

**COMMUNITY FORUM: ROYAL OAK GOLF COURSE**  
**From the ROYAL OAK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING May 30, 2018**

**Tracked Comments from the ROCA Forum on the Royal Oak Golf Course, 540 Marsett Place, ALR Removal Application currently before Saanich Council**

1. Commenced at 7:49pm. (After ROCA AGM adjourned)
2. **Mark McInnes (Mark) ROCA President** - With everyone here, we have a good deliverable to bring to Saanich. We have residents and immediately impacted neighbours in the room in regards to the application to exclude from the ALR the Royal Oak Golf Course at 540 Marsett Place. ROCA's position has been to take a wait and see approach on this application. Provincially, there has been movement with the ALR. There has also been conflicting information in the Saanich Official Community Plan (OCP), the Regional Growth Strategy, and the Local Area Plan (LAP). The OCP and Regional Growth Strategy have aspirational comments about the ALR and food security. But that conflicts with the LAP which suggests taking the Royal Oak Golf Course out of the ALR. Given that, ROCA waited for more information and asked the residents to direct their comments to Saanich. The developer has not given more information. The golf course is about 80% in the ALR and is a hodgepodge of being out of the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB). If you want a return on investment for a property like that then the chips need to fall so that it is taken out of the ALR but then what do you do about the UCB? The UCB can be changed but there is a question of major and minor changes to it. A minor change can be decided by Saanich Council and Planning but a major one has to be done by referendum. It's up to Saanich Council to decide what they want to densify particularly given the development proposal for 4734, 4744, and 4754 Elk Lake Drive where the OCP says 98 units maximum and the developers are going for site specific zoning for 161 units. Looking at that pressure to provide housing for current and future residents as well as the pressure to maintain what agricultural land there is. ALR Committee said that the original intention for the golf course was that it would be turned back into ALR after being a golf course.
3. **Introduction of Guests (Mark)**
  - a. Kyla Shauer is the professional transcriber. She is sitting in and will help with the proceedings.
  - b. Constituency Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture Lana Popham, Chris Wieczsorek.
4. **Barb Sharpe (Barb) ROCA Director - Forum Facilitator** - This is an opportunity for people to speak their minds and their feelings on the golf course and to ask questions. We probably don't have the answers but they will be recorded and the new executive will do their utmost to answer those questions by going to people much more informed than we are. There will also be discussions at the provincial level for the ALR.
5. **Marilynn Graham, 530 Marsett Place, Royal Links South:** We're opposed to excluding the land from the ALR. First, removal would lead to development, which is not conducive to the land and the ecosystem it supports. Nor is it consistent with the Official Community Plan (OCP) nor the P4 zoning. The OCP highlights food sustainability, protection of greenspace and retention of the ALR. All would be contravened by the removal from the ALR. Second, removal and development would have serious environmental implications including threatening the wildlife corridor, the over 30 bird species that use the ponds and large trees, other biodiverse animals, and the land drains into Colquitz creek, a salmon-bearing stream. Third, the developer has not been co-operative in disclosing any plans or details. Removal of the land before any plan is premature. This land is not conducive to any other development other than its intended use in the ALR. Quote of Sharon Hvozdzanski on Saanich policy: "ALR exclusion applications must include detailed plans related to the proposed development site as the exclusion, subdivision, rezoning, and development permit applications are put before Council for consideration as a complete package." ROCA needs to hold Saanich to their own policies and procedures to ensure that due process is undertaken as part of the ALR exclusion application. It is recommended that the ROCA executive meet with senior Saanich Planning staff to raise this issue [lack of complete plans in application] and hold Saanich to their stated procedures. Finally, both Saanich and ROCA received quote "exceptional" response from the public on this ALR exclusion application and the responses were overwhelmingly against the application.

