

Local news

Mark Allan
City Editor



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Local 503



Artist's sketch of Prince George Costco building, planned near the corner of Highway 16 West and Range Road.

BIG WHOLESALE-RETAIL OUTLET

Way cleared for Costco

by BERNICE TRICK
Citizen staff

CITY COUNCIL

Costco Wholesale got the nod from city council Monday to proceed with plans for a large outlet in Prince George.

A public hearing attracted only one member from the public who offered support for the project on behalf of Peden Hill Community Association.

Council approved third reading of bylaws to create a Costco development permit area and a highway commercial zone, as well as to rezone the 4.8-hectare (12-acre) site to C-5C highway commercial from tourist and highway commercial zoning.

The matter now requires approval of fourth and final reading by council, approval of the bylaw by the province and approval by

the Highways Ministry, which is expected today.

The wholesale-retail outlet will be bordered by Highway 16 West, and Range, Wiebe and Vance roads.

Jack Frank, real estate project manager for Costco, said the company is pleased and excited about establishing in Prince George because it's at the centre of a large trading area.

Customers are expected from as far away as Prince Rupert, Fort St. John and Alberta border communities, said Frank.

The company expects to hire from 125 to 200 full- and part-time employees with a minimum wage of \$9.99 per hour.

The store could open by late October or early November, Frank said.

The 135,000-square-foot facility will offer 738 parking spaces and the unique feature of an attached tire sales area.

"Customers will be able to have tires installed without ever going into the store," told council.

Costco built its first warehouse in the U.S. in 1983 and established in Canada two years later in Burnaby.

Since then 12 other stores have opened in Canada including four in B.C.

The company, which carries about 3,500 items in its outlets, has 1.5 million members in North America. Costco shoppers must be registered as members.

Council okays rental fees for new civic centre-plaza

The new civic centre-plaza complex is gaining popularity even while still under construction, and Prince George city hall is already booking the halls for 1995 through '97.

There's interest from groups that have never held events in Prince George, Tom Madden, director of Leisure Services, told city council Monday.

Madden says it's possible the centre will be ready to accommodate events in November, "but the beginning of 1994 is more likely."

Council readily approved the first rental fee schedule Monday with some members expressing surprise that space can cost less than the old Civic Centre.

The reason is because the new facility offers different space op-

tions to choose from, Madden explained.

The main floor features an 18,000-square-foot assembly hall which divides into three rooms.

Renting one section for a dinner and dance with a capacity of 330 will cost \$432. The main floor of the old Civic Centre costs \$600 for the same event.

Renting two sections in the new centre, with a capacity for 650, will cost \$864.

■ The daily rate for a convention is \$1,620 for the entire hall, \$1,080 for two sections and \$540 for one section.

Commercial and promotion events cost the same daily rate as conventions.

■ Meeting rooms rates vary from \$14.40 for one to \$41.60 for six

rooms used by community service groups for up to three hours.

Prices increase for more time required and for commercial or convention uses.

In his update, Madden said he expects to tender the construction project for the \$2.4-million outdoor plaza in late March.

Last bookings for the old Civic Centre, referred to as "the old girl" by city councillors, are on May 9. A tender for the demolition of the old building will be advertised in March or April, Madden said.

Council accepted a tender from Division Ten Enterprise Inc. to supply and install telescopic seating in the new civic centre at a cost of \$214,451.

The firm was the low bidder from among only two contenders.

Mishap kills former resident

A former Prince George resident has been identified by Fort St. James RCMP as the driver killed in a weekend snowmobile accident in the village, 150 kilometres northwest of Prince George.

Police said Lincoln James Whitehead, 21, of Fort St. James died when his snowmobile collided with a log and flipped. The log marked the parking lot boundary near Cottonwood Park, a small downtown park on the shore of Stuart Lake. The accident occurred at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

Whitehead was pronounced dead on arrival at Stuart Lake Hospital. An investigation continues.

Whitehead was raised in Prince George, but moved to Fort St. James where he has been living and working. Funeral services will be held Friday at 4 p.m. at Assman's Funeral Chapel here.

Investigating Mackenzie RCMP say charges will not be laid against

POLICE BEAT

the driver of a logging truck that struck and killed a McLeod Lake pedestrian.

Marion Boyko, 69, died Jan. 29 when she was hit by the loaded logging truck. Boyko was walking south on the Hart Highway at 3 p.m. She was struck when she attempted to cross from the west to the east side of the highway.

No mechanical flaws were revealed after investigators completed a full inspection of the truck. McLeod Lake is 160 km north of Prince George.

■ A change of venue application for the trial of Andrew Rose, 44, charged with the second-degree murders of two West German tourists, has been adjourned to March 5.

The matter was adjourned Mon-

day in B.C. Supreme Court in Prince George.

The bodies of Bernd Goerick, 27, and Andrea Scherpf, 22, were discovered Oct. 6, 1983, about 300 km northeast of Prince George, outside Chetwynd.

★ ★ ★

Fire investigators are continuing to comb the rubble after a fire swept through the Bulkley Hotel in Smithers early Saturday, killing one person.

Smithers RCMP said a post-mortem to determine the identity of a body discovered Sunday is expected in Prince George today.

Fire officials said this morning that both a damage estimate and the probable cause of the fire was still being determined.

One Alberta man, a member of the band that had been playing at the hotel cabaret and staying at the hotel has been moved to Prince George Regional Hospital for treatment.

