



City of Surrey

Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes for April 23, 2009

File: 360-20 (DAC)
Date: April 23, 2009
Time: 2:30 PM
Location: Planning Room #1,
Surrey City Hall

Attendees:

Councillors:
Marvin Hunt

Members:
Ted Dawson
Jeff Fisher
Deana Grinnell
Avtar Johl
Bill Kruger
Mark Nowotny
David Porte
Gopal Sahota
Kevin Shoemaker
Amy Spencer-Chubey

City Staff:
Jeff Arason
Dan Bottrill
Theresa Kidd
Nicholas Lai
Judy McLeod
Steve Whitton

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of March 26, 2009 were amended to reflect Amy Spencer-Chubey's comment to clarify that the GVHBA was a seminar for first time home buyers. The minutes were received as amended.

2. Bonding for Retained Trees for Single Family Developments – Steve Whitton, Trees & Landscape Manager

A PowerPoint presentation was given by Steve Whitton and is attached. Steve advised that bonding is currently \$3,000 per tree to a maximum of \$10,000 per lot and \$100,000 per subdivision to be retained on site. This has proven onerous for developers of small subdivisions. There is a proposal for a different approach to tree retention that would improve the success rate of saving protected trees. When the Arborist report is submitted, the cost of bringing the trees back to a healthy state and keeping them healthy would be determined. The Arborist's report would assess what needs to be done (i.e. watering for the summer, repair of root systems) for each development. A letter would be issued doubling the amount of that cost. The estimated cost for this is about \$550/tree so doubled would be around \$1,100 instead of the current \$3,000 bond. The trees would be assessed in September to ensure that they have survived through the summer. At that time, the unused portion of the deposit would be returned. The down side is that there is a cost rather than the return of the complete security. The up side is that this is a process that will protect more trees, benefit the developments, and return the money to the developers and get them out of the tree business much faster.

- Deana Grinnell asked if there was discussion around multi-family developments. Steve advised that they are looking at this, but the current proposal applies to single family developments. Deana noted that this is a positive step.
- Avtar Johl asked when the current plan returns the money to the developer. Steve advised it is after the last house has completed. Avtar felt that in some ways it was very positive but he also felt that it could end up costing the developers more. Avtar asked about

bonding for replacement trees. Steve mentioned that this issue needs work and he intends to propose changes to this system, as well. It was noted that DAC would like to be consulted in developing new procedures to securities for replacement trees.

- Mark Nowotny asked about the mitigation process, and what happens if the care for the tree doesn't work. Steve advised that this is a pilot project and he will be monitoring it regularly.
- The DAC members expressed general support for this potential pilot project.

3. Economic Investment Strategy–Dan Bottrill, Deputy City Manager

Dan distributed a copy of the Economic Investment Action Plan recently announced by Mayor and Council. This is a 6 point plan which consists of:

- 1) Capital spending to create construction and permanent jobs;
- 2) Mayor's Advisory Committee on Investment and Job Creation;
- 3) Business Retention and Expansion Program;
- 4) Establishing Economic Investment Zones;
- 5) Streamlining Approval Processes;
- 6) Pre-Servicing with Engineering Services of Business Lands.

In addition, at recent meeting of Council, it was determined that a program for exploring city involvement in business incubators be explored.

Incentives are available to business related and high density residential development projects in the City Centre including elimination of municipal property taxes (over a 3 year period), reduction in development cost charges and reduction of building permit fees. The 3 elements in the economic zone include the deferral of the payment of DCC's to a later stage in the building approval process than is currently available, the reduction in building permit fees by 50% and the waiving of the City's density-bonus policy. (For details, members can refer to Corporate Report R063 which was considered and approved by Council at its meeting of April 20, 2009.)

Dan noted that the City has recently completed a thorough review of land development and building permit approval processes. This review has identified a number of areas where the City can improve, including priority processing of business-related development applications through the establishment of an industrial-commercial investment team involving Economic Development, Engineering, Planning and Building staff. As well, priority will be given to the processing of development inquiries and applications for high density projects in City Centre through the establishment of a City Centre investment team. The City would like to maintain a strong focus on improving inter-departmental communications to facilitate expedited development application processing, and to enhance e-Business process and paperless transactions to eliminate the need to come to City Hall to do business with the City.

With regard to the proposed business Incubation Program, the city will be working with Surrey SFU, Kwantlen and the School District, so young people can have space and help them develop business, help them along so that they can move to a commercial space, and so on – on a rotating basis and hopefully they will be very successful. The City would provide the space for these students. The City will be looking at other Cities and see if there any elements that we can use here at Surrey. A report will be going to Council by late May or early June.

Jeff Arason advised that with SkyTrain, the reduced need for parking and reduced traffic demand make it possible for the City to reduce the DCC's in City Centre. The bylaw will be going to the Province for approval and will hopefully be passed by the end of May.

There were questions with regard to the City's investment in pre-servicing of business areas. Jeff advised that the exact lands have not yet been determined. The City is looking to identify any private lands or potential partners that may be interested in servicing lands for business development. Anyone interested should contact Jeff.

Kevin Shoemaker asked about the role of the Surrey City Development Corporation and expressed the concern that it not be in competition with the private market. It was agreed that Jim Cox, President and CEO of the SCDC, would be invited to a future meeting of the DAC to discuss the role and mandate of the Corporation.

4. Overview of Draft Regional Growth Strategy-Judy McLeod

Judy presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the content of the proposed new Regional Growth Strategy, "Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping our future", and an overview of Surrey Council's response to the document. She advised that while Surrey supports the overall vision, there are some significant outstanding concerns that need to be addressed, specifically:

- The proposed degree of Regional oversight of local land use planning and the concern that this will add time and a further level of review to the development process;
- The creation of new land use designations, and specifically new Industrial and Industrial/Commercial designations.

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation, as well as Surrey's Comments (Corporate Report C004), are attached as information.

Jeff Fisher advised that he had attended one of the regional sessions, and expressed concern that while the discussion was focused on high level issues, the implementation details and impact on development were not presented.

It was agreed that staff would continue to keep the Committee advised of this process.

5. Comments on the Market (all members)

- Mark Nowotny stated that they have seen some improvements in the market in the past few months.
- Ted Dawson read in the paper about lost jobs but it feels like we are in a healthy spring market right now. This is a good time for renters to enter the market and he noted that they were seeing quite a few renters comparing their rents to ownership given the reduced prices and low interest rates.
- Gopal Sahota stated that volume and sales are good right now. Interest rates are creating consumer confidence. He noted, though, that sellers should not be too quick to increase the prices.

- Deana Grinnell is seeing a lot of activity, more deals and more subjects but the prices are low and it's the right time for purchasers to be out there. Some Municipalities are raising DCC's so she appreciates Surrey's initiatives. Deanna finds the market promising but feels we will be at this level for a while.
- Bill Kruger clients are looking cautiously right now but not purchasing at the moment.
- Avtar Johl sees the multi-family side picking up. There are buyers out there but it is still fragile at this point, it's a slow process and you have to work hard to make the sales. There is some interest in offers on lots now.
- David Porte feels that there are buyers around and prices are low. The commercial market is down as well. It's a tough road ahead even in the residential market.
- Jeff Fisher sees that activity seems to be climbing a bit and he agrees with Deanna that other Municipalities are thinking about increasing their DCC's, he reiterated he is pleased with Surrey's proposal on DCC's.
- Gopal Sahota advised that there are some banks that are tight but secondary lenders are stepping in now and taking a risk so people can get in that way.

The meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.