

Mt. Rocher Property Report

December 2021

Recommendation

It is recommended that the following report be discussed and received as information.

Background

During the September 16th, 2021, Finance Committee meeting, a history of the Mt. Rocher property was provided. It was occupied by Mt. Rocher Alliance Church until 2006 when the church closed. Since the church closure, the building was used by the Canadian Sunday School Mission until 2014 when a 'church group' took over the rental. The 'church group' is composed of a few members who used to belong to Mt. Rocher Alliance Church. The 'church group' pays a small rent of \$1,200.00 per year plus utilities and maintenance costs.

The value of the property has decreased to \$178,000.00 in 2021 from a high of \$280,000.00. It should be noted that the land is valued at \$46,900.00 and the building is valued at \$131,000.00.

In December 2015, the Finance Committee proposed to DEXCOM that the property be sold to the 'church group' renting the facility at book value (approximately \$46,000.00) and this was approved. However, the 'church group' declined to purchase the property due to financial restraints.

Currently, the 'church group' has dwindled down to basically 2 retired couples, 1 single teacher approaching retirement, 1 single retired widow, and a handful of adherents that do not contribute financially. They are paying an annual rent of \$1,200.00. It is costing them about \$10,000.00 a year for heating, electricity, water user fees, water, property tax, insurance, minor repairs, cleaning, lawn maintenance, and snow removal. The heating cost alone is about \$4,500.00 a year.

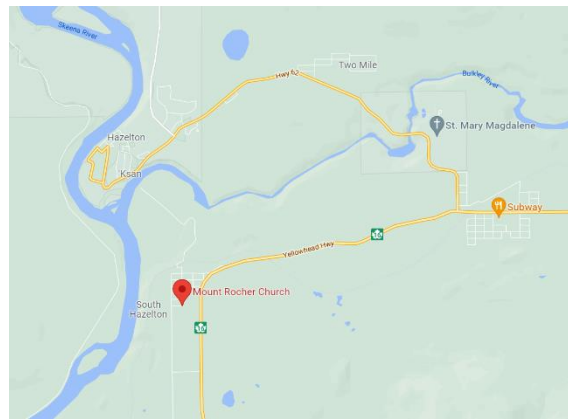
The 'church group' is requesting CPD to modify the lease agreement by sharing 50% of the heating cost (about \$2,000.00 a year). Any major repair expenses will also be deferred to CPD.

Bart Metcalf of Misty River Ministries has also been using the building weekly for gatherings for a cost of \$200 per month and Richmond Chinese Alliance Church supports Misty River Ministries through CPD (approximately \$5,000.00 per year).

At the conclusion of the Finance Committee meeting, it was decided that further information gathering is needed to further determine the future of the Mt. Rocher property. Since the 'church group' has not met in the building for the past year, the rental fees for 2021 was waived.

Discussion

The Property



The Mt. Rocher property (2060 Broadway Street) is in a residential area in South Hazelton. The property is approximately 1.1 ha (2.7 acres) in area with a church building. Zoning on the site is P1 - Community and Institutional Zone. Tenure of the property is 'Crown-granted' which means the land was granted by the government and is a freehold property. However, Bart Metcalf mentioned that there is a 99-year lease from the Crown which started in 1982. This needs to be verified.

From the aerial photo, the footprint of the church building is approximately 3,000 sq. ft. It was built in 1994. There is a main floor and a basement. The information received from Bart Metcalf indicates the building is in good condition. The roof was replaced a few years ago. One of the two furnaces was replaced not too long ago. However, the other furnace is very old and may need to be replaced in a few years. The building has had some spring flooding in the past, but the addition of a roofed exterior area

used for BBQs on the north side has substantially eliminated this. There is a sump pump that takes care of the remaining spring run off.

There is little real estate activity in the Hazelton market. Demand for the church property is low and will likely require a rezoning process for any other potential uses. The main activity area is in New Hazelton.

The Ministry

As indicated earlier in the report the 'church group' using the building has about 6 members who are quite aged. They are not currently using the building due to one member not wanting to be vaccinated. However, they intend to resume meeting when the pandemic is over. They have little to no outreach ministry but recognize the value of having a church in the South Hazelton community.

Bart Metcalf, who used to be the pastor of Mt. Rochet Alliance Church from 1998 to 2006, is operating a ministry serving the First Nations people (Misty River Ministries). He remains in good contact with members of the 'church group' and many of them are neighbours. Grace Gathering (the church service of Misty River Ministries) uses the building for their weekly worship gatherings. They rent the space from the 'church group' for \$200/month. They need the church building for their larger church gatherings.

They were approached by the 'church group' for additional rent to help off set the maintenance cost of the property. They are prepared to pay more (double the current rent) to continue using the building. However, Bart indicated there are significant cultural barriers to meeting at the church building. The First Nations elders wanted their people to not attend the white man's church because their ancestors were abused there. It is also difficult for transport - getting to the building from the outlying communities is difficult.

The focus of Misty River Ministries in the early years was establishing smaller gatherings (house church) in the various communities - but the key need now is training. The hope is that First Nations youth would eventually become part of the ministry. Another possibility is about a training centre for indigenous young people who sense a call to lead house groups in their village. The training is in basic leadership that is culturally relevant to the indigenous people.

Thoughts to Ponder

- There is no growth in the existing 'church group' using the property and there is no indication that this pattern will change in future.
- Misty River Ministries has been operating under New Venture for over 16 years. The ministry is not financially adequate and requires outside assistance. However, it is a viable ministry with good partner support. It is the only First Nations church in the CPD. It is worthy of CPD's continual support.
- Bart Metcalf is close to retirement age, and he is looking for possible successors for the Misty River Ministries. This may be an opportune time to re-focus the ministry with the hope that First Nations youth would eventually become part of the future ministry. A leadership training

centre/program for indigenous young people who sense a call to lead house groups in their village is a possibility.

- Annual maintenance cost of the property to CPD should be minimized while alternatives are being explored for the future of the property. A new lease agreement with the 'church group' and Misty River Ministries should be negotiated to establish an equitable arrangement for the upkeep of the property. Perhaps a church ministry team could visit the property on a work project.
- In the medium term, if a vision develops, we can look to sell and relocate the funds to another asset that will better serve Misty River like a training centre in the New Hazelton area.
- There may be an opportunity and a turning point emerging. Therefore, more time is needed to discern and explore ministry opportunities before a decision is made on the Mt. Rocher property.

The information in this report was collected from the following sources:

- BC Assessment Authority records.
- Regional District of Kitimat Stikine.
- A real estate agent in the Hazelton area.
- Conversations between Andy Lampkin and Bart Metcalf.
- Prayerful discussions with Andy Lampkin who oversees New Venture ministries.