6. **Art Roberts, 530 Marsett Place, Royal Links South:** Thanks to outgoing executive for conveying to Saanich that the majority of responses you received from our community opposed excluding the former golf course from the ALR. However, your letter to Saanich also referred to the 2008 Royal Oak LAP calling for this exclusion. We've been told by Saanich Planning that this LAP was last updated in 2001 and re-adopted in 2008. In 2001, food security was not the issue that it is today. Likewise the health benefits of nature for all generations were not recognized either in 2001. This ALR exit reference in the LAP is outdated. The Royal Oak area is deficient in greenspace by Saanich's own policy ratio. No doubt due to Royal Oak population growth. Saanich has some policy requirements about excluding ALR. Unless and until we have clear evidence based upon a current soil study from a professional, qualified pedologist that this land has no reasonable food growing potential, it belongs in and should remain in the ALR. Respectfully, we're looking to ROCA to call upon Saanich Council to adhere to its own policy requirements and to support the pro-ALR positions and to the vast majority of letters already generated.
7. **Jan Elliott, 530 Marsett Place, Royal Links South:** We live on the golf course and will be affected by whatever happens there. The only reason for this is for more development and more densification and we oppose that. We have no current scientific evidence that the land is unsuitable for ALR use and no details on the intended use. However, references to streets and traffic calming suggest large scale development, which, on top of other proposals in the area, would have serious negative consequences to immediate neighbourhoods and beyond. Many local residents are already worried about increased traffic volume and safety on roads and intersections that are already subject to congestion would result in deterioration of quality of life. There has been some noise in the background that if the property is not removed from the ALR, we could be faced with cattle lots, chicken farms, composting facilities, or even marijuana greenhouses. We would be the people most affected by that. We still believe it should stay in the ALR. In a 1998 survey of Royal Oak residents, most agreed that pedestrian safety and traffic were major concern in Royal Oak. Other issues of concern were too much multi-family development and lack of greenspace. Since then Royal Oak has grown from 7,000 in 1996 to an estimated 8,400 in 2016. Can our community let this large greenspace be filled with more density exposing RO residents to what was already an issue in 1998 especially not knowing the land cannot feed us and not knowing the plan? We urge ROCA to seek broad community input as to 2018 lifestyle needs and concerns via a similar survey and to convey our opinion to Saanich that the application, lacking information, should not be forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) at this time.
8. **Bob Law, 520 Marsett, President of Royal Links North:** Supports uses that are public for this land. But is concerned that if it remains in the ALR, it will remain under provincial use and we are municipal. Having gone through the ALR act, he is concerned of the uses permitted. Be careful what you wish for. If it is taken out of the ALR, it is under the control of Saanich, where we live. I think that is the only way that we will get anything that we want.
9. **Dennis Grimmer, 530 Marsett PI:** Saying that they can do anything they want to do is untrue. Environmental laws apply out there. You've got Colquitz creek, Normandy Creek. If it pollutes those creeks, it'll be shut down. The ALR was established almost 50 years ago. The ALR is a reserve. We may not need it now. We may need it later. Looking at food self-sufficiency, back in 1950, more than half was produced on the island for the island. Today, that is below 10%. Food production is still going with the ALR and hasn't dropped much. But the population growth is huge. Self-sufficiency is less than 10%. Look at the Saanich Strategic Plan from the current council: Sustainability and self-sufficiency. They want to increase the number of farms that have farm tax status and to protect the ALR. There are a lot of crops that can be grown on the golf course. Haliburton Farm is seven acres, owned by Saanich and leased out. Go and talked to the neighbours. The ones he has talked to don't complain about the farm at all. A vineyard, onions, broccoli, no corn (because of raccoons), you can grow tons of stuff.
10. **Anita Bull, 4426 Wilkinson Road**
  - a. ALR report from 1970s? Soil tests on ALR lands to make sure they are good for the ALR. Anita thinks this property was part of that report but they need the maps from the report. This report was private but some who knew about it removed their properties from the ALR because their soil did not test right for the ALR. We need to follow up on that report and get the maps.
  - b. Was the [Royal Oak Golf Course site] included in that soil report?

