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Fate Of Abraham Glacier Wellness Resort to be Decided Soon

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On March 24, 2004, the County of Clearwater Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) refused the application made by 1006335 Alberta Inc. (Alberta Inc.) for a development permit for the Abraham Glacier Wellness Resort. Among the reasons for refusing the application were the unsuitability of the site chosen for the resort and the fact that the applicant had not undertaken the necessary studies on the proposed sites. The proponent chose to appeal this decision.

On May 4, 2004, the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) hearing was underway regarding the appeal against the refusal of the resort development permit. The purpose of the hearing was to hear submissions from the proponent, the County staff, and affected persons both in support and against the proposal. To our dismay and in breach of the County's own agenda, the hearing was not closed but rather adjourned until May 27, 2004.

From the outset, the hearing was almost entirely monopolized by the proponent and his entourage of experts. The County agenda clearly outlined that both the County and the proponent would be allocated one hour to make a presentation in support of their positions regarding the application for development and the MPC's decision.

Although the County stayed within their time allotment, the proponent presented over two hours worth of project changes, new information, and expert opinion to the SDAB. Due to the quantity of new information, the SDAB adjourned the hearing to give themselves time to review the new information and to provide the public the opportunity to update submissions in light of the changes.

The SDAB had received approximately 145 written submissions from concerned parties in opposition to the resort development. Furthermore, many affected parties were present at the appeal hearing. These groups and individuals had taken the time to attend to hearing as well as prepare informed oral submissions based upon the original project proposal. These groups were given no opportunity to present to the SDAB due to the adjournment. In many cases, the submissions were no longer relevant due to the changes made by the proponent.

The appeal process requires that the SDAB review the decision made by the MPC based upon the same proposal the proponent originally presented to the MPC. What the proponent presented on May 4 was in essence a new project proposal. There were a significant quantity of new maps, reports, and changes made, including the removal of buildings, and the relocation of the access road. This new proposal should, therefore, not be eligible for an appeal since it has yet to be reviewed by the MPC. The proponent should be required to re-apply.

At the hearing on May 27th, affected persons and groups were given the opportunity to make oral presentations to SDAB in support or opposition to the resort development. There was overwhelming opposition to the resort development by groups and individuals. Among the main points of emphasis were the size, type and location for the resort, as well as the need to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to identify the impacts on wildlife, vegetation and special features in the area. Most presentations in support of the resort were representatives of the proponents own consultant team.





The Appeal hearing will reconvene on Thursday, June 10, 2004 at 9:00 am at the Clearwater County Administration Building in Rocky Mountain House. This will allow the County Development Staff and proponent the opportunity to review the submissions and to present their responses and summations. All are welcome to attend. Thank you to all who opposed the resort and who sent letters or made presentations at the appeal hearing.

