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Crown plays partner in Galiano development

At its August 2 meeting, the Galiano Island Local Trust Committee heard Richard Dewinetz (Winmark Capital) propose a ten-lot rural residential development, with the Province of BC as his development partner, for his holdings in the Bodega Ridge area. The proposed development would be under current Forest zone bylaws.

In 2004, Dewinetz sold 50 acres adjacent to Bodega Ridge Provincial Park to the province. The acreage has not, however, been included in the park and there is no comprehensive Master Plan in place for Bodega Ridge Provincial Park.

Now, in a 48-page agreement with the BC government, not publicly available, Dewinetz has arranged 'a temporary return of title' for this parcel. It is to be used to count toward a total of 158 acres to be designated for Galiano Heritage Forest. With this 'temporary return' of Crown land title, Dewinetz can boost the number of residential building lots from eight to ten.

In the plan, Dewinetz proposes to nominate the government as steward of this section of the Heritage Forest, rather than a Galiano-based organization. This novel scheme

assumes that the Province of British Columbia qualifies to hold Galiano Heritage Forest as if it were 'an incorporated Galiano organization of thirty years standing with one of its objects being the stewardship of forest land.'

Galiano's Heritage Forest bylaw requires a covenant to practice sustainable forestry and to prohibit subdivision. However, the government is exempt from regulation by local land use bylaws and historically, the province does not accept title to land encumbered by land-use restrictions.

At the meeting, Trust Committee instructed staff to write to the province to see if it will accept a covenant that would curtail campgrounds, mining, and resort development, all activities permitted in BC Parks but contrary to Heritage Forest permitted uses.

An additional feature of the scheme is that, with the province as steward of the 108 acres, Dewinetz might then be eligible for a tax receipt: Dewinetz's handout at the meeting states 'tax receipt for donation expected.' ✍

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