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Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2024 10:04 AM

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Cc: saverockwoodpark@gmail.com

Subject: Please rescind motion to designate 1671 Sandy Point Road property as surplus

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Good morning,

On February 20, 2024, the Saint John Common Council passed a motion to declare #1671 Sandy Point Road, a part of Rockwood Park, as surplus land without any public consultation.

While I support growing Saint John and reducing the vacancy rate, there are plenty of areas for housing development that would not compromise Saint John's prized urban park. Given the trend in the market at the moment I suspect this lot would not be used for genuine affordable housing, which is the greatest need in our city. Even if this were affordable housing the location does have the infrastructure (such as consistent bus routes) to support the groups of persons who are the most in need for this type of housing.

I moved to Saint John two years ago. My best memories of this city have been in Rockwood park. The natural beauty and available amenities has had a major impact on my decision to stay in Saint John not only to continue my education but my career in the healthcare sector as well.

This portion of land in particular is gorgeous. Harrigan lake is a spectacular trail and the first I ever hiked in the park. It is a relatively accessible means of enjoying a version of remote nature. Groups that utilize the park such as the Saint John Trail Runners have provided me a huge outdoor community that I had feared I would lose when I originally moved here. This park and the recreational uses of it are some of the BEST things Saint John has to offer.

I am asking that you please NOT sell off any part of rockwood park for potential short-term game.

I request that this motion be rescinded as soon as possible when the full council is present. Further, I encourage the Mayor to restore public trust by immediately committing to eliciting public opinion through a consultation period for every decision that will have lasting impacts on how the land within the boundaries of Saint John city parks will be used (including but not limited to Rockwood Park). This includes consultation on selling, rezoning, surplus or any other use that has the potential to impact environmental or aesthetic values.

Rather than selling lot 1671 Sandy Point Road for development, I would like to see the areas of Rockwood Park along Sandy Point Road protected by a conservation agreement (conservation easement or covenant) to ensure the long-term enjoyment of this cherished green space. I also encourage the city to develop a plan for 1671 Sandy Point Road. This may include taking advantage of sunk costs by building park facilities or reforesting cleared land.

I worry that rezoning, selling and developing 1671 Sandy Point Rd will:

- set an unintended, short-sighted precedent – which may help to "clear the way" for other areas of Rockwood Park that are not protected by a conservation agreement to be developed.
- have impacts on the environment - 65% of the property is forested and therefore provides habitat to wildlife and helps to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- increase the input of salt and effluent from vehicles into the lake which will decrease water quality for fish, freshwater mussels, amphibians, loons and beavers.
- increase traffic issues in this area, which will pose a risk to human and wildlife health,
- affect the enjoyment of park users hiking on trails near Harrigan Lake on the Harrigan Lake Trail, Golf Trax Trail and Tour de Pants Trail.
- diminish the economic and intrinsic value of the park.

Rockwood Park is a gem, just the way it is. Please rescind the motion to surplus this property as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kathleen Varty

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