

Fernwood land flip on tap

Deal in the works to trade properties with controversial developer Robin Kimpton

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If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

That's the logic behind a proposed land swap between the Fernwood Community Centre and Victoria landlord Robin Kimpton that's raising eyebrows in some corners of the community.

FCC executive director Roberta Martell confirmed Friday that a deal is in the works to trade the an FCC-owned character house at 1423 Fernwood Rd. for a vacant property owned by Kimpton at the corner of Fernwood Road and Gladstone Avenue.



Roberta Martell

"It's an exchange of community assets. This is an amazing project," Martell said. "We're expecting to have an announcement soon."

The deal would give the FCC control of Kimpton's boarded-up corner building, which many in the community see as an eyesore and an under-used community asset.

In return, Kimpton would receive the character house at 1423 Fernwood Road and a yet-to-be-disclosed amount of cash. He plans to redevelop the property.

An anonymous newsletter delivered to the Victoria News last week, criticized the proposal as a "questionable enterprise" and claimed that Kimpton will receive the house and \$100,000 in cash.

Martell declined to release any numbers, saying the deal is still being negotiated.

The proposed land swap underscores ongoing tensions between the Fernwood Community Centre and the Fernwood Community Association that came to a head last year during a bid to amalgamate the two related organizations.

FCA board member Marnie Smith said the newsletter was "clearly meant to antagonize a very divided community."

The proposal, she added, is a positive step toward revitalizing Fernwood's tiny town centre.

"We have been struggling with a dead-end centre for 10 years," Smith said. "This is an opportunity for the community to come out and support where they live."

Martell said the FCC has tried to negotiate behind the scenes out of concern the deal will be derailed by community naysayers.

"In Fernwood you can't move forward until you've consulted with everyone and once you've consulted with everyone, you can't move forward," she said.

In the last two years, two Kimpton-owned buildings in the area have been the target of crackdowns by the City of Victoria bylaw enforcement department, one at 1176 Yates Street and the other at 2321 Cook Street.