

Peachland Baptist Church



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Media Release

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Church Shocked and Disheartened by Peachland's Brinkmanship Tactics to Force Land Deal

Since 2021 the District of Peachland has been aggressively pursuing the acquisition of the Peachland Baptist Church property including a surprise, unsolicited offer in November 2023 for the land and building at less than one-third of its estimated replacement value.

Since that time the church has been on a roller coaster ride of sporadic communications with recent correspondence from staff becoming increasingly combative and raising legal powers to force an expropriation of Church property. Third party professional appraisers and cost consultants have priced a like-for-like replacement of the church land and building at an approximate value of nearly \$4M.

"I understand that they would like to create new offices for town bureaucrats, and our spot probably looks like a great place to build them, but it doesn't seem right that a charitable organization which has served the community for 120 years should subsidize this plan on land we own and don't wish to leave" said Lyle Wahl, the pastor for the church. To date the town has suggested the church sell its holdings at below market value or moves to a less valuable area abutting the highway.

The saga began when plans for a new firehall grew into more a more grandiose and expensive vision for a new super-complex that would house a new Municipal Hall, residential housing, new space for RCMP and Ambulance services, potential retail and commercial space, all with necessary parking. Detailed plans were not shared with the Church but had to be obtained by mining the town's procurement site for a confidential Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) process that had already been initiated.

The church is trying to work with the town as they are the local authority that God has set up to govern the community. The pastor notes "We have been clear that while we don't want to leave where we're at, we are willing to work with them. Our church attendance has doubled since COVID, and we use the building throughout the week. We just don't understand why they can't build their plans to the west where they've already acquired land adjacent to the lot set aside for the firehall, instead of displacing us."

No consultation on the expansive plans of the town occurred with the church, which also seem to transcend current budget allocations approved by residents through the referendum, which itself made no reference to the need to expropriate church property. Closed meetings of town Council and confidential meetings with proponents with designs for the site have left the church out of the loop, with no response to the sincere offers of the church to work together towards a mutual solution that saves taxpayer money.

The ministry of Peachland Baptist Church is to love and serve the people of Peachland, in the heart of the community. The church remains hopeful that a solution can be found that will avoid its closure during a mental health crisis when the spiritual needs of the community area are greater than they have ever been.