"She's got more babies now than she did before," her mother said.

Family friends and members of her church have already pitched in by donating everyday essentials.

Little Jocelyn still needs clothes and boots. She is a size two and wears children's size 5 or 6 footwear. A dress jacket or coat for McLeod herself, size 12 or 14, is also needed because McLeod, an occupational therapist, will soon return to work. McLeod also has no shoes other than those she had on at the fire and takes a women's shoe size 7 1/2 or size 8.

"It's ironic," says McLeod. I've helped with a clothing drive every

'METER PLUGGERS' TO BE FINED \$8

by BERNICE TRICK
Citizen Staff

Overstaying your time a little at a parking meter in downtown Prince George still means a \$2 fine unless you're a "meter-plugger."

City council agreed Monday to leave the \$2 fines in place for overstaying the time paid for on meters, but to sock it to "meter pluggers" by handing out "overtime ticket" fines of \$8.

Meter pluggers are described by the city's parking ticket fine review committee as individuals who hog the meters by continually plugging in additional coins.

They work downtown and insist on parking on the street. Their offence is parking longer than the maximum time limit provided at that location.

"They purposely park their vehicles longer than the maximum time limit allowed by the parking meter," says committee chairman Coun. Monica Becott.

The current penalty for overtime parking is a \$2 fine if paid within 24 hours — the same as fines imposed for overstaying the time paid for on a meter.

The new fine has no early payment options. The practice of plugging meters has a negative effect on downtown shopping and consumers who want convenient parking near the businesses they patronize, says the committee.

When parking is perceived as a problem, consumers often decide to go elsewhere.

Regulatory staff at city hall are directed by council to increase enforcement of meter pluggers and especially monitor vehicles on which complaints are received.

Parking control officers will monitor vehicles parked at two-hour meters through red flags on the meter and by chalking tires.

First comes the \$2 ticket

Vehicles parked more than two hours will first receive a \$2 ticket. If they are still in the same spot two hours later, an \$8 ticket will be issued even if there's money in the meter.

Individuals who pay for two hours, but are 10 minutes late returning to their vehicles may find a \$2 "meter-time expired" ticket on the windshield, but won't receive an "overtime ticket" until another two hours have passed.

Coun. Rino Fornari opposed the new regulations, preferring instead to remove all parking meters.

But city manager George Paul reminded council the many examples of communities removing parking meters is equalled by just as many replacing or putting them in.

Other parking recommendations approved by council are: ■ Commercial vehicles with municipal decals are no longer allowed to park free at metered spaces.

"Removing these commercial vehicles from parking meters will create more parking spaces for consumers," the report states.

The vehicles can continue to park in loading zones or in back lanes for loading and unloading purposes, and drivers can park at meters provided they pay the fee and park no longer than the maximum time limit.

Holders of municipal decals will be given a two-week warning period about the new regulations

■ Regulations for utility vehicles parking at meters will be re-examined and addressed in a new parking bylaw.

■ City staff, in the process of revising the city's parking bylaw, are to note the effects of new parking regulations for a year before reporting back to council.

A public meeting held last year on parking problems determined a majority opposed increasing the \$2 fine because it would produce a further decay of downtown shopping, felt meter pluggers must be strictly dealt with and believe there's widespread abuse of parking regulations by commercial vehicles and some abuse of metered spaces by utility vehicles.

Auction helps service

John Unsworth will conduct an auction instead of an orchestra at the Bethesda Christian Counselling Service dinner and auction Feb. 26 in Prince George.

Tickets for the auction, a fundraiser for the city counselling service, are on sale. Profits from the event will help Bethesda maintain its unique services here, Bethesda chairman Pat Bunn said in a recent interview.

With two full-time counsellors and backup from others, Bethesda offers a range of services to any-

one who needs it, Bunn said. Although much of their work is from referrals, their door at 575 Quebec St. is open to anyone.

Bethesda also works with employee assistance programs. The non-profit association stands on its own as an independent association in Prince George.

Cash grants from the city, help from service clubs, garage sales and fundraisers with local restaurants such as Wendy's all help Bethesda, said Bunn.

The auction takes place at Cedars Christian School on North Nechako Road. Tickets are \$17.50.

For more information, or tickets, contact Catherine Tolkamp at 962-6287 or Murray Mawhinney at 564-4780.



Jo-Ann Prediger

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BARTON INSURANCE BROKERS

Mom says thanks for help after fire

by MARILYN STORIE
Citizen Staff

A Prince George woman who escaped with her two-year-old daughter from a house fire here last Tuesday wants to thank people for their generosity and help.

"I think it's just so wonderful to see how much people in Prince George care about others," Janice McLeod, 36, said Monday. "I've been helped by people I've never even met."

A fire began in a single-car garage attached to the home and quickly spread to consume the house. The frame is intact but will have to be torn down.

McLeod escaped from the fire with her daughter, a portable phone and a comforter. A neighbor saw her shivering at the fire — McLeod did not have a coat — and lent her a blanket.

"Jocelyn keeps asking when we're going home," said McLeod, who is temporarily staying with her parents. "We've had a lot of talks about that. It's been shock for her and not easy to explain."

McLeod said her daughter missed "her babies" (dolls) at first, but since the fire she has received so many gifts of coloring books, building blocks and toys, that she thinks it is Christmas.