



# City of Surrey

## Council-in-Committee

### Minutes

Council Chamber  
City Hall  
14245 - 56 Avenue  
Surrey, B.C.  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2008  
Time: 4:30 p.m.

#### Present:

Councillor Bose - Chair  
Mayor Watts  
Councillor Villeneuve  
Councillor Steele  
Councillor Gill  
Councillor Martin  
Councillor Hepner  
Councillor Hunt  
Councillor Higginbotham

#### Absent:

#### Staff Present:

City Manager  
City Clerk  
Deputy City Manager  
General Manager, Planning & Development  
General Manager, Engineering  
General Manager, Finance & Technology  
General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture  
General Manager, Human Resources  
City Solicitor

## A. DELEGATIONS

- Rosemary Zelinka, Coordinator**  
**Surrey Association of Sustainable Communities (ASC)**  
File: 0125-20; 0550-20-10

Rosemary Zelinka, Coordinator, Surrey Association of Sustainable Communities (ASC) was in attendance before Council regarding Surrey's public consultation practices and procedures. The following presentation was provided.

*"The Surrey Association of Sustainable Communities is an umbrella group for community associations and groups and is also involved in community development and asset-building. As an organization, we are trying to be politically neutral and non-partisan. We seek to work with the City rather than against it. But there are still some issues that we feel we must raise with the City from time to time.*

*This presentation is regarding a number of issues related to public processes and public communication. We want to firstly express our appreciation to Council for the improvements that have been made in the last three years in this regard, such as the Mayor being accessible to citizens, the setting up a Mayor's Community Associations Advisory Committee, and work on a Sustainability Charter. But we have found 13 issues, most of which we have previously mentioned to Council, and which we had hoped would be addressed as part of the promises of "openness at City Hall" which were made at the last municipal election. We are respectfully requesting that these issues be resolved before the next election.*

#### **General Issues:**

- Mayor's Community Association Advisory Committee.** *While we very much appreciate the creation of this Committee, it has not met in 18 months (although we understand a meeting has now been scheduled for later this month). We would like to see this as a standing committee, which is advisory to all of Council, which meets regularly at least four times per year, and which receives minutes and responses to the issues it raises.*

2. **Response to letters.** We request that the City officially acknowledges and responds to all letters sent to Mayor and Council. Other municipalities do this, some by having a correspondence item at Council in Committee meetings, as many other municipalities do.
3. **Availability of staff reports.** We would like to request that Council agenda details, including staff reports with all appendices, be put on the City website on Friday afternoons, instead of 1 p.m. on Monday, only 3 hours before these items may be discussed and decided by Council. I checked the websites of other Metro Vancouver municipalities and found they all make reports available several days before a Council meeting, not several hours before. I raised this matter with the City Clerk a few weeks ago and it seems there aren't any technical problems to Surrey doing this, but it may require a change to Surrey's procedural bylaw.
4. **Improve the City's website.** We requested a few months ago that it include more community group information. We also feel that the search engine and overall organization of the website should be improved, as our members have considerable difficulty accessing items they are interested in [e.g. tracing back specific corporate reports, if you don't know the date and name of it, it is difficult to find them].
5. **Public access to Council.** Currently, the public can only address Council at statutory public hearings or by requesting in writing to be a delegation at a later Council Committee meeting. Many other municipalities provide additional opportunities, for example by allowing the public to speak to specific items as they arise at Council Committee meetings, and/or by having a few minutes to address Council on any topic before a Council meeting officially starts. We are requesting that Surrey do the same.
6. **Public open houses.** With regard to public open houses, which are held for transportation and parks matters as well as planning, we are pleased that some recent open houses, as well as having display panels, have a presentation and general question and answer session at a preadvertised time. We support this very much, and would like to encourage this approach for all open houses. We also suggest that City staff should be the recipient of comments made at open houses as well as the proponents of a project.
7. **Input to Final Plan.** With regard to public consultation processes in developing planning, transportation, and PR&C plans, there has been an improvement in holding public meetings early in the process, but we feel that in many cases, the public should be allowed more time to comment on the final plan before Council adopts it. Too often, a draft plan is circulated to the public, comments are made, and the next thing we know, Council is approving the final plan without us knowing whether anyone took notice of our comments, e.g. Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the amendments to the Semiahmoo Town Centre Plan.
8. **Non-statutory Public Hearings.** We recommend Council holds non-statutory public hearings for major projects and bylaws not subject to statutory public

hearings, e.g. Tree Preservation Bylaw, Sustainability Charter, Parks Master Plan and some development permits, as many other municipalities do. We have requested this of Council several times, without success.

**Planning Issues:**

9. **Including Secondary Plans in the OCP.** The Local Government Act requires that an Official Community Plan must be adopted by bylaw after a public hearing, about which there are various advertising requirements. As far as I can discover from their websites, all municipalities in the Metro Vancouver area except Surrey that are subject to the LGA have interpreted it to mean that secondary plans (area plans and neighbourhood concept plans) must be incorporated into the OCP also, by bylaw, after a public hearing.

Surrey Council, on the other hand, only adopts secondary plans by resolution, without giving the public an opportunity to address Council on the topic. This, it is claimed, allows for greater flexibility and a speedier process, and is legal because down the road, when a rezoning application comes in, the OCP is amended at the same time, for that individual parcel of land.

