



MAYOR'S OFFICE

NEWS RELEASE

Date: February 10, 2011

Time of Release: Immediate

Subject: Saanich Acquires Panama Flats from Island Berry Company Ltd (IBC).

Mayor Frank Leonard announced today that Saanich Council had approved a purchase agreement with Island Berry Company Ltd. to acquire for \$2.4 million a 62 acre farm on the Colquitz River floodplain known as Panama Flats.

After considerable discussions, a fair market value was determined and agreed upon by Saanich and IBC. The purchase price will include \$910,000 from municipal reserves and an exchange of surplus Saanich lands on Carey Road and Cherry Road.

Mayor Leonard said "Council was pleased the Company was willing to negotiate the sale of their farm property." "Saanich residents are very fortunate IBC enabled this valuable environmental, floodplain management, parks and agricultural asset to become part of the public land trust."

Wayne Hopkins of Island Berry Company said they had already completed a substantial part of the farm development for a cranberry farm, with planting at least one half the lands to occur in 2011 and the balance in the spring of 2012. Hopkins said IBC delayed their plans when the Municipality approached them about the property last November.

"Island Berry Company agreed that the lands were better served with public stewardship", he said, "and will provide a public benefit that neighbours and residents will enjoy for generations."

Hopkins said, "IBC remains dedicated to agriculture on South Vancouver Island and will continue to look for opportunities to expand their production and distribution in the region."

Mayor Leonard said Parks staff would consult with the community on the future uses of Panama Flats after purchasing conditions were satisfied and the title transferred to the Municipality. The transaction is expected to complete before year end....

- 30 -

For further information, you should contact:

Mayor Frank Leonard
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FACT SHEET - PANAMA FLATS PURCHASE

A. PROPERTY EXCHANGE

Panama Flats

Civic Address - 4112 Carey Road
Owner - Island Berry Company Ltd.
Zoning – A-1 Rural
Parcel Size - 62.43 acres

Cherry Road

Civic Address - 1265, 1271, 1275, 1281 Cherry Road
Owner - District of Saanich
Zoning - A-1 Rural and P-3 Personal Care Zone (potential 9 lot residential subdivision)
Parcel Size - 1.31 acres

Carey Road

Civic Address - 4122 Carey Road
Owner - District of Saanich
Zoning - A-1 Rural (potential 3 lot residential subdivision)
Parcel Size - 21,784 square feet

B. COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Flood Plain Management

Panama Flats is the most important flood plain on the Colquitz River. Acquiring the Flats will help the Municipality protect the flood plain to moderate flows and reduce flooding risks.

Habitat

Owning the Flats affords a prime opportunity to optimize environmental values on the Colquitz. Coho salmon overwinter in the ditches and flooded flats. The Ministry of Environment acknowledges the area is habitat given the abundant waterfowl in winter. One rare plant species and eleven rare or endangered birds are found on Panama Flats.

Parks and Trails

Better flood plain management could reduce seasonal flooding of existing trails. Saanich Parks can formalize the informal perimeter trails around the Flats creating a looped system for community use.

Food Security

The Carey Local Area Plan recommends 'designating the farmland within Panama Flats as Agriculture Land Reserve.' As the owner, Saanich could act on this policy to preserve farm land and enhance food security. Leasing a portion of the lands for agricultural use compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood or community allotment gardens are options.

Long Range Planning

Three Strategic Plan objectives, 42 Official Community Plan policies, and 11 Carey Local Area Plan policies support the Municipality acquiring this property.

Property Restoration and Maintenance

A preliminary estimate to restore habitat, improve trails, upgrade the farm building, and manage stormwater is \$300,000 with an annual operating cost of \$30,000. Assistance from environmental groups would reduce these costs.