

A 'message' for Georgian Bluffs: Vukovic

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By Nelson Phillips

South Bruce Peninsula council wasn't happy with an airport budget decision made by their neighbouring municipality, the Township of Georgian Bluffs, to keep the Warton-Keppel Airport management budget as-is, following a joint council meeting last week, and has rejected a draft budget from their airport business partner.

SBP council says they felt confident that during the joint council meeting last week they had made their point clear: their contribution to the airports budget would be halved, until the airport could provide some direction on how to see some positive growth.

South Bruce Peninsula councillor Ana Vukovic says to receive word from Georgian Bluffs that they want to leave the airport budget alone, means the two municipalities have a long, bumpy road ahead.

During council discussion, councillor Matt Jackson asked if council felt they had made their point clear enough during the joint council meeting; that SBP would be slashing funding to the airport.

Mayor Janice Jackson responded by saying if council rejected the draft from Georgian Bluffs, they would certainly be clear.

"I have a messages for Georgian Bluffs... It seems to me that we're not going anywhere," Vukovic told the press. "My problem here, is that when I go door-to-door, the hot issue is the airport. The peoples' money is being spent on it, and it's not making any revenue. Year after year after year, we have meetings and say: are we going to do this, do this..." said Vukovic.

Vukovic says that for years, the municipality has been entertaining a potential buyer for the airport property, and just recently the buyer has decided to walk away.

"An offer was presented... I spoke with the fellow who wanted to come here, develop that airport, create jobs for the Bruce Peninsula - and this has been sort of put on the back burner. When I heard 'this is a pie-in-the-sky,' I say deal with the pie-in-the-sky."

Vukovic says she spoke with the developer after the joint meeting, and again on Feb 3 before the latest SBP council meeting. The developer informed her that he wasn't interested in pursuing the purchase any longer.

Vukovic said she wishes this developer the best of luck.

"It seems to me, each time we touch on something, a developer or anything else that is good for this community, we just send them out. This is not the way to run anything."

Vukovic says that when her council was deliberating their budget, they decided to cut the budget to the airport "almost in half."

"In the meantime," added Vukovic, "Georgian Bluffs goes over there and budgeted the full amount of money, not scaling it down for the next six months, and I have a problem with that."

Vukovic says Georgian Bluffs decision is "contrary to what we discussed here and decided."

Vukovic says of course Georgian Bluffs is entitled to their own deliberations and decisions, but the relationship suffers when the two municipalities experience constant disagreements.

"This is a joint-business. One is doing one thing, and another is doing another thing - seeing the history of it, this marriage is not working, and I don't think it's ever going to work," said Vukovic.

South Bruce Peninsula has budgeted \$75,000 for the airport.