

RHONDA L. MILLIKIN
7212 Fitzsimmons Road South, White Gold, Whistler B.C.

CAO, Mayor and Council
Resort Municipality of Whistler
4325 Blackcomb Way
Whistler, BC V8E 0X5

07 April 2022

RE: White Gold Beautification revote

Ms. Cullen, Honourable Mayor and Council,

The Braden Dupuis article "Costly White Gold beautification project has fractured the neighbourhood" inspired many comments from Whistler taxpayers, beyond our neighbourhood of White Gold, against the cost and the imposition by those who want it on those who don't.

As was disclosed in the 16-March 2022 zoom meeting update on the project, led by Christine Boehringer, costs have well exceeded the threshold for a revote.

For a revote to be democratic, it must be carried out in-person at a town hall meeting, where a FINAL cost estimate, FINAL mapped design and FINAL timeline for construction are presented, with experts from BC Hydro and the other utilities present to answer questions.

This project was proposed prior to COVID. No one could have predicted the increased costs of materials and labour, or the astronomical increases in property assessment which will increase taxes. Continued spending on this beautification project is not consistent with other commendable priorities underway by the Honourable Mayor and council (housing, transit).

I am against the beautification project for these reasons:

- 1) The budget to date is more than \$2 Million over the cost presented to residents at the time of the vote, and that price does not include a full quote from the utility providers or the cost of contractors and materials
- 2) Contrary to other areas of Whistler where the utilities are undergrounded (upper village, Spruce Grove), White Gold utilities have not failed. The scale of undergrounding in an existing neighbourhood like White Gold has not been previously undertaken by BC Hydro. The feasibility and timeline of disruption to blast rock along Ambassador will significantly impact residents with noise, road blockages, and loss of services. The vote of residents should carry more weight than that of landowners who are not residents.
- 3) The final design has not been disclosed. The 16-March zoom meeting was the first indication that roads will be widened to the extent of the RMOW right of way removing mature trees and permeable surfaces which are essential in the mitigation of extreme weather that is expected with climate change. Trees are essential for protection from extreme heat, flood mitigation and for wildlife. Permeable surfaces are essential for flood mitigation and the health of trees. The installation of lights will negatively impact wildlife and human health.
- 4) The process has not been clear or democratic. Meetings to update residents have been sent to incorrect addresses, with incorrect names, and have excluded many residents.
- 5) There are many more valuable ways to spend this money. Please can we work together to focus on those expenditures that support our community instead of fracturing it.

As I stated in my 14 May 2021 letter, I am reminding council that even at 62 White Gold residents who were against the project before a revote, it is council's responsibility to balance the needs of multiple interests.

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[REDACTED]

After discussion with the BC Ombudsperson and the Governance and Structure Branch of Service BC, we understand you have the ability to cancel the undergrounding of hydro and other services in White Gold for these reasons:

- 1) Whistler has its own community charter act¹ which gives you the authority to reverse or pause the decision of undergrounding due to the unforeseen impact of COVID (inability to have a proper community engagement, economic hardship due to the loss of wages and rental income for residents, and the extreme increase in material and labour costs resulting in the increased project costs beyond the 10-15% of \$5.5M budget presented by Mr. Hallisey at the 01 December council meeting).
- 2) We have a right to appeal the process imposed for recovering the cost of this project². We propose three choices for that appeal:
 - a. Cancellation of the project by CAO, Mayor and Council under authority of Community Charter Act of Whistler as outlined in #1.
 - b. CAO, Mayor and Council conduct a proper community engagement using a townhall format as initially emailed to Mr. Forsythe 27 April 2021, and re-petition of the White Gold residents following that townhall where the true costs and design are known. If there are residents who after knowing the current cost and current design of the project, insist on having services undergrounded to their properties, they can repetition Mayor and Council under Whistler's Local Area Service to delineate a portion of the neighbourhood where >50% who still want this.
 - c. WG residents against the project appeal the proposed process for budgeting and tax level increases, by formal petition and demonstration.

Please respond to the email provided in the header before further work is undertaken on this project.

Regards,



Rhonda L. Millikin, on behalf of 62 residents of White Gold.

¹ https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96407_01#section6

² <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/facts-framework/legislative-framework>