



Tsawwassen Votes for Development and Jobs

By Bobbi-Sue Menard

TFN members vote 'no' to a proposal to develop condominiums on an adjoining six-acre parcel, that would be similar to those pictured here.

The TFN lands are highly valuable to developers because of their proximity to Delta Port and the ferry that takes hundreds of thousands of people to Vancouver Island every year.



A recent referendum by the Tsawwassen Band saw the go ahead for development of an industrial land package next to DeltaPort in the greater Vancouver region.

It is difficult to overstate the unique characteristics of the 120 acres of industrial land the Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) voted on in an April 15 referendum to approve for long term lease. The referendum results moved large scale development one step closer on TFN land.

The industrial land in question is defined by its contiguous size and ready access to Deltaport, road and rail facilities. Located at the northwestern corner of TFN land, it is the only large piece of land on the West Coast of Canada with such a diverse range of sterling logistic qualities, and the TFN is laying down the legislative parameters and socio-economic goals to create investment stability and longevity.

On April 3, 2009, the Tsawwassen First Nation Treaty came into effect. Since then, it has been an extraordinarily busy year for Chief Kim Baird and her council.

When the Treaty took effect, Baird acknowledged, "The Indian Act no longer exists in our community." Work has focused on delivering the civic institutions and

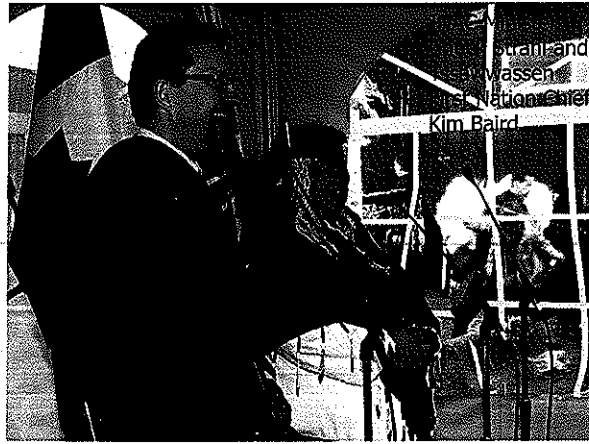
socio-economic structures necessary to build future success.

One of the key pieces created by Baird and the council was the TFN Economic Development Corporation. The TFN corporation was incorporated November 1, 2009, under the BC Corporation Act; it has its own board appointed by the executive council of the Band.

The TFN-EDC goals are outlined in a letter of expectations, which will be renewed or adjusted in 2012. "Everything we do is in the interests of the TFN," says the corporation's CEO, Chris Hartman. "The TFN is the entire shareholder."

Hartman describes the mandate of the TFN-EDC as generating revenue from TFN land assets and creating job opportunities. Hartman's personal experience is in developing large pieces of land to generate revenue in the private sector.

Hartman says ongoing successes and solid working relationships are a vital part of delivering future results to the Tsawwassen Band. One key relationship,



have been quietly knocking on the door since day one. A Request for Expressions of Interest will soon be released, signaling the start of the selection process. "We are talking to international investors with the experience to lead a project like this. It is a colour-blind process. The future agreement will look at revenue and the social side. It must deliver revenue; it must create jobs for members."

laid out in a February 12, 2010, MOU, was signed between the TFN and TSI Terminal Systems.

TSI is the marine terminal operator in Vancouver and Delta, and has been a business partner with the TFN for many years. Included in the MOU are commitments to explore joint economic development opportunities, work towards developing programs to ensure employment opportunities and training and management capacity initiatives for TFN members.

Recent visible activity on TFN land has been the result of \$9 million in stimulus funds (shared equally between the federal, provincial and TFN governments) used to develop infrastructure in and around the 120 acres to be developed.

The project has already delivered jobs: the initial land development activity saw, along with outside contracting, 3,000 hours of band member employment created in six months, with an average wage of approximately \$20 per hour. That is small potatoes compared to what is coming up next, says Hartman.

"We are looking at supply chain management, manufacturing facilities, and adding value to what comes to Canada," says Hartman. The facilities will be aimed directly at maximizing the opportunities created by proximity to Deltaport.

Funding industrial development is the next step as international investors

ate jobs for members." Hartman speculates final agreements could be in place as quickly as fall 2010, as interested parties have been making inquiries for over three years. "This is a motivated process and it would be wonderful to have construction of the first phase begin next year."

Baird understands a 'motivated process.' She discussed the past year and her hopes for the potential development two days prior to the band wide vote on the proposed developments.

Baird is arguably one of the most productive legislators and community leaders in Canada today. Since the TFN Treaty signing in December 2006, its implementation in 2009 and the first community wide land use referendum, Baird and TFN Council have had to draft law, formulate business plans



and create effective community processes for dealing with the avalanche of information and questions.

Land development and job creation have been high on the list of priorities. "So far in terms of engagement we have had a lot of our people extremely interested," says Baird. One reason for that is the 'pent-up demand' for progress, she says. "The question is how to build an economy from the ground up. We have a lot of individuals who are anxious to see returns on the land."

There are a range of views on the land development issue.

Prior to the vote Baird was optimistic about the outcome. Yet dissent is an ongoing theme Baird works with



Construction on the TFN Lands means good employment.

TFN DEVELOPMENT REFERENDUM

TFN Members voted on three ballot questions regarding three separate areas of Tsawwassen Public Lands

- 1 Majority of TFN Members voted 'yes' on TFN entering into lease agreements on approximately 120 acre of industrial land.
- 2 Majority of TFN Members voted 'no' on TFN entering into lease agreements for a commercial facility. The land under consideration consisted of approximately 100 acres adjacent to Hwy 17, all of a portion of which was considered for a a major retail, commercial facility.
- 3 Majority of TFN Members voted 'no' on six acres for the development of a retirement community complex located on waterfront lands.

daily. The referendum had three proposals, but in the end only one passed (see sidebar); although arguably it was the most important one to the Band's economy.

With a strong business case in hand the TFN Council didn't take anything for granted and worked hard to address member's concerns. Public process was adapted from full out forums to smaller meetings, almost one on one, with questions and answers recorded and distributed after sessions. "This has been an expression of our self governance and open accountability," says the Chief.

"It is tough from a traditional governance of consensus, but our conclusion is the minority shouldn't rule and we don't have the luxury of waiting for perfect to come along."

Baird keenly feels what she terms the "high expectations to manage judiciously."

With the development of the industrial lands, she is hoping TFN members see there will be more jobs than members. "What becomes important is the human resources strategy for training. We want quality employment. Right now [it] is chicken and egg; we [as individuals] have a general lack of confidence that specific training will lead to results, so we hold off on training."

The plan is for targeted training to



match skills to opportunities. Baird sees the inbuilt advantages of the industrial land development and creating training pipelines for members in the future. Industrial massing opportunities and light manufacturing in concert with the exceptional distribution opportunities have Baird confident about the future.

"As soon as we finalized the treaty we began working on the land-use plan. The industrial land was low lying fruit. It is important to have early successes."

Baird and TFN Council have pursued an 'aggressive' legislative agenda by conscientious choice. The same can be said of the approach taken to economic development, "We've designed everything to be investment friendly; we are very open to that."

Photos contributed



TFN Economic Development Corporation Board Members (l to r): Diane McElhinney, Chair Norman Stark, Pat Hibbits, Carolyn Rogers and Chief Kim Baird.