

Anmore green power project in jeopardy

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Gary McKenna
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Funding problems have stalled a renewable energy project in Anmore and Mayor Hal Weinberg said he will seek the assistance of the village council to re-charge the initiative.

The village had planned to build a small power generation plant and education centre on land next to Buntzen Lake that would produce hydrogen using water, wind and solar power.

A foundation was set up by council to facilitate the project, which was expected to receive funding from the **Western Economic Diversification Canada (WEDC)** program.

But a dispute between WEDC and the foundation over \$20,000 has halted funding on the project and the foundation's charitable status has been revoked.

The issue came up at an environmental committee meeting last month, when, according to the minutes, those present felt the project was finished. "Anmore's Renewable Energy Foundation is no longer and other than discussions regarding what will happen with the solar panels, the project has concluded," the meeting minutes state.

But Weinberg said he still believes the project is viable and he will be presenting a motion to council asking the village to work with WEDC to resolve its funding problems.

"I have worked for six years to try and make this happen," Weinberg said. "What is important to me is that it was a demonstration of how a small municipality can actually help in renewable energy."

The dispute arose when WEDC, which promised \$120,000 for the project, said it had overpaid the foundation by \$20,000. According to Weinberg, the organization is alleging that because solar panels were moved from the Buntzen Lake project site to the village hall, the foundation broke the original agreement approved by WEDC.

A spokesperson for WEDC did not return calls from The Tri-City News by press deadline Thursday.

A \$34,000 withdrawal, which was supposed to be used to pay the company that installed the panels in April 2008, was not approved.

Since the company has not been paid for the installation work, it has not signed off with BC Hydro, meaning the panels have not been generating power.

Weinberg said the foundation does not have any money to pay back the \$20,000 to WEDC. He said he was reluctant to speak about the situation until after the Oct. 27 village council meeting, when the issue will be discussed.

When the project was introduced, it was touted as a model for public ownership and green energy.

On top of producing power for the community, the excess of which could be sold back to the BC Hydro grid, Weinberg said it would provide real-world applications for green technologies.

From: Mark Ferrari
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2009 10:29 AM
To: Doug Hawes
Subject: FW: PM Media Clips for October 23, 2009

Fyi. Interesting that this is being characterized as us not wanting to pay because of changes to the original contract. A bit disappointing really because WD has been supportive of the changes and the media is not reporting the financial mismanagement of the proponent which is really at the heart of the matter. Lets stay tuned.