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# QBRA NEWS

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## Growth Containment Boundary

We were pleased to welcome two special guests to the QBRA Annual General Meeting on October 26:

Michael Jessen, P.Eng., Representative to the Arrowsmith Parks and Land-Use Council; and, Mr. Wayne Moorman, former Chief Engineer for Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN). They provided members with an overview of the Urban Containment Boundary and answered questions during a discussion period. Michael kindly provided his speaking notes for our website:

### Urban Containment Boundaries (in RDN now called Growth Containment Boundaries)

An urban containment boundary defines a set limit between urban and rural areas. The goal of the boundary is to promote efficient use of land, and servicing infrastructure. It is meant to encourage the development of complete and compact communities and control urban sprawl (sometimes taking the form of what is referred to as leap-frog development), while preserving rural space and environmentally sensitive areas.

*At present our Urban Containment Boundary/ Growth Containment Boundary is set by both our OCP and a regionally agreed boundary that is now a Regional District of Nanaimo bylaw.*

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Urban Containment Boundaries help local governments meet a number of planning goals that cross-cut with climate action, such as:

- \* improving the viability of transit by concentrating development;
- \* encouraging mixed-use development closer to homes and jobs, helping cut the number of car trips
- \* maximizing the use of existing infrastructure and minimizing new infrastructure costs;
- \* revitalizing downtowns and town centres;
- \* maintaining a working land base (agricultural, rural, forested, and other resource lands) and the green infrastructure; and
- \* protecting the environment.

On top of the climate-friendly results of UCBs, another benefit is in providing a degree of certainty to both developers and residents as to the location of future development. One potential disadvantage to UCBs is that it can contribute to an increase in land prices within the UCB. However, there is no consensus on this as there are many other factors involved in determining land value.

### ***Official Community Plan***

*QBRA has taken the point of view that the wishes of the residents of Qualicum Beach are best expressed in the Official Community Plan (OCP) backed by the Quality of Life survey and the many public meetings. Any changes to the OCP should have as much public scrutiny as the original OCP.*

## **UGB/UCB and the OCP**

At present there is a move by the council to have the Urban Growth Boundary the same as the current boundary of the town. This would allow the Council to decide where and when development would take place within the boundaries of the town. Examining the map, most of the land outside the UGB is under the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and needs provincial permission to remove it from the ALR in order to develop it. The map shows that the Estate area (where Milner Gardens is), part of the Eaglecrest Golf Course, the parkland off Arbutus where Granden Creek runs through, some land around the airport, the 5 acre lots south of Rupert and part of Pheasant Glen golf course property is outside the UGB but inside the town boundary.

The proposal that has been presented to the public to allow Pheasant Glen to build houses as well as vacation properties was the key to this movement. The QBRA does not take a stand on the desirability of this project, but rather with the process. If the town takes all the steps of an OCP review including all the public input we will be satisfied that the process is valid. If the change to the OCP is made as a minor change without the public input we feel the process has been short circuited.

The Town Council has not yet decided how to proceed but we must encourage them to follow the steps for an OCP review before concluding their deliberations.



## Qualicum Elementary School

We attended a quick tour of the QBES school on Monday morning given by the assistant principal. Also in attendance was Suzanne Adkins representing the Seniors group, Anne Skipsey, Teunis Westbroek and Mary Brouillette.

First observations and understandings:

1. The school is larger than I thought.
2. The school has 265 pupils and is generally full with no spare vacant classrooms with the exception of 1 storage room that could be converted, so there is no chance of moving QBMS to QBES. Class size varies between 21 and 26 dependent on age.
3. There are 25 staff working at the school.
4. There is a privately run drop in Munchkin room open to anyone.
5. There are 2 day care rooms being used.
6. The gym has 3 badminton courts and a basketball court, large stage, that is not in the greatest condition, but was added in 2000 with an extension. The school was built in 1967 with 2 phases of addition in 1987 and then 2000. There is a dedicated computer room with brand new equipment. There is a music room.
7. The principal said the heating and ventilation system was not reliable requiring frequent call outs early in the morning to rectify electrical problems. The glazing is only single pane.
8. The playing fields are not well drained and tend to flood and get heavy after rains. They are generally not used, and pupils tend to use the smaller dedicated paved and dedicated play areas.

In the evening I attended District 69's invitation for discussion with parents and teachers. The session was headed up by Rollie Koop, plus 4 board trustee members, 3 members of the board staff and 2 principals of local schools. A similar meeting was held last Saturday with French Creek residents and school staff.

The main presentations were given by persons representing parents of QBES pupils and Don Reimer of the ACEBC community school proposal. Parents were invited to ask questions to which the board and staff would attempt to answer. There was no official presentation by the school board, so the assumption was everyone knew what was being proposed.

Facts and Questions raised included the following:

1. No decision on what closures, amalgamations or reconfigurations would be made before April 29th. However staff admitted to already having proposals and plans in place in order to meet the September 2014 start up year.
2. QBES closure included short and long terms plans to accommodate any changes, and the board is reluctant in considering selling off quickly in order to generate revenue, but they are open to all possibilities. The school land is presently zoned school only. A dormitory style addition on the land to accommodate the option of international student use was an option for income. (\$25-35k/year/ student)

3. Moving certain playground equipment from QBES to QBMS could be impractical due to damage during dismantling or transfer. The QBMS has no playground area as such for younger students, so there will be new capital costs for any move.
4. A total of \$450k is required to modify any existing transfer schools in accommodating younger and smaller pupils transferring from the 4 elementary schools penned for closure. This may require phasing and will not be done in 1 go before September.
5. There has been a big change in the school boards projection for pupil numbers between their 2012 and 2013 projections. The former has an upward swing already arising by 2014, whilst their latest 2013 projection has it still declining. The studies were all conducted by a group from Whiterock called Beargas? When asked if parents could see their assumption's Rollie stated he was confident in their numbers. I question if they have an alternate fall back position having spent \$100's in making changes only to find that classrooms are now full and nowhere to put them, except go back to square 1 or start putting mobiles up?
6. The board has not conducted any 5 year plan and do not plan to conduct one at this stage, so all of these plans only meet very short term plans. The plan is to move the pupils and then decide what else can be done to further reduce costs. At present QBES and similar school are each losing approx. \$600k/ year. Provincial government spending in education is scheduled to drop by 1.5% every year. Only 10% of all budgets are governed by operating service costs other than teacher salaries and benefits.
7. 40% of children attending QBES come from outside the local Qualicum Beach catchment area. The remainder selected the school as an option for them being out of an area with no local school. The extra cost of bussing children to QBMS may be partially offset by this school now being closer to some outside of Qualicum. Changes in busing scheduling is also on the books to reduce costs.
8. Closing QBMS will save \$450k whilst closing QBES saves \$280k, but QBES is too small to handle any extra numbers.
9. QBES has a deferred maintenance cost of \$2mm required to bring it up to par. This compares with Ballenas requiring \$7mm! QBES operating costs are \$737/ pupil compared to \$890 for QBMS. I suspect this is because QBES has a much higher enrolment, being nearly full, but with much lower heating efficiencies in place.

Judging by the disinterest shown on the school board members faces during the 3 presentations and question period, I feel that decisions have been made and that they are tired of any more questions or proposals, and just want to get on and out of it ASAP. A large influx of young families and young people wanting larger than normal (1.8) family additions is very unlikely, certainly in the short term and likely the longer term. We are only building moderate to large single family homes and condos in our town. Lower cost housing is available to a lesser degree outside of our town.

Dave Golson