

## Freedom of Information request filed on Talisman land sale

Some residents have filed a Freedom of Information request about the sale of municipal lands at Talisman.

“Many of us – including me – have called, written, emailed,” said Jane Pyper of Kimberley in an interview with the Advance. “There’s no information coming back.”

While there may be some items that need to be protected, there are others that can and should be placed before the public, she said.

“I want to know what the conditions are, but I’m also concerned about the secrecy.”

Ms Pyper listed outstanding questions for the group filing the FOI request. These include: Why, since there was a joint venture, did the municipality go ahead with a separate conditional sale? Where is there a map that shows the

undevelopable lands, which it has been said comprise 80 percent of the property? Why is maximizing profit a goal of the agreement to market the properties along with Talisman Inn property through thinkCOMPASS?

“I think there’s just a fear that what happened in Collingwood is going to happen here,” Ms Pyper said, “a rush of development with systems not in place to support it, changing the character.”

In a press release, residents said that “the MGH has also not followed the spirit of its own policies with respect to the sale of public lands which call for a ‘transparent and accountable process’.”

The decision to sell did not flow out of a public consultation, the group said in its statement, despite strong public interest in the site and different visions for

the future of the property presented.

“While the Municipal Act provides for municipalities to discuss matters relating to a specific land sale in private, decisions related to the overall strategic direction for Talisman should be discussed in public, which has not happened.”

Last fall, a complaint went in to the Ombudsman about a closed meeting discussing the joint venture agreement. The decision was that the meeting did fit the Municipal Act standard for closed meeting as it was related to “plans and instructions for negotiations.”

At the Grey Highlands regular council meeting on Sept. 15, council went into closed session for an “FOI Request review and training,” as permitted in section 239 (3) of the regulation.