

Port backtracks on power lines will examine options

BY BRENT RICHTER, NORTH SHORE NEWS MARCH 22, 2013

MOODYVILLE residents have been given a temporary reprieve from the prospect of high-voltage power lines running through their neighbourhood as Port Metro Vancouver has agreed to examine two other options.

The community has been up in arms since BC Hydro informed them in early March that the 69-kilovolt transmission lines to service the Richardson grain terminal would be installed in the coming weeks.

The changes are part of the controversial Low Level Road expansion project, which the city agreed to last year. However, the plan the City of North Vancouver signed off on didn't make any mention of new 69-kilovolt transmission lines coming down St. Davids Avenue.

After an "emotional but respectful" meeting between PMV, the city, BC Hydro and roughly 70 neighbours Tuesday night, the port has agreed to research and report back on two potential alternatives - burying the existing distribution lines along the St. Davids corridor and installing the transmission lines on higher overhead poles, and servicing Richardson via the west, which would require the company to move its connecting substation.

"I think the meeting was worthwhile and well attended," said Justin Pedley, PMV's director of trade areas and infrastructure delivery. "The two options are going to be explored from a technical engineering point of view and we're going to do that as quickly as possible. The project team's intent is to report back to the port executive next Wednesday with the review of their findings and shortly after that, report back to the community and the city."

Residents were incensed they were never consulted or even told that the port's original intention to run the transmission lines along Low Level Road had been scrapped.

"(We started) getting into measuring inches and metres and we realized, to maintain a landscape buffer and not impact view corridors, we could not put the power lines where we were originally intending to. That's how we came up with the St. Davids corridor," Pedley said. "It wasn't until very recently that we realized there's just no way we can do it."

However, survey crews began measurements for the 69kilovolt lines on St. Davids in November last year, according to an email sent to First Street resident Amanda Nichol from PMV project manager Richard Lyell.

The response to the potential changes from Moodyville residents ranges from cautious optimism to bleak skepticism, according to neighbour Stephani Samaridis.

"Personally, I'm somewhat optimistic. I know there are a lot of people that are not, based on the process they've been undergoing with the Low Level Road. They don't believe anything they're being told," she said.

But if the port comes back next week without a workable solution, PMV can expect an escalation of the

protest from residents, Samaridis added.

"I'm hopeful they will do what they say and force Richardson to accept alternatives since the power that's going down our street is directly to supply them. I think what will likely happen if that does not work, there will be bodies lying in the street as they try to dig up the lines," she said.

Pedley could not say whether PMV has the power to compel its tenants to move their infrastructure.

The hydro line fiasco is just the latest in a string of incidents in which the port has angered its neighbours and city council by failing to communicate its plans or changes until they are already set in motion. But sullyng the relationship between PMV and the city is not the port's intention, Pedley said.

"The port has been in North Vancouver for 100-plus years and it intends to be there for a while, so the port takes being a good neighbour to heart and we intend to try and keep maintaining our relationship with the city," he said.

The city is also getting a completed Spirit Trail, slope stability improvements and improved bike paths out of the deal, he added.

brichter@nsnews.com

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