

**Public Meeting - Farm Workers Campground**  
**Notes of Meeting held October 5, 2011 at 3:00 p.m.**  
**Victory Hall**  
**742-7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Keremeos, BC**

**In attendance:**

Farm Workers  
Village Residents and Business Owners  
Mayor Despot  
Councillor Bauer  
Councillor Cowling  
Councillor Thielmann  
Walt Makepeace, RDOS Area B Alternate Director  
Glen Lucas, BCFG  
Lilly Zekanovic, Constituency Assistant to Alex Atamanenko, NDP  
Elf Christansen, RDOS Area G Director  
Bill Newell, RDOS CAO  
Mark Woods, RDOS Community Services  
Laurie Taylor, Village Keremeos CAO  
Wendy Curr, Village Clerk

**The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.**

The 4 key issues identified and agreed to at “Coffee with the Mayor” on September 23, 2011 are as follows:

1. Location of proposed campground should be within 1 mile of the amber light in Cawston
2. Basic needs of workers
3. Separate pickers from non-working transients
4. Social standards

Mark Woods, RDOS gave an overview of the Oliver and Osoyoos farm worker’s campground situations

Oliver Campground

- RDOS identified a suitable site for the campground
- Rotary Club took the lead to provide for amenities, such as washrooms, showers and cooking facility
- Farming community must be involved for the management of the site

Osoyoos Campground Proposed for 2012

- RDOS identified a wild land site adjacent to the desert area, approximately 3 to 4 km away from town;
- RDOS Rural Area Director took the lead

## **Issue #1 - Location**

### Discussion:

- Farming community needs to be involved with the process
- Services/amenities are what is needed
- 3 km away is too far
- Concern about no restaurant, internet, laundry facility
- Village taxpayers should not pay for amenities
- Need more than one Provincial Government agency to provide additional amenities
- Land needs to be rented or purchased
- It has not been decided what land is available
- Map shows limited crown land available
- RDOS is looking for accessible land within 3 km of the amber light in Cawston
- It would be preferable to get a crown tenure
- Could then use other money raised for infrastructure
- Best site identified on the map is on the north side of the river, on Newton Road and approximately one hectare in size
- Water and power is available
- May be able to work with RDOS, the Provincial Government and up to four different Ministries
- Possibly use ALR land
- Will RDOS assume the liability for the site?
- Still in the planning stages
- Can put in an application for infrastructure on tenured land
- Would it be possible for the Province to turn the campground into a Forestry Campground and assume the liability?
- Province doesn't want any more responsibilities
- Is there a need for a commercial campground in the area?
- Possible business model for private operator – mix long term and short term types of campers in one campground
- If BCFGGA wishes to take on the endeavor others will work with them
- Farmers and BCFGGA are mostly responsible for a solution as fruit from this valley is shipped to their packinghouses
- Why are Canadian farm workers not looked after by the Federal Government like non-Canadians are?
- Farm workers should have basic needs provided to them - what are BCFGGA and the Province going to do about this?
- RDOS can take this up with the Province

## **Issue #2 - Basic Needs of the Farm Workers**

It was determined that the basic amenities required by the workers are as follows:

- Showers and washrooms with running water
- Cooking facilities
- Laundry facilities

### **Discussion**

- The farmers lose a lot of the good workers because of the lack of amenities which makes room for the less desirable workers
- Ministry of Labour should be made aware of bad conditions
- Small farmers are struggling and need government subsidy to bring amenities to their farms for their part time workers
- There needs to be legislation like the Federal Government has put in place for non-Canadian farm workers
- The farmers should be made to follow the labour standards that all other businesses are made to have in place, such as hand wash stations, washrooms, etc.
- Ministry of Labour regulates wages and such not campsites
- Possibly Interior Health would regulate this
- Very expensive for the farmers to provide other amenities when only employing workers, in a lot of cases, for 3 to 5 days at a time
- Who are the inspectors and when are farms inspected
- When Mexican's point out sub standard conditions, often a farmer will only show one facility to the inspector
- Need more inspectors to do random checks on the farms
- Naramata has a good system that works well – facilities are at all the farms and there is no need for a workers campground
- Our farmers need to step up to the plate like the Naramata farmers have
- Who will police the campground if it is put in place?
- Lots of debris and garbage at the existing campground is unattended to
- If the land is tenured would be able to weed out the bad people
- Best solution would be to move the workers to the farms where they are working

## **Issue #3 – Separate Pickers from the Transient Non-Workers**

The transient non-workers are the key issue in the community

### **Discussion**

- The farm workers and the growers need to be involved in the process
- In Naramata there is a community farm worker liaison position that deals with communication – works well

October 6, 2011

Notes of Meeting at Victory Hall

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- Should be a committee made up of farmers, farm workers and citizens to look at the issues
- Working towards a farm workers collective
- This issue is basically a policing problem

**Issue #4 – Social standards of Village residents must be respected by farm workers.**

Asking farm workers to respect the societal standards of our community. There is high percentage of seniors in our population and they expect a certain level of behaviour (i.e. no drinking beer on the street).

Discussion

- If the living standards for the farm workers are raised it would raise the farm workers respect for the community
- Farm workers are guests in our community – they should respect the rights of the residents

Closing

- RDOS will work on securing preferred site
- BCFGGA will continue to put money towards campground and provide orientation for farm workers
- Follow up meeting will be set up in May as they should have information on the site by then
- Current campground closing October 15