

Food to fuel people or cars?

School district looks at banning use of biofuels

by Martin van den Hemel

Staff Reporter

The debate among school trustees about the merits and pitfalls of continuing the use of biofuels in the district's fleet of vehicles will continue for at least another two weeks.

Before making a decision, trustees want to know the financial toll in the event it opts to cease using biofuels made from animal and food sources like corn and soybeans.

Some trustees see this as an opportunity for the school board to take a leadership position on the issue.

The issue of biofuels was raised last month by trustee Sandra Bourque, who expressed concern about the impact biofuel production and use was having on the global food supply and food prices.

Trustees have since spent hours researching and discussing the issue, and are now scheduled to make a decision on June 16.

Trustee Donna Sargent commended Bourque on raising the issue.

Sargent said she's still learning about its complexities, and trustees have been handed several comprehensive articles on the topic in prestigious publications including *National Geographic*, *Scientific American* and *Time*.

Sargent admitted she hadn't con-



Mark Patrick photo

School bus driver Jordon Reid fills up another tank. The Richmond School District is considering to stop using biofuels in its vehicles.

sidered the impact of using the food supply, like corn, to produce ethanol.

According to *Time Magazine*, the grain required to fill a 25-gallon SUV tank with ethanol could feed a person for a year.

In a report to the board's education committee, Bourque wrote: "The purpose of my motion was

not to decry biofuels, it was to ensure we don't choose to use food to fuel our vehicles rather than use that food to feed people."

There are many factors beyond using food crops for biofuels that are contributing to food shortages, she said, and the Richmond Board of Education has little control or influence over many of them, she said.

But the district does have an agreement to buy used food oils for transportation fuels.

"The provincial government is set to require gas and diesel to be augmented by biofuels and as a large institution, we can influence them so they choose wisely as to the source of the biofuels used," Bourque wrote.

In brief

Prices stay hot while sales slump

The Richmond real estate market cooled slightly last month, with fewer homes changing hands, but prices continued on the upswing.

The number of houses, condos and townhomes that changed hands dropped in May compared to a year ago, according to the latest numbers from the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver.

House sales were down 20 per cent, townhouses dipped 28 per cent and condos plummeted 32 per cent in May compared to May 2007.

But price increases remained in the double digits in Richmond, bucking the region-wide experience which saw price jumps dipping into the single digits.

In Richmond last month, the median selling price of a house was up more than 12 per cent to \$743,000, townhouses jumped 14 per cent to \$473,000, and condos rose 16 per cent to \$325,000.

— by Martin van den Hemel

New logo hits and misses with feng shui

by Matthew Hoekstra

Staff Reporter

A renown fortune teller and feng shui master says a new City of Richmond logo has a good overall design, but still misses a few marks.

Richmond's Sherman Tai said the logo resembles a phoenix rising above the word "Richmond." Its colours, he said, capture four of five traditional elements: wood, water, fire and earth.

Although black can also represent the final element of metal, Tai said a clear display of all five elements would give the people of Richmond "a more healthy, wealthy and comfortable living environment."

"If this logo can have a little bit of gold or metallic colour, that would be more perfect," said Tai, a published author whose services take him around the world.

Feng shui is an ancient Chinese practice that uses the laws of both astronomy and geography to help improve life. Proponents believe feng shui has an effect on health, wealth and personal relationships.

Tai said since the most dominant feature is a blue stripe, he predicts an unstable population in the future—much like flowing water.

"In the next few years, people will move in and out, which means there will be a lot of people moving back to Asia or back to their hometown, and Richmond is only a transitional city."

On the positive side, he said the shape of the bird is good, and indicates it can fly up in the sky—something the phoenix normally doesn't do.

"The phoenix only (comes) from the sky to the ground. This is tradition."

And while the optimal direction for the bird would be flying left to right—opposite of the logo—the good news is the phoenix only flies down to an area of treasure.

"They will not go to some kind of dirty place. They are not going to some kind of poor and unhealthy place."

Council not excited by slogan

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"I should be excited about it. I should be able to grab it and run with it. But I can't," said Coun. Evelina Halsey-Brandt.

Said Coun. Rob Howard: "There's just something about the combination of these words that left me wondering."

"I love the heron, but the (slogan) doesn't quite do it for me," said Coun. Sue Halsey-Brandt.

According to a report from communications manager Ted Townsend, "Soar Beyond" is meant to reflect "the outstanding quality of life and proactive socio-economic direction of the city, while delivering a clear message representing the aspirational spirit inherent in Richmond."

But most civic politicians liked the old standby, "Island City By Nature," better.

"We're an island by nature. I don't think we can lose that," said Coun. Bill McNulty. "Richmond's been around for 140 years. We've had a bit of development, but why would we obliterate the past?"

Staff's reason to dump the slogan was intentional. Lee Malleau, manager of sponsorships and partnerships for the city, said promoting the city as an island scares

investors, who immediately think of access challenges.

Townsend added Richmond is so connected to the rest of the region that residents don't experience isolation of island life. He also said the old slogan speaks to a "natural, pastoral community," but doesn't capture a growing metropolitan centre.

"Soar Beyond" was picked by staff because of its ties to flight and because people move to Richmond for a new life and new opportunities, said Townsend.

"This is a community that really has a spirit of aspiration," he said. "This is a place where you can realize and build on your dreams."

Mayor Malcolm Brodie said "Island City by Nature" isn't accurate since Richmond is made up of many islands and New Westminster has jurisdiction at the east end of Lulu Island. He favours a new slogan of "Soaring Beyond" to reduce the "double entendres everyone would be making and it also inspires us to move forward."

Staff are expected to bring back a second report in two weeks.

In the meantime, the city will begin making plans for rolling

Richmond's turn of phrase

- City adopted current stylized heron logo over a decade ago with slogan, "Island City By Nature."

- "Better in Every Way" introduced in 2002 as part of a promotional campaign to attract investors, and soon became widely used.

- New logo and proposed slogan "Soar Beyond" meant to encompass "new Olympic era" of city.

- Use of "Child of the Fraser" continues on city's coat of arms, which will be kept for official documents.

out its new logo—a design meant to easily transition with the old one.

Townsend said the old logo will be swapped with the new one as signs, stationary and vehicles are replaced.

The city brought on Hyphen Communications to help develop the logo—a project funded by a tourism grant from the province.