

PRESS RELEASE

Statement from the Council of the Resort Village of Fort San regarding the redevelopment of the former Prairie Christian Training Centre site

February 23, 2021
Fort San SK

For immediate release:

Over the past few weeks, Fort San Council and Administration have received hundreds of calls and emails both for and against the Pine Lodge Treatment Centre relocating to the former Prairie Christian Training Centre (PCTC) in the Resort Village of Fort San. During this time, Fort San Council has been portrayed in the media as being against Pine Lodge establishing operations in the village. This is not an accurate portrayal.

The actual issue about which Fort San Council is being asked to make a decision is a narrow interpretation of a definition within the Resort Village of Fort San Zoning Bylaw. Specifically, Council is being asked to decide whether a substance abuse treatment centre fits into the definition of a “Residential Care Facility” as defined in the Resort Village of Fort San Zoning Bylaw.

Not all Substance Abuse Treatment Centres are the same. Some treatment centres are privately operated; some are government operated; some are for-profit; some are not-for-profit; some, like Pine Lodge, have patients who check themselves in voluntarily; while others have patients who are ordered into treatment by the courts. Numerous Fort San residents who participated in a public information conference call about a substance abuse treatment centre at the former PCTC site expressed public safety concerns about the possibility of patients from the latter type of facility causing disturbances in the village.

A complicating factor prolonging the Council decision is that the owner of the former PCTC site has yet to provide Fort San Council with a written development plan for the site. While there has been some verbal discussion about Pine Lodge possibly locating in Fort San permanently, to-date Pine Lodge has only committed to locating at the former PCTC site for six months. If Pine Lodge were to leave the site, Council has no assurances that another substance abuse treatment centre would be operated as well as Pine Lodge or have a similar reputation in the community. Further, what may fall into the definition of a Residential Care Facility in one community may not be an appropriate fit in another community. Municipal councils have the duty to decide for themselves how to define items within their respective zoning bylaws.

The Fort San Council agrees and acknowledges that substance abuse treatment facilities are an important and necessary service in any community. However, Councils are required to make decisions based on what they believe is in the best interest of their communities. Councils need

to be given the time to complete thorough due diligence without outside distractions. In the end, if the Resort Village of Fort San Council does not believe a substance abuse treatment centre fits into the definition of a “Residential Care Facility” as defined in the Resort Village of Fort San Zoning Bylaw and that such a use is not in the best interests of the community, then Fort San Council is under no obligation to agree to the definition.

Mayor Steve Helfrick
Councillor Valerie Hamilton
Councillor John Naumetz
Councillor Brad Redman
Councillor Don Williams

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Quotes:

"I am deeply concerned by exchanges through the media that are resulting in inaccurate insinuations. I sincerely hope these tactics are not meant to pressure Council into making decisions without following our bylaws and proper protocol. Council must do our due diligence." Councillor Brad Redman

"This is not, nor has it ever been, about Pine Lodge. Pine Lodge is a great example of a well run substance abuse treatment centre but not all treatment centres are the same as Pine Lodge." Mayor Steve Helfrick

"Council is interested in working with the developer to establish a long-term use for the former PCTC site that is beneficial to the developer and the community." Councillor Don Williams

"Council is working hard to make a decision that is in the best long-term interests of the community." Councillor Valerie Hamilton

"We need time to investigate and understand this issue thoroughly." Councillor John Naumetz

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