



# Corporation of the City of NEW WESTMINSTER

*A vibrant, compassionate, resilient city where everyone can thrive.*

## CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

### MINUTES

**Monday, December 11, 2023**

**Meeting held electronically and in Council Chamber,  
City Hall**

#### PRESENT:

Mayor Patrick Johnstone  
Councillor Ruby Campbell  
Councillor Daniel Fontaine  
Councillor Tasha Henderson  
Councillor Jaimie McEvoy  
Councillor Paul Minhas  
Councillor Nadine Nakagawa

#### STAFF PRESENT:

Ms. Lisa Leblanc	Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Peter DeJong	Corporate Officer
Mr. Kwaku Agyare-Manu	Acting Director of Engineering Services
Ms. Jacqueline Dairon	Acting Director of Finance and Chief Financial Officer
Mr. Brad Davie	Deputy Chief, New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services
Mr. Richard Fong	Director of Human Resources and Information Technology
Mr. Blair Fryer	Senior Manager, Economic Development
Mr. Dean Gibson	Director of Parks and Recreation
Ms. Jacque Killawee	Acting Records and Information Administrator
Mr. Craig MacFarlane	Manager of Legal Services
Ms. Erika Mashig	Manager, Parks and Open Space Planning, Design and Construction
Mr. Gary So	Senior Manager, Financial Services
Mr. Shehzad Somji	Director of Finance and Chief Financial Officer
Mr. Alex Tam	Senior Financial Analyst
Mr. Paul Taylor	Senior Manager, Information Technology
Ms. Jackie Teed	Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
Ms. Serena Trachta	Manager, Inspections, Climate Action, Planning and

Mr. Erin Williams  
Mr. Marius Miklea

Development  
Chief, New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services  
Assistant Corporate Officer, Legislative Services

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**1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*Mayor Johnstone called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.*

Mayor Johnstone recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. He acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

**2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** Council receive all On Table material as presented.

**Carried**

All members present voted in favour of the resolution.

**3. BUDGET 2024: COUNCIL WORKSHOP (PART FOUR)**

**3.1 Budget 2024: Proposed 2024 General Fund Operating Enhancements Scenarios and Funding Strategy**

Staff presented on the proposed 2024 service enhancements with a proposed funding strategy and resulting estimated property tax revenue impact. There are three different scenarios known as Budget Scenarios and their resulting estimated property tax revenue impacts: 5.50%, 6.80%, and 8.50%.

Discussion ensued on:

- Scenario 2 most closely matches the level of investment the City needs across the budget and to meet strategic priorities set out by Council;
- From the perspective of the Finance Department, grant funding is speculative and cannot be accounted for in the budget. Staff confirmed there are avenues being pursued with regard to grant funding – for example with respect to housing and the crises response teams, the Province has announced \$51M which will be distributed to municipalities to meet legislative requirements;

- In light of the 6.4% increase in last year's property tax rate, staff had reviewed programs which were no longer running and adjusted the budget to reflect \$1.5M in budget transfers which was subsequently reflected in each scenario;
- Staff clarified there will be a further refinement to both the capital and operating budgets in January 2024 which will include estimates to the changes in reserves. The usage of reserves is on an as-needed basis and not for regular usage going forward; and
- Staff indicated there are approximately \$42M in funds in the Climate Action Reserve and continuing to increase via the Climate Action Levy and carbon credits sales.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** Council direct staff to pursue Scenario 2 of the 2024 Service Enhancements for the General Fund Budget;

**THAT** Council provide direction on the proposed estimated property tax revenue increase for 2024;

**THAT** Staff be directed to report back on the Draft Consolidated Financial Plan Bylaw, 2024 – 2028.

**Procedural Note:** An amendment was proposed.

**THAT** the new Full Time Equivalencies for the New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services (NWFRS) as outlined in Scenario 3 be incorporated into Scenario 2.

**Procedural Note:** Discussion ensued regarding the proposed amendment.

Staff clarified that additional staff would reduce the amount of overtime currently taking place in NWFRS. Increasing the establishment list would have incidental costs such as additional uniforms and equipment.

The additional suppression positions, through analysis of their staffing model, indicates much staffing relies on overtime which drives health issues and sick days, as well as increasing high-rise firefighting scenarios which require a greater number of staff.

**Procedural Note:** The question on the amendment was called.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** the new Full Time Equivalencies for the New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services (NWFRS) as outlined in Scenario 3 be incorporated into Scenario 2.

**Carried**

All members present voted in favour of the amendment.

**Procedural Note:** A further amendment was proposed.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** line items 124, 127 and 128 be incorporated for consideration into Scenario 2 of the 2024 Service Enhancements for the General Fund Budget.

**Carried**

All members present voted in favour of the amendment.

**Procedural Note:** A further amendment was proposed.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** no grant funding as outlined in Scenario 2 be approved for consideration in the operating budget unless senior levels of government funding have been secured.

**Procedural Note:** Discussed ensued regarding the proposed amendment.

Discussion ensued on grant opportunities often require the requesting organization to prove existing budgeting and staff would need to budget for it in either case scenario.

**Procedural Note:** The question on the amendment was called.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** no grant funding as outlined in Scenario 2 be approved for consideration in the operating budget unless senior levels of government funding have been secured.

**Defeated**

Opposed by Mayor Johnstone and Councillors Campbell, Henderson, McEvoy and Nakagawa.

**Procedural Note:** A further amendment was proposed.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** the property tax increase be limited to a maximum of 4.8% and the reduction in the property tax revenue, as outlined in Scenario 2, to come out of the Climate Action Reserve Fund.

