

City of Maple Ridge

***COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA***

***January 24, 2017***

***7:00 p.m.***

***Council Chamber***

**ADDENDUM**

900      ***CORRESPONDENCE***

901      **Coalition for Healthy Riverview**

Letter dated January 21, 2017 from Dr. Nancy H. Furness on behalf of the Coalition for a Healthy Riverview requesting that the City of Maple Ridge join the Coalition and share a petition to restore Riverview lands a centre of excellence for mental wellness.

Checked by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



January 21, 2017

Dear Mayor Nicole Read and Maple Ridge Councillors:

I am writing to you on behalf of **Coalition for a Healthy Riverview (CHR)**. The CHR represents mental health, social justice, environmental, horticultural, art and heritage groups, as well as individual citizens who are advocating for the protection and restoration of the Riverview Hospital and Lands in Coquitlam.

Our mission statement is: ***“To retain the publicly owned Riverview Lands as a Centre of Excellence for Mental Wellness, set within the existing world class arboretum and surrounding green space.”***

Since 1904, the Riverview Hospital and surrounding Lands have been publicly held assets dedicated to meeting the mental health care needs of the people of BC. Riverview has been continually downsized since the 1960's, until the doors were finally closed in July, 2012.

The downsizing of Riverview has been correlated with a dramatic increase in drug use and addiction within the regional mental health population, especially within the deinstitutionalized population. Subsequent failure to provide housing and supports for people experiencing serious mental health issues is a major factor leading to the present mental health crisis in communities throughout BC.

Riverview's closing resulted in loss of valuable mental health education, training capacity and expertise. This has negatively impacted BC's capacity to educate, train and support practitioners who work with seriously mentally ill and severely addicted and mentally ill people.

Riverview Hospital is located within a spectacular campus-like setting, including a world class open-grown arboretum. In addition to enhancing the healing aspects of the site, the Riverview lands provide a natural space to be enjoyed by local residents. The arboretum is home to ~1800 mature trees, some of which are unique to Western Canada. The individual trees have been assessed at \$50 million. However, as a collection, the arboretum is worth much more.

Riverview also provides habitat for wildlife such as black-tailed deer, black bears, bobcats, coyotes, raccoons and beaver. Birdwatchers have identified over 80 bird species, including three species of owls.



The Riverview buildings date from 1913 to 1955, and many deserve heritage designation as examples of 20th-century B.C. architecture. The National Trust for Canada listed Riverview as one of Canada's top 10 most endangered heritage sites in 2013. The entire Riverview site is included on Municipal and Provincial heritage registries, but carries no formal protection. In 2009 an effort to declare Riverview a National Historic Site was blocked by the provincial (Liberal) government.

Contrary to the wishes of the majority of TriCities residents, BC Provincial Liberal Government's current plans for the future of Riverview entail woefully limited mental health facilities, significant development including high-density market housing and an economic zone to achieve a "break-even" mandate. No clear commitment has been made to preserve the surrounding green-space or arboretum.

CHR's goal is to send a strong, collective message to our Provincial elected representatives telling them to retain Riverview in its entirety as a public asset dedicated as a Centre of Excellence for Mental Wellness set within the existing green-space. We are currently sharing info-graphics and a petition via social media, and are developing templates for engaging with local elected representatives. Public awareness events and a Rally for Riverview are being planned for the spring. Please help us share the petition:

[Petition to Restore Riverview Lands as a Centre of Excellence for Mental Wellness](#)

We invite you to receive further information and updates by joining CHR. Please respond with contact information for your group to: [riverview.chr@gmail.com](mailto:riverview.chr@gmail.com)

You can also "join" us on Facebook: [coalition for a healthy riverview](#)

With hope for a healthy future,

Dr Nancy H. Furness

*on behalf of the Coalition for a Healthy Riverview*

For further background, we encourage you to refer to the following report:

[Into the Future - the Coquitlam Health Campus](#) *A Vision for the Riverview Lands Prepared by Dr. John Higenbottam JAH consulting June 2014*

## Quotes about Riverview

*... to anyone who has walked under the great trees of Riverview, it is sickening to think of cutting them all down to make room for just another patch of tackytacky suburban sprawl.* - **Crawford Kilian**

*"Many of the people discharged (from Riverview) in the move to deinstitutionalize are now on the streets of the Downtown Eastside, among other places, or in the criminal justice system. It's a huge scandal. One of these days, I think we'll look back on it, and it's going to be a very shameful incident in our past."*

- **Jane Duval, executive director of the B.C. Schizophrenia Society**

*"We have here a unique and beautiful creation that is the legacy and gift of previous generations. We want to take this botanical creation and use it for education, for therapy, and for the mental health of the people of British Columbia and Canada. This is our vision."*

- **Bill Browne, Horticulturalist and Founding President, Riverview Horticultural Centre Society**

*"This collection of mature trees ... should be preserved as a future source of propagation material, taxonomic study, and definitely a gene pool."* - **William Snowden, Director Emeritus, the Niagara Parks Commission**

*"There is a good argument for a school of therapeutic gardening which would put B.C. in the forefront in this area of growing interest."* - **Val Adolph, editor of "The Riverview Lands"**

*"It is very important for people, especially children, who live in cities to have an opportunity to experience nature. That is what makes the Riverview Lands so important."* - **Dr. David Suzuki**

*"Imagine that Stanley Park had not been set aside for the millions of Vancouverites and visitors who use it. Imagine that Fort Langley had not been preserved, nor Emily Carr's paintings collected and displayed. In 100 years, citizens will have such gratitude that the planners and politicians of today had the vision to keep Riverview intact, with facilities and programs to make it accessible."* - **Paddy Wales, International garden photographer and writer**

*"These trees in this magnificent park like setting are invaluable as teaching tools to all levels and ages of students."* - **David Tarrant, Horticulturalist, Author, and Broadcaster**

*"This (Botanical Garden) would give visitors from all parts of the world an opportunity of seeing at a glance the enormous variety of beautiful, curious, and useful plants indigenous to British Columbia."*

- **John Davidson, Provincial Botanist, 1913**

*"We reflect with humility that these people, rejected by the society of the day...are the ones who have given us this treasure."* - **Brenda Guild Gillespie, Author and Journalist**

*The unique character of the Riverview Lands is defined by its heritage trees, historic buildings, and landscapes as well as its streams and wildlife habitat. These features MUST be protected and enhanced in order for the lands to reach maximum potential. Demolishing intrinsic and authentic architecture or compromising in any way the health of the mature trees means losing what is special and unique about the Riverview site.*

- **Riverview Horticultural Centre Society 2014 Our Vision for the Riverview Lands**

*"There is no other city in the province that has ever had to break even on properties in order to get some kind of medical facility. I don't know why Coquitlam has to be the first."* - **Coquitlam City Councilor Mae Reid**

*"The need for mental health and health care programs, services and facilities in British Columbia has never being greater. Utilizing the Riverview Lands for program and service delivery is the key to addressing the needs of people with serious mental illnesses in the Lower Mainland and throughout the province."* - **Dr. John Higenbottam**

# A Riverview dedicated to Mental Health would benefit all citizens of BC.

The Riverview Lands are home to approximately 1,800 mature trees, some of which are unique to western Canada. Access to green spaces and to recreational activities is known to have beneficial effects on recovery from mental health problems.\*

**Ask your MLA to help restore Riverview as a Centre of Excellence for mental health.**

