

To Lou Varela, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Qualicum Beach
Cc Mayor and Council; Heather Svensen, Director of Corporate Services / Deputy CAO
Date September 24, 2026

Request for clarifications to the Eaglecrest Project FAQ (September 14, 2026)

Dear Lou Varela,

I'm writing about the Town's Eaglecrest Project FAQ, dated September 14, 2026. The Town released it on September 15 by media release and on its Facebook page.

Under the Town's Media Policy (3000-25), the Town commits to "offer fact-based information in an authentic and transparent manner." The FAQ's total project budget matches Bylaw 921.01. However, several of its statements leave out information from the Town's own records that a reader needs to understand them. Members of Council running for re-election are using it to support their points, on social media and at a public candidate forum. For that reason, I'm asking that it be clarified before the election on October 17.

1. "...funded from future land sales without impact to taxation" (p. 2)

The September 15 release says Council "anticipates" no impact to taxation, and page 6 of the FAQ qualifies its land-sale answer with "based on Council's current decision making." The sentence on page 2 has no such qualifier and reads as a fact. The \$6.5 million contribution also includes \$1.275 million of general surplus. In June 2026, the \$2,863,000 Eaglecrest Drive water and storm mains were moved out of the project budget onto the asset management reserves. I ask that page 2 match the release by saying no tax impact is the expected outcome. I also ask that it disclose the \$1.275 million of general surplus and the move of the mains.

2. "...sufficient Reserve balances exist to temporarily finance the 2026 capital expenditures" (p. 5)

Note 11 of the 2025 Financial Statements shows these year-end balances:

- the Strategic Initiatives Reserve overdrawn at -\$21,200
- the property reserve at \$80,374
- the Growing Communities Fund at \$41,597
- the affordable housing reserve at zero

Most of what remains is in the asset replacement reserve (\$4.36 million) and the water infrastructure reserve (\$2.80 million). In November 2025, staff wrote that the asset replacement reserve is underfunded. They also wrote that contributions to the water reserve are insufficient and that water pipe renewals have been deferred. I ask that the FAQ say which reserves will carry the 2026 costs.

3. “...not currently expected to affect planned projects” (p. 5)

The projects are “scheduled for later years” because the July 2025 funding plan moved them there to pay for the purchase. That plan pushed back 33 strategic-initiative items. The Saahtlam Park playground moved from 2026 to 2028. I ask that the FAQ list the projects that were deferred and their original years.

4. “Will land sales fully fund the Project’s costs? Yes...” (p. 6)

Staff’s June 24, 2026 presentation put land sales at \$19,074,800. With the \$2,125,000 donation, that covers the \$21,199,800 budget. But Bylaw 921.01 schedules only \$17,841,600 in land sales for 2026–2028, which leaves \$1,233,200 unscheduled. The FAQ reports no completed sale. I ask that the answer say when, and from which sales, the remaining \$1,233,200 is expected. I also ask that it say the answer is a forecast.

5. Public engagement (p. 2)

The list leaves out the October 6, 2025 public hearing, where 34 speakers opposed the rezoning and 4 supported it, by my count from the meeting video. The hearing was on the rezoning rather than the purchase. But the land sales that the FAQ relies on depend on that rezoning. The survey also offered no option to oppose the purchase. Its only negative choice was “Concerned about the acquisition opportunity,” which 22.5% chose. None of its questions or answer choices mentioned the price, where the money would come from, taxes, the risks, or the projects Council had already pushed back to pay for it. Council approved those deferrals on July 23, 2025, about seven weeks before the survey opened. The survey’s only question about money asked which amenities the Town should consider in a funding plan. The FAQ says Council was advised early on that “unforeseen costs and project adjustments were likely,” but none of the survey’s questions or answer choices told residents this. I ask that the hearing be included, and that the FAQ say what the survey did and did not ask.

6. Supporting documents

The FAQ relies on a feasibility study and due diligence reports that have not been published. These are the MODUS Planning / Cunningham & Rivard study, the servicing review and the environmental reports. I ask that they be released, or that the Town explain why they can’t be.

7. How the FAQ and release were prepared

Under Policy 3000-25, the Director of Corporate Services approves communications released through the Town’s channels. Policy 3000-26 gives the same role final approval over the Town’s social media posts. I’d ask:

- Was the FAQ, the September 15 media release or the Facebook post reviewed by Council, or by any member of Council, before release?
- The release describes the acquisition as “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver lasting community benefits.” Mayor Westbroek used almost the same words in the Town’s October 30, 2025 release: “This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our community.” Was the Mayor, or any member of Council, involved in writing or approving the September 2026 release?

Section 6 of Policy 3000-25 asks members of Council to “communicate accurately the decisions of Council.” Members are now citing the FAQ in their re-election campaigns, so I think residents would want to know how it was prepared.

Sources for each point, with links to the Town’s own documents, are at letthemeatgolf.ca/fact-check/eaglecrest-faq/. For transparency: I publish that site as a personal, non-commercial project.

I’d appreciate a written reply by October 2, 2026 saying which clarifications the Town will make, and answering the questions in point 7. I plan to publish this letter and the Town’s reply.

Sincerely,

Saleem Barnard

 (home address removed for publication)

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