

MY COMMENTS & QUESTIONS ON 2021 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

From

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Hello Mayor & Council,

Firstly, I will comment on how strongly opposed I am to the City's new permanent policy to make an "Opportunity To Be Heard" just an "Opportunity To Write" the City with one's comments, concerns and questions.

There is a far difference between sitting in the council chamber (at the delegation table) and expressing one's views, versus sending comments in writing. Verbal comments said as a delegation at council have more impact than written comments that just merge with thousands of other emails and letters that are sent to mayor and council.

I believe this new restriction, on not being able to comment on the Financial Statements as a delegation at a council meeting, a form of "cancelling opinion".

New Westminster citizens no longer have the right to sit in front of council as a delegation (to look at each councillor) and voice their opinions and concerns (on the financial statements) directly to council.

I would ask that, at least when the Financial Statements are annually being discussed, real **Opportunities To Be Heard** are re-established.

Moving on to my comments and questions on the 2021 Financial Statements. I will work briefly through each topic that caught my interest and hope answers are forthcoming from council and City staff.

təməsewtx^w Aquatic and Community Centre

Would the City please inform me what the total hard and soft construction costs were for the tēmāsewtx^w Aquatic and Community Centre in the 2021 financial year? Where would I find this information (sources of TACC funding) in the 2021 financial statements being reviewed tonight? What were the sources of funding for the TACC last year (2021) ... reserve funds ... General Fund ... other sources? Were any adjustments made last year to the 2021-2025 Five Year Financial Plan Bylaw's Capital Budget to increase the TACC capital budget (as has recently occurred)?

PROCESS FOR COUNCIL APPROVING SPENDING MONEY FROM RESERVES

The 2021 Financial Plan shows significant instances of money being removed from reserves set aside by council.

What is the process that council follows to remove money from reserves and is this process a public one or a "in camera" one. There may be a public expectation that these actions are not to be an "in camera" process. Such actions taken "in camera" may be seen by the public as secretive and opaque as the public has no awareness of the withdrawal of money from city reserves. Does the Community Charter require councils to bring spending motions (related to depleting reserves) out of "in camera" and be put on the public record.?

- **Facility Replacement Reserve – TACC**
This reserve was drawn down to zero from \$8.23 million dollars sometime in 2021. When and how was this reserve drawn down to zero by council?
- **General Fund Provisions Reserve**
This reserve was drawn down \$13 million dollars sometime in 2021 (from 22 million dollars down to 9 million dollars). What were these reserve funds used for? When and how did council authorize spending from this reserve?

WHAT DOES COUNCIL DO WHEN DEPARTMENTS GO OVER BUDGET?

Finally, I will close with my comments on overspending City departments and council's oversight over department spending.

The Parks and Recreation Department 2021 budget was \$21.57 million dollars but the Parks and Recreation Department spent \$24.75 million dollars in 2021, meaning the department overspent their 2021 budget by a whopping \$3.18 million dollars (14.5% more than their budget allowed)

What happened? Where was this extra \$3.18 million dollars spent? It would appear that most of our 2021 tax increase went to cover the Parks & Recreation Department's over expenditures, yes? What is council's oversight of their departments' budgets once a department overspends their allotted budget for the year? Why was the 2021-2025 Five Year Financial Plan Bylaw not amended to legitimize further spending once the department went into an over expenditure situation? Has the 2021-2025 Five Year Financial Plan Bylaw been amended to "legalize" the Parks & Recreation Department's over expenditures in 2021?

Will the Parks & Recreation Department have their overspending rewarded by having the \$24.75 million dollars they spent in 2021 as their new baseline for the 2022 financial year? Is it that department directors know that their overspending ways can be covered by the annual surplus? Where does the Director Of Finance's oversight over department spending fit into the financial picture? Where does council's oversight of it's departments spending fit into the financial picture?

I conclude that I wish this Opportunity to Write to council about the 2021 Financial Statements had been an Opportunity to Be Heard as a delegation at council.

Thank you.

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