In our opinion, Surrey's actions are skirting the intent of the LGA, which is plainly to have municipal development plans provide some certainty rather than flexibility and with which city capital expenditure programs are supposed to comply. The LGA also provides for public input directly to Council on a plan for an area, which is denied the citizens of Surrey. Yet, input to the whole, final plan before Council approves it and certainty of the plan are what the public wants. We recommend that Surrey's process for approval of secondary plans be changed to correspond with what all other municipalities in Metro Vancouver that are subject to the LGA are doing.

10. **Prior consideration of OCP consultation process.** Section 879 of the LGA states that in developing or amending an OCP, the local government must consider whether consultation should be early and ongoing. Most municipalities bring a report to their Councils early in the application process, setting out the proposed consultation process. This allows a Council to order, for example, a wider circulation area or additional public meetings if it feels it necessary. Surrey, on the other hand, only passes a resolution after the fact, when 3rd reading is being given, that the consultation carried out complied with S. 879. Again while this approach may fall within the letter of the law, one wonders how a municipality can really consider if extra consultation is needed long after the consultation has been carried out. We suggest Surrey does what other municipalities do in this regard.
11. **Composition of community advisory committees.** There have been issues with the composition of community advisory committees set up to advise on the development of area plans and neighbourhood concept plans, e.g. in Grandview Heights. We suggest that every effort be made to choose participants who are altruistic and intending to remain in the area, to see it develop, rather than those wanting to sell their property for development at the highest value and leave the area.

12. **Consultation re Development Applications.** *Some longstanding community associations are automatically consulted re development applications. We suggest that the City should extend this invitation to all established groups.*
13. **Planning Committee/Commission.** *A number of other municipalities have a planning committee of councillors or a planning commission as an intermediary stage in the planning process, where people can express concerns in greater detail than may be practical before the whole of Council. Perhaps Surrey should consider this also.*

### **Conclusions**

*It is our impression that despite the improvements made by this Council, Surrey is still probably the worst of the municipalities in Metro Vancouver in providing opportunities for public input to its processes. We suggest that Surrey checks this out with other municipalities and that its processes be changed for the better.*

*We realize, of course, that the planning process, in particular, is often not just an issue for the City and its citizens, but also for developers, who want the process to be as speedy as possible. Obviously a balance has to be found between the needs of all three parties. In our opinion, Surrey's current planning consultation processes are too much weighted in favour of developers, compared with other municipalities, and these processes should be changed to reflect our recommendations. We feel there is time to make these changes before the next election, if Council wishes."*

In closing, the delegation did note that the research for the presentation was fairly cursory, looking at the websites of other municipalities to see what they had under their official community plan and if they have a list of area plans that are also part of its schedule, etc., and that it is the hope of the ASC that a more thorough examination might be done by City staff.

The Chair thanked the delegation for the presentation and requested that a copy be provided to the City Clerk.

2. **Jamie Vann Struth, Vann Struth Consulting  
Eric Vance & Associates and Dragana Vojakovic**  
File: 6750-01; 0550-20-10

**Note:** See Corporate Report Item No. C012.

Jamie Vann Struth, Vann Struth Consulting was in attendance to make a presentation regarding the Economic Development Strategy. The following comments were provided:

- The context for this strategy is very much building on such as the Employment Land Strategy, the Sustainability Charter and the Livability Accord, and it attempts to reflect and support the messaging and results of each of those studies.

- Most of the high level principals or objectives are already in place by the City such as the focus on expanding employment, in particular diversifying the economy, and getting more high value jobs in Surrey.
- The report has 17 strategies organized into three main objectives:
  - Expand and diversify employment opportunities, including higher-value jobs. Actively encourage and support employment growth both through local companies within Surrey with the business retention program as well as investment attraction activities (some of those through partners with the region).
  - Establish Surrey as a premier investment location - those things that Surrey can do internally to ensure it remains a desirable investment location for investment of all kinds.
  - Strengthen Surrey's unique character as a vibrant urban economy and a centre of agricultural production.
- One of the larger changes made, based on the feedback from the presentation to Council in June, is the importance of education. Education is one of the top priorities for the City, which is now reflected.
- There are now five top priorities as identified in the executive summary:
  - Ensure an appropriate supply of serviced industrial land on an on-going basis.
  - Focus on developing City Centre as an important catalyst for broader economic development in Surrey.
  - Continue to protect Surrey's agricultural land base and enhance the viability of agricultural enterprise.
  - Continue to operate the business retention and expansion (BRE) program.
  - Continue to build the education and skill profile of Surrey's resident workforce.

In response to Council's comments, the following was noted:

- There was a lot of specific examination of industrial land use, however there was no consultation with futurists about industrial land use, which may be reflected in the Employment Land Strategy to be presented at a later date.
- The comments and actions noted in the Economic Development Strategy talk about the broadening of uses and being more flexible. That flexibility is not envisioning an extension to residential, it is more flexibility within an employment creating realm; more flexible uses or mix of industrial and various commercial uses, not mixing residential with the industrial land.
- Staff will develop work plan items related to each of the recommended strategies, working in partnership with the partners listed in the document.

Council extended their appreciation for the presentation and the work done on the Economic Development Strategy.



**G. ADJOURNMENT**

It was

Moved by Councillor Hunt

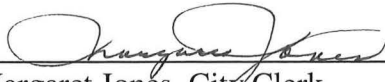
Seconded by Councillor Higginbotham

That the Council-in-Committee meeting do

now adjourn.

Carried

The Council-in-Committee adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

  
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Margaret Jones, City Clerk

  
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Bob Bose, Chairperson