



RECOVERY CENTRE: VisionQuest executive director Jim O'Rourke and chair Earl Moulton share a moment with Sechelt mayor Cameron Reid after Monday's meeting.

CATHIE ROY PHOTO

VISIONQUEST

Mayor has a vision of recovery for the Coast

CATHIE ROY
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

VisionQuest Recovery Society is once again in the limelight on the Sunshine Coast.

The organization, which advocates addiction recovery through total abstinence based on the 12-step program used by Alcoholics Anonymous and other like-minded groups, wants to have a treatment centre here.

VisionQuest first came to the Coast last fall at the invitation of Sechelt mayor Cam Reid.

At that time it appeared that a treatment facility might be available at the former Kirkland Centre in Davis Bay. The plan was squashed when further investigation showed that when Kirkland was built a covenant was attached to the building forbidding its use for drug rehabilitation. However prior to that discovery a standing-room-only town hall meeting showed the displeasure of area residents of locating a drug rehab house so close to the school, churches and community hall in the immediate area.

The latest meeting with VisionQuest members on March 17 at the District Municipal Hall was convened with two firm objectives: to find out what level of community support there is behind such a facility, and to research any property where it might be possible to locate a rehab centre.

The meeting drew about 30 members of the community including the private and public sector. Many

questions arose during the two-hour meeting regarding VisionQuest's program and the organization's success rate. Included among the concerns is the abstinence-only basis of the program.

Jim O'Rourke, executive director, himself a recovering drug addict, is adamant that the only program VisionQuest will use is one of total abstinence. It was also apparent that the lack of community support for the Davis Bay project touched a nerve with the feisty director.

"Everyone loves what I do, but not in their neighbourhood," O'Rourke said.

Right now the District of Sechelt is investigating a property in West Sechelt that is far from residential areas, yet reachable by emergency vehicles and not too far from resources needed by the recovery house clients. The property is at the end of Mason Road, north of Gale Avenue. It was used before as a log sort. It's directly across from Sandy Hook on the Inlet.

Several other property options were floated, but have not been thoroughly investigated yet.

VisionQuest chair Earl Moulton, a retired RCMP officer, stressed to those present that the program holds all participants responsible. And while 60 per cent of the clients come as part of a court-ordered program Moulton said that in most cases it's because the person wants to turn his life around.

Locally VisionQuest has the support of Taking Back our Community (TBOC), a group whose objective is

to keep young people off the addiction path.

TBOC's spokesperson, Terry Picard, told Moulton and O'Rourke, "We (TBOC) will do whatever needs to be done to get that recovery house here."

Several local RCMP members are members of VisionQuest as well including Const. Bryson Hill.

Hill spoke of how impressed he is with the recovery of local men who've gone through the VisionQuest house in Surrey.

In one instance he said, six men went to the VisionQuest Centre and five came back in great shape.

"This is a program that works," Hill emphasized.

For Reid, also a retired RCMP member, the issue boils down to one of health.

He related that parents have come to him in tears looking for help for their kids. Reid has volunteered to take some interested members of the community to the VisionQuest house in Surrey to see the program first-hand.

He urges all community groups Coast-wide that are interested in helping spearhead this initiative to contact the District of Sechelt and add their name to the list of concerned citizens.

"We're here for action. Let me know if you support the program in principle," Reid said.

"We can't continually say not in my backyard."

More information on VisionQuest can be found on their website www.visionquestsociety.org.