



Corporation of the City of NEW WESTMINSTER

A vibrant, compassionate, sustainable city that includes everyone.

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

MINUTES

Monday, December 13, 2021

Meeting held electronically and open to public attendance

Council Chamber, City Hall

PRESENT:

Councillor Patrick Johnstone Acting Mayor
Councillor Chinu Das
Councillor Jamie McEvoy
Councillor Nadine Nakagawa
Councillor Chuck Puchmayr*
Councillor Mary Trentadue*

ABSENT:

Mayor Jonathan Cote

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. Rod Carle	General Manager, Electrical Utility
Mr. Richard Fong	Director of Human Resources
Mr. Dean Gibson	Director of Parks and Recreation
Ms. Lisa Leblanc	Director of Engineering Services
Mr. Craig MacFarlane	Manager of Legal Services
Ms. Harji Varn	Chief Financial Officer and Director of Finance
Ms. Nicole Ludwig	Assistant City Clerk

GUESTS:

Mr. Gary Penway Consultant

*Denotes electronic attendance.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillor Johnstone, Acting Mayor, opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m. and 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. PRESENTATIONS

2.1 BC Housing Supply and Affordability: Opening Doors Discussion

a. Presentation, Director of Climate Action, Planning and Development and Gary Penway, Consultant (On Table)

Emilie Adin, Director of Climate Action, Planning and Development, and Gary Penway, Consultant, provided a presentation on the report "BC Housing Supply and Affordability: Opening Doors Discussion" and requested input on the options that should be recommended to the Provincial government that are available at the Federal, Provincial, Regional, and Municipal level.

Council's discussion included the following relating to Federal aspects:

- There is a need to be cautious when talking about excessive demand; there is a role for the Federal government to change the tax regime so that housing is more about housing than it is about speculation, or having assets operate as a savings bank;
- There is a need to know where the Province stands as it may be difficult to harmonize approaches with other provinces;
- There is a need for more information on the demand side of the equation, as well as the role of immigration and movement of people;
- The federal level has no clear sense of affordability and needs clearer priorities related to socio-economic needs
- There are a variety of boutique programs, but there is no overall program for housing the most vulnerable; and,
- Would like to see achieving housing goals as a criteria for infrastructure funding.

Council's discussion included the following relating to Provincial aspects:

- Climate change is changing the livability of many homes, and changes can only be addressed at the federal or provincial levels;
- BC Housing has moved away from managing their own buildings, and it may be beneficial to return to that;
- Co-op housing is important and has been neglected;
- Co-housing should be considered at the provincial level; these kinds of intentional communities have many benefits ;
- The tax benefits between being a homeowner and being a renter need to be balanced out;
- Things like Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) have increased the costs of development and housing;
- The Province should be providing more for affordable and social housing and child care so that CACs are used to provide benefits to the community, rather than being taken up in housing.

To open the conversation on regional aspects, Mr. Penway noted that regionally there is a 15 to 25 % shortfall on housing today, and one roadblock is that municipalities do not generally want to be instructed on how much they need to build for regional accommodation.

Council's discussion included the following relating to Regional aspects:

- Targets are needed because housing is a regional issue and it is easy for one city to refuse to participate;
- There is a need to consider other infrastructure when developing housing targets, such as sewers and transportation, which are also regional issues; and,
- Efforts in building housing should be measured against targets that show the need for housing.

Mr. Penway noted that the Lower Mainland and British Columbia are unique among provinces, as the region has not been amalgamated, and that to meet the Regional Growth Strategy and housing needs, strengthened regional planning is also needed.

Council's discussion included the following relating to Municipal aspects:

- The main cost for developers is time spent on projects;
- Public hearings create vulnerability for developers, especially non-profits;

- Would like to see staff have more authority to approve minor variances;

Mr. Penway noted that:

- As the development process becomes more and more uncertain, it starts breaking down and anything requiring Council approval introduces uncertainty;
- There is no obligation for a Council to approve a development or rezoning, which gives them room to ask for other things such as daycares and community centres;
- Many municipalities require Development Permits to go to Council, but this introduces a political process into what is largely a technical process of ensuring the application is aligned with existing guidelines; and,
- There is a need for development permit and building permit processes to be sped up and be more consistent.

Ms. Adin advised that staff will update the letter attached to the report based on Council's comments and send it to the government in 2022.

b. BC Housing Supply and Affordability: Opening Doors Discussion Paper

To seek direction from Council regarding the City's response to the Final Report of the Canada-British Columbia Expert Panel on the Future of Housing Supply and Affordability, Opening Doors: Unlocking housing supply for affordability.

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT Council direct staff to include the feedback solicited at the Council Workshop on December 13, 2021 in the cover letter from the Mayor, attached as Attachment 4 to the December 13, 2021, report entitled "BC Housing Supply and Affordability: Opening Doors Discussion Paper" along with the discussion paper on the Opening Doors report (Attachment 2 of the above-noted report), and send it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing, and the Minister of Finance.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

3. **END OF THE MEETING**

The meeting ended at 4:18 p.m.

Jonathan Cote
MAYOR

Jacque Killawee
CITY CLERK