

Port's power line shocks residents

St. Davids transmission line not mentioned in grain expansion plan

BY BRENT RICHTER, NORTH SHORE NEWS MARCH 20, 2013



Moodyville resident Jackie Swanson speaks to a crowd of close to 40 area residents and City of North Vancouver Coun. Don Bell (third from left) Saturday as the neighbourhood debated Port Metro Vancouver plans to run a 69-kilovolt power line down St. Davids Avenue to service an expanded grain terminal at Port Metro Vancouver. Scan with Layar for video.

Photograph by: NEWS photo, Paul McGrath

RESIDENTS in Moodyville are feeling jolted by the late-in-coming revelation that BC Hydro and Port Metro Vancouver are planning to turn their neighbourhood into a corridor for high-voltage transmission lines.

The neighbourhood appeared en masse at the City of North Vancouver municipal hall Monday night to plead for council to use any means at its disposal to persuade PMV and Hydro to pick a new route.

The provincial utility only informed residents two weeks ago of its plan to run 69-kilovolt transmission lines down St. Davids Avenue from East Fourth Street to service Richardson Terminals, which is planning to build new silos after the Low Level Road expansion.

"We haven't had any time to evaluate any health concerns. The poles are going to be up to five metres higher. . . . It also decreases the property values in the neighbourhood. It depreciates the look of the neighbourhood that we're trying to restore and develop. It has view consideration for a lot of people," said Jackie Swanson outside the meeting.

"The neighbourhood has been slammed with so many things. We get all the coal dust. We get the wheat dust. The road is impacting us. They're cutting into the property and the Moodyville Park is being reduced in size because of the expansion. This little neighbourhood is being hit with everything."

Much to the disdain of area homeowners, hydro servicing plans were never once mentioned throughout the consultation process for the Low Level Road expansion discussion last year.

The port looked at five different options for other power line routes, according to Justin Pedley, the port's director of trade areas, but after considering impacts on the environment, community and viewscales, as well as constructability, right of ways, cost and scheduling, PMV determined the St. Davids route was the only viable option.

Facing grilling from Coun. Craig Keating on whether the port had fulfilled its promise to work with the community when developing the Low Level Road, Pedley was contrite.

"The port has to apologize a little on this one," he said before being cut off by laughter from the gallery.

"We believe the power lines are going on existing corridors. We've heard from the community and it's apparent there should have been more information discussed and we've committed to doing that starting (Tuesday)."

The port, BC Hydro and city staff scheduled a meeting with area residents to review options on Tuesday evening.

"We will listen to the community, present some options, and I can't promise any more than that," Pedley said

This is the second time council has been left stunned by plans never mentioned by PMV relating to the Low Level Road expansion. Richardson Terminals applied to PMV to build a 45-metre bank of silos last August, only after the city agreed to the unpopular Low Level Road project.

According to staff, PMV said it could only provide a detailed plan for its electricity servicing after the city granted approval for the Low Level Road project and its final designs for the road were complete.

"We have no authority to require that a hydro line go in a certain place or a pole to be inserted. I would like some authority. We see hydro poles show up in the middle of our sidewalks sometimes." said city engineer Doug Pope.

The discussion resulted in another 'I-told-you-so' moment from Coun. Rod Clark who voted against the Low Level Road project last year.

"I did so because we were buying a pig in a poke and this is exactly the kind of poke that we're getting. Poke, poke, poke. We're getting besieged by misinformation, disinformation and a complete lack of community consultation and it's not acceptable," Clark said.

"Here we are and are we here? Because only two members of council stood up for the community."

After warning the exasperated residents not to expect any leeway from PMV at Tuesday's meeting, Coun. Pam Bookham vowed to back the neighbourhood if they decided to escalate their protest.

"I believe you're going to get a very patronizing explanation that you need to suck it up and simply allow this to happen in your neighbourhood. If I were you, I would be taking to the streets. I would be taking charge of my neighbourhood and making it very, very difficult for Hydro to get in there to do the work that they are inflicting on your community," she said. "That's entirely up to you. But if you're there, I'll be there."

Speaking up for the council members who voted in favour of Low Level Road expansion, Keating reminded council of the importance the port plays in the city.

"It is not a simple, clear-cut case that those people who opposed the Low Level Road stood up for the community and other members of council didn't stand up for the community. This community depends upon tax dollars. This community depends upon jobs. This community depends upon that port. That port has been a part of our community since the very inception. Since before there was a North Vancouver"

But, he added, the port is squandering whatever goodwill the community has for it by ignoring its duty to consult.

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