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Lagoon proposal jumps hurdle

A proposed new development including up to 150 houses, a hotel or both alongside Esquimalt Lagoon has received preliminary approval from Colwood councillors.

Zoning for the 4.7hectare site off Heatherbell Road near Royal Roads University was approved by members of Colwood's community planning, zoning and health committee earlier this week.

The new zoning gives Calgary developer UnaVera Resorts of Calgary freedom to build up to 150 homes, or up to 75 homes along with a 150-unit hotel or a 300-unit hotel complex.

The comprehensive zoning will also allow the developer to construct the project as market conditions develop.

Colwood Coun. Gordie Logan, chairman of the planning committee, said UnaVera has also promised up to \$1.3 million in fees and other payments, including \$150,000 toward a new fire station and \$100,000 toward repairing the lagoon bridge.

Fifteen of the housing units would be made available at prices affordable to low-income people, while about 40 per cent of the site, in an area adjacent to the lagoon and along a natural creek, would be left undeveloped.

Logan said the developer made an effort to consult with local residents and even agreed to scale back the development by about 50 per cent in response to concerns.

An art gallery, health centre and other commercial buildings are part of the proposed plan, which includes a promise of environmentally sound construction methods.

The developer has also agreed to provide proof of financing before excavations begin.

"It's quite refreshing, quite frankly," said Logan of UnaVera's approach.

Randy Royer, UnaVera president, said it's not known when his company can begin construction. But Royer said the entire project, worth about \$100 million, will be completed in stages, over five to seven years.

He said the level of consultation with the community and local government, along with having the freedom to respond to the market, makes the development a new experience.

The proposal heads to a full meeting of council before it goes to public hearing.

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