical aspects and for environmental aspects. On May 1 staff provided the applicant with a review with suggested changes and requests for further information.

The proposal, as it stands now, calls for a hotel and conference centre at the corner of Gower Point Road and Winn Road. The site includes four private properties, the proposed use of Winn Road from Gower Point Road to the water and water lease areas. The proposed hotel development consists of five components: a hotel with 96 rooms, meeting rooms/conference centre, restaurant and bar/lounge; 29 condominiums; rental space (approx. 1,200 sq. ft.) on Gower; liquor primary use (pub, 160 seats) on the water lot; and marina providing transient boat moorage (approx. 64 slots) and fuel sales (including relocation of existing fuel tanks).

"The proposed development provided a land use that is a good fit with the official community plan harbour area plan that encourages tourist accommodation, higher density, improved marine facilities and upgrades to the seawalk," Boel said in his report.

"However, the form of development [massing, height] does not fit with key OCP harbour area plan policies, which refer to maintaining the scale and character of Gibsons Landing and the protection of views. Specifically, the size of the building in relation to a relatively small site results in an urban-like density that is significantly higher than anything anticipated in the Town's OCP."

Boel is also recommending an independent analysis of the economic benefits the developers are claiming, because those benefits are being cited as one of the reasons the Town should allow higher density.

Boel said a new architect has recently joined the project team and an updated proposal is expected to come to the Town, although he said there is no indication when that proposal will be submitted.

He said following receipt of the updated proposal, staff will report back to council, then there will be community consultation and consideration of bylaws and permits, which could take months to complete.

Council and members of the public, who packed the gallery for the presentation, had questions around water leases, the developer's request to incorporate the lower section of Winn Road into the development and whether residents will have the opportunity to provide feedback and/or photos regarding view impacts the project could have on existing homeowners.

Mayor Wayne Rowe said the view impacts could be addressed during the public hearing stage of the application, while chief administrative officer Mani Machado said the Community Charter spells out a very specific process for the incorporations of existing roads into developments that starts with assessing the value of the land, which he said is already underway.

He said after that, negotiations would take place with options like a cash payment or land swap being considered, and the Town would have to announce an intention to dispose of the land, which would provide a chance for public input.

Readers can view Boel's 12-page report in full on the Town's website at www.gibsons.ca/images/2013-07-23_COW_Agenda_Web.pdf.