



## **SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP**

### **MINUTES**

**Monday, November 29, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.**

**Meeting held electronically and open to public attendance  
in Council Chamber, City Hall**

#### **PRESENT:**

Mayor Jonathan Cote  
Councillor Chinu Das  
Councillor Patrick Johnstone  
Councillor Jamie McEvoy  
Councillor Nadine Nakagawa  
Councillor Chuck Puchmayr\*  
Councillor Mary Trentadue\*

#### **STAFF PRESENT:**

Ms. Lisa Spitale	Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Jacque Killawee	City Clerk
Ms. Emilie Adin	Director of Climate Action, Planning and Development
Mr. Curtis Bremner	Acting Fire Chief, New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services
Mr. Jorge Cardenas	Chief Librarian*
Mr. Rod Carle	General Manager, Electrical Utility*
Mr. Richard Fong	Director of Human Resources*
Mr. Dean Gibson	Director of Parks and Recreation
Mr. Dave Jansen	Chief Constable, New Westminster Police Department*
Ms. Lisa Leblanc	Director of Engineering Services
Ms. Harji Varn	Chief Financial Officer and Director of Finance
Ms. Erika Mashig	Manager, Parks and Open Space Planning, Design and Construction*
Ms. Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk

\*Denotes electronic attendance

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

Mayor Cote opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsundered 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. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **2.1 Budget 2022: Proposed Service Enhancement Requests and Funding Strategies**

- a. **Presentation (On Table)**
- b. **Budget 2022: Proposed Service Enhancement Requests and Funding Strategies**

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer, and Harji Varn, Director of Finance, provided a presentation titled, “2022 Operating Budget – General Fund Proposed Investments & Offsets”. Ms. Spitale advised that staff were available to answer questions.

In response to questions from Council, Ms. Varn, Dean Gibson, Director of Parks and Recreation, Erika Mashig, Manager, Parks and Open Space Planning, Jorge Cardenas, Chief Librarian, Dave Jansen, Chief Constable, and Curtis Bremner, Acting Fire Chief, advised:

- The Open Space Planner position is requested largely in part to address the workload of staff who are currently supplementing managerial work and to support interdepartmental work, update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and oversee construction of capital projects;
- Further details with respect to the New Westminster Grand Prix not being offered in 2022 due to ongoing construction in the Downtown and waning revenue are anticipated to be provided to Council before the end of the year;
- It is expected that the Library will no longer charge late fees sometime in the first quarter of new year, after further discussion with the Library Board;
- The E-Comm budget enhancement comes from a review that E-Comm conducted of their operations which resulted in an additional cost to all municipalities who utilize E-Comm’s services in order to stabilize their operating model. The increased cost does not come with an increase in service; however, this will come in future years, particularly on the non-emergency side;
- The E-Comm budget enhancement for the New Westminster Police Department is designated temporary as it is currently unclear if it will be a

permanent increase. The E-Comm service cost increase to New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services (NWFRS) of \$30,000 was absorbed into the NWFRS's budget;

- If Council does not move forward with the budget enhancement for E-Comm, it is unknown what impact that would have on the delivery of services;
- Savings realized from the decommissioning of the Canada Games Pool would partially top up funding for the Indigenous Relations Advisor position;
- The cost of renting election equipment, which the City has done each election year, has increased over 100 percent since 2018 and staff continue working to lower these costs;
- The required unlocked emergency exit between the Anvil Centre and the office tower, which enters into the conference level, necessitates the employment of a security guard to ensure safety. A structural solution to this issue will come from a comprehensive review of civic properties. Staff are confident that a design solution can be found which would eliminate the need for a 24-hour security guard and a report outlining these options will be provided to Council next year;
- The \$0.7M from the decommissioning of the Canada Games Pool is recommended to be used as funding to offset some of the one-time investments in the proposed service enhancements;
- Residents receive a breakdown of the City's budget by department along with their property taxes to assist them in understanding where funds are being allocated.

In discussion, Council members noted:

- Current services provided by E-Comm are essential and beneficial to the many communities who have relied on them for years; however, there are significant issues that must be addressed for which there are no easy solutions. These services must not be underfunded;
- The City should investigate the possibility of providing services internally where E-Comm cannot;
- Next year, the Police Board will have discussions with E-Comm to review service options;
- Staff are requested to provide a report to Council on the full scope of the situation with E-Comm so that it may be better understood and options discussed;
- Determination of building design options at the Anvil Centre which would increase security and save on security expenses could possibly be done prior to final budget approval;
- Savings realized from the decommissioning of the Canada Games Pool should not all go to funding budget enhancements as funds will be needed for additional programming to help mitigate the closure of the pool;

- While it would be nice to have a lower property tax increase as residents are already stretched financially due to the increase in utilities, etc., mandatory salary and insurance increases dictate the greater increase;
- Many small businesses have been lost due to the pandemic and, although companies may have taken over some of those spaces, we must remain cognizant of the impact that COVID has made and continues to make on small businesses;
- The Indigenous Relations Advisor position should not be considered a temporary position as the work will be ongoing; and,
- Staff were commended and thanked for their hard work on the budget during which has been another difficult year.

MOVED AND SECONDED

**THAT** Council provide staff with direction on the 2022 Proposed Service Enhancement requests; and

**THAT** Council's direction be then incorporated into the Draft Consolidated Financial Plan Bylaw, 2022 – 2026 reflecting a property tax rate increase of 4.4% for 2022.

**Carried.**

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

Council direction: That a report should be provided to Council on the E-Comm situation.

## **2.2 Budget 2022: Responses to Council Questions from November 1st Workshop**

Mayor Cote stated that more in-depth discussions regarding insurance must be undertaken next year in order to mitigate some of the risks that may be coming.

MOVED AND SECONDED

**THAT** Council receive this report for information as part of the Budget deliberation process.

**Carried.**

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

Harji Varn, Director of Finance and Chief Financial Officer advised that next steps include staff to preparing a draft five-year financial plan for Council's consideration at the City Council meeting on December 13, 2021 and, if approved, the 2022-2026 Financial Plan Bylaw will come back to Council in January for three readings and adoption.

3. **END OF THE MEETING**

The meeting ended at 3:13 p.m.

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Jonathan Cote  
MAYOR

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Jacque Killawee  
CITY CLERK