**Defeated**

Opposed by Mayor Johnstone and Councillors Campbell, Henderson, McEvoy and Nakagawa.

**Procedural Note:** The question on the main motion, as amended, was called.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** Council direct staff to pursue Scenario 2 of the 2024 Service Enhancements for the General Fund Budget;

**THAT** Council provide direction on the proposed estimated property tax revenue increase for 2024;

**THAT** Staff be directed to report back on the Draft Consolidated Financial Plan Bylaw, 2024 – 2028;

**THAT** the Full Time Equivalency amount as outlined in Scenario 3 for the New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services be incorporated into Scenario 2; and

**THAT** line items 124, 127 and 128 be incorporated for consideration into Scenario 2 of the 2024 Service Enhancements for the General Fund Budget.

**Carried**

Opposed by Councillors Fontaine and Minhas.

*Mayor Johnstone declared a recess at 3:08 p.m.*

*Mayor Johnstone called the meeting back to order at 3:21 p.m.*

#### **4. WORKSHOP**

##### **4.1 Report on the 2022 General Local Election**

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** Council, provide the following direction to staff:

- a. That staff continue to use branded marketing and promote the election on all the City channels including social media, billboards, City facilities, and bus shelters.
- b. In the 2026 election to provide a small number of voter guides distributed in City facilities and through partnerships with local malls.
- c. Research other municipal candidate statements and work with Elections BC to develop a more structured candidate profile format.
- d. To make the distribution of voter cards with a QR code link to the voter guide a standard feature of all City elections moving forward.
- e. That the City offer mail-in ballot options for all future Local Elections.
- f. To research providing an opt-out clause for mail-in ballots for by-elections to save costs.

- g. To maintain the current alphabetic order of candidates on the ballot.
- h. To provide name order analysis to the School Board for their consideration.
- i. To investigate closing the loophole within the sign bylaw that allows for larger signs in some areas of the City.
- j. That staff determine possible measures to increase voter participation in low turnout areas.
- k. That staff determine how to provide a stronger equity lens for residents in those neighbourhoods including those lacking online access.

**Procedural Note:** Discussion ensued regarding the proposed motion.

Discussion ensued on:

- How the City can increase voter turnout generally. In 2022 the Voter's Guide was published and voter numbers remained relatively unchanged;
- Low voter turnout is found within multi-family housing, including multi-family low income housing. This is a population which can be targeted for the next election;
- Consideration that given there will be no physical newspaper in 2026, what are the different types of media that voters could find useful which would bring them out on election days;
- Staff noted that recently the Province has been improving their process of bringing youth onto the registered voter list. The City has in the past provided opportunities for youth education and employment by recruiting from the student population at New Westminster Secondary School; and
- Staff have not considered bringing in electoral organizations, as it would require legal advice.

**Procedural Note:** An amendment was proposed.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** i. be stricken and to add l. to amend the sign bylaw to allow for freedom of expression to allow signs of up to 4' x 4' on private property; and further

**THAT** Sign Bylaw No. 7867, 2017 be amended to allow for signs to be displayed from the beginning of the nomination period.

**Procedural Note:** Discussion ensued regarding the proposed amendment.

Discussion continued:

- On comparisons made to real estate signs which are everywhere and have less scrutiny; and
- Staff cautioned against allowing signs to be posted early in the nomination period, prior to confirmation of eligibility, due to the possible scenario where a person is nominated, creates signs but then is found to be ineligible afterward.

**Procedural Note:** The motion was requested to be severed into two parts.

**THAT** i. be stricken, and to add l. to amend the sign bylaw to allow for freedom of expression to allow signs of up to 4' x 4' on private property.

**Defeated**

Opposed by Mayor Johnstone and Councillors Campbell, Henderson, McEvoy and Nakagawa.

**THAT** Sign Bylaw No. 7867, 2017 be amended to allow for signs to be displayed from the beginning of the nomination period.

**Carried**

Opposed by Councillors Campbell, Henderson and Nakagawa.

**Procedural Note:** An amendment was proposed.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** b. be stricken from the main motion.

**Carried**

Opposed by Councillor McEvoy.

**Procedural Note:** The question on the main motion, as amended, was called.

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** Council, provide the following direction to staff:

- a. That staff continue to use branded marketing and promote the election on all the City channels including social media, billboards, City facilities, and bus shelters.
- b. Research other municipal candidate statements and work with Elections BC to develop a more structured candidate profile format.
- c. To make the distribution of voter cards with a QR code link to the voter guide a standard feature of all City elections moving forward.
- d. That the City offer mail-in ballot options for all future Local Elections.

- e. To research providing an opt-out clause for mail-in ballots for by-elections to save costs.
- f. To maintain the current alphabetic order of candidates on the ballot.
- g. To provide name order analysis to the School Board for their consideration.
- h. That staff determine possible measures to increase voter turnout in low voter turnout neighbourhoods.
- i. That staff determine how to provide a stronger equity lens for residents in those neighbourhoods including those lacking online access. And further,

**THAT** Sign Bylaw No. 7867, 2017 be amended the sign bylaw to allow for signs to be displayed from the beginning of the nomination period.

**Carried**

All members present voted in favour of the motion, as amended.

**5. END OF THE MEETING**

*Mayor Johnstone terminated the meeting at 3:59 p.m.*

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Patrick Johnstone

MAYOR

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Peter DeJong

CORPORATE OFFICER