

Jumbo dilemma for RDEK

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For The Free Press

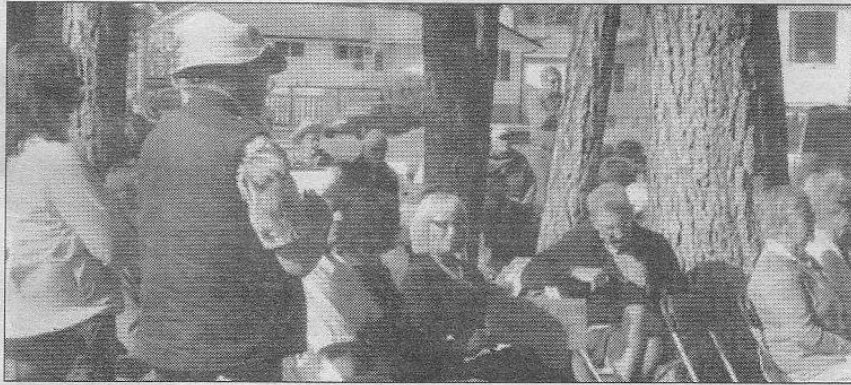
Elk Valley RDEK directors came under fire for a board motion to hand the decision-making power for the controversial Jumbo Glacier Resort to the provincial government.

The 85 plus crowd that gathered outside the RDEK meeting in Cranbrook on Friday was visibly stunned at the eight to seven vote in favour of asking the provincial government to designate the Jumbo Glacier a resort municipality.

Directors Cindy Corrigan (Fernie Mayor), Heath Slee (Area B), Norman Walter, Gerry Wilkie, Wendy Booth, Michael Macdonald (who voted on behalf of absent Director Ute Juras) and Gerry Taft voted against the motion, while Directors David Wilks (Sparwood Mayor, who brought the motion forward), Dean McKerracher (Elkford Mayor), Mike Sosnowski (Area A), Liz Shatschneider, Jim Ogilvie, Scott Manjak, Rob Gay and Dee Conklin voted for the motion.

Fifteen delegates spoke, mostly against the motion, to the 15 member board over two hours, with rigorous debate from the 15 directors.

Many of the delegates



An 85-strong crowd gathered outside the RDEK office in Cranbrook to await the board decision on Jumbo resort.

Submitted photo

felt that land use decisions were the responsibility of the RDEK, and passing the decision to Victoria would mean a loss in public input and democracy.

Wildsight's John Bergenske said the RDEK was making possibly its most important land use decision ever, and that significant public input and due process was still needed. He asked the board not to break the public's trust.

A Wildsight press statement after the meeting described the decision as "a Jumbo stab in the back."

Several Directors expressed their concerns that directors supporting the motion were largely from the Elk Valley, where they would not face public backlash.

Fernie director Corrigan, who voted against the deci-

sion, said she believes that the Jumbo resort will some day happen, but the decision needed to be made locally.

"I think its imperative that we deal with this at this table," said Corrigan. "We all have a job to do, and that's land use and if it's not fun, that's okay."

Director Slee said he would not support the decision due to a lack of future local input.

"There's a lot of passion surrounding this process," said Slee. "Any local input into this project will be negated."

Director Wilks, who brought the motion to the board, called the board out for not bringing up any motion to move forward with the Jumbo decision after the 2006 vote.

"We have continued to allow the proponent to

move forward with the provincial government," said Wilks. "Eighteen and a half years I think is a lot of democracy."

Director Sosnowski voted in favour because he felt the Jumbo process was slowing down projects that were trying to get passed in his constituency.

"Having their processes slowed down is not in their best interest," said Sosnowski.

Now that the decision is in the hands of the provincial government, if they do designate Jumbo a resort municipality, an appointed council would govern decisions.

It is possible that someday a local population would eventually grow in the proposed resort, and would elect to make their own decisions.