- i. (Mark) Don't know. Will make it an action item in the executive meeting. Mark did mention this issue to two environmental engineers. Their response: How does Las Vega have golf courses? Clearly, they're doing something with the land to make something grow there. How would it not be arable?
    - c. Anita is a farmer for Thrifty foods. She opposes this coming out of the ALR. She does not want to see the UCB moved. She's not going to want to farm forever. If they remove the golf course from the ALR and moved the UCB then she wants the same. Other people will want the same if this is taken from the ALR. ALR properties all the way down Wilkinson Road. A lot of people will want it too. Strongly oppose any changes.
11. **Yvonne Pigott, 530 Marsett Place:** Saanich urged to consider the future with climate change and sustainability. Saanich is committed to being sustainable for its energy by 2050. Not bad. How this ties to the lack of green space is obvious. Can't have sustainability without concern for the environment. That whole piece of land is sustaining the greenery and air we breathe. I oppose it.
12. (Mark) Need a plan before taking things out of the ALR?
- a. (Anita) There needs to be a set of rules. What happens with the next application? There needs to be a fairness in this.
  - b. (Mark) How to pass on the tradition of farming? But what is the larger plan for passing on succession planning? Ministry of Agriculture is looking into this. If you take land out of the ALR, that cascades. Also, the punitive practices for neighbours that don't go along with it. Anxiety over what will happen to it.
13. **Greg Holloway: 4745 Rosehill Road:** Other ALR properties being influenced by this... There are three ALR properties on Pipeline that are feeling the pressure and may be wanting to get out of the ALR as well. One has requested getting out of ALR before and was declined. Anita's point is exactly right. Saanich and CRD has a long standing commitment to the UCB as a planning device. Containing the dense development. The golf course is unique in that it is bisected by the UCB. The developer should be compelled to make a subdivision along the two parcels to make that clear. If Saanich were to agree to take this entire parcel out of the ALR but then what about the UCB? They can only develop the part inside the UCB? During a Council meeting on Harriet Road there was fierce determination against moving the boundary at all. Even only a few tens of meters. This is over six hectares. There should be a Saanich referendum on this. Other municipalities could challenge Saanich doing that.
14. **Patricia Haakonson, 530 Marsett, Royal Links South:** We need to find a middle ground between stinky farms and high rises. A lot of people use this space for walking etc. and beyond just the neighbours. It is a beautiful spot for a community park. She would like ROCA to bring that option to Saanich Council. We need to preserve the green space.
15. **Ian Vantreight, 747 Travino Lane:** Around the ALR gets muddled with the UCB and the zoning. If we're talking about an ALR application., as a farmer when the ALR came in, we were assured that you're right to grow on your farm through generations, then as the community grows around you, you sell and move your farm further out but the ALR changed that. At the time, the NDP government said they would compensate farmers for cost of production. That lasted five years. With the ALR, the initial idea was to preserve farm land so it is available for production further down the road. It's a good idea. But from our experience farming in Gordon Head with development coming in around us, farmland surrounded by single family or multi-family housing doesn't work. There is far more vandalism and problems. For me, having an application to remove something from the ALR should be based on two things: Is it viable? And does it fit in with its surroundings? Having an apple in the middle of oranges doesn't work. Is it land that someone is going to come in and farm? They won't pay the land what it is worth. No farmer is going to come in and farm the golf course. It will be cost prohibitive. There is water and power but what is the surroundings of the golf course? If it fits the definition of the ALR, they can put in a composting facility or a hog farm. One last point, 50 years ago Royal Oak was rural and farms. Since then something to allow all the homes, townhomes etc. to be built to allow you to live there now. If the land isn't viable, then why are we beating our heads against a wall? Maybe there is a better suggestion for it like a park or partial development. But just staying keep it in the ALR, as a farmer, it is annoying.
16. **Roger Graham, 530 Marsett:** One thing to look at is recognizing this was all agriculture at one time. We have a convergence of opportunity. These were lands that were ALR. It was allowed to be made

into a golf course. But since the golf course failed doesn't mean that it should automatically be pulled out of the ALR without taking into consideration the concerns of the public. There is a review of the ALR going on right now. We need to stay tuned to that. ROCA can provide input. We can better understand if this land is indeed viable. The work done by the developer did not touch on this at all. We need to let the review process happen. We need to talk to Saanich about the true implications about the ALR and UCB. The LAP was done in 2001. All of the LAPs are being updated by Saanich. This is a critical piece of the community. The LAP needs to be updated with any process that involves this critical piece of land.

**17. Meeting ended at 8:49pm.**