

# Comox looks at float plane facility

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A charter float plane facility at the Comox docks could be in place by the time a new airport is built, says Comox Councillor Paul Ives.

"If we can do it here without annoying too many people, it may be worth looking at," says Ives, who says the idea may not have gotten all the attention it deserves in the past.

The facility - which would ideally fly airport passengers to the island's north and west coasts - has been floated by the economic development society for years but has never made it to the council table.

The facility would most likely sit at the federal Harbour Authority docks, where the planes could either be fit in or accommodated with another length of dock.

The placement could be affected by low tide and would ultimately upset residents of nearby Jane Place and nearby property owners.

Another option being considered is Des Reid's marina on the far right side.

Low tides, dredging, and ultimately noise to neighbours would also be a deterrent.

"It remains pretty much undecided where it would go," says Ives. "I think we have to look at the feasibility there is for it, who would pay the cost - it's not something the town could afford to do."

The municipal marina is too full to accommodate a dedicated facility and the Courtenay Airpark is considered too difficult to get into.

The federally run facility would most likely be operated by the Harbour Authority, as is the case in Nanaimo.

About 10 to 15 companies have already expressed interest in the idea.

The central concern is expected to be noise, but Ives says some of that concern may be premature.

"The fact of the matter is they wouldn't be taking off from there, they would be taxiing out to the harbour somewhere and they would take off from there."

The Economic Development Society hopes to have a feasibility report by fall.

If the project proceeds from there, it would still need federal Transportation Ministry, Coast Guard, Harbour Authority and other approvals.