

DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER

COUNCIL WORKSHOP

Minutes of the Council Workshop of the Council for the District of North Vancouver held at 5:04 p.m. on Monday, February 27, 2012 in the Committee Room of the District Hall, 355 West Queens Road, North Vancouver, British Columbia.

Present: Mayor R. Walton
Councillor R. Bassam
Councillor R. Hicks
Councillor M. Little
Councillor D. MacKay-Dunn
Councillor L. Muri

Absent: Councillor A. Nixon

Staff: Mr. D. Stuart, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. B. Bydwell, General Manager – Planning, Properties & Permits
Ms. N. Deveaux, General Manager – Finance & Technology
Mr. J. Gordon, Manager – Administrative Services
Ms. C. Grant, Manager – Corporate Planning & Projects
Mr. A. Wardell, Manager – Financial Services
Ms. J. Bratina, Communications & Corporate Relations Officer
Ms. L. Brick, Confidential Council Clerk

Also in

Attendance: Ms. Mary Bacica, Ipsos Reid
Ms. Tracey Tan, Ipsos Reid

1. Opening by the Mayor

Mayor Walton opened the meeting and welcomed members of the public and staff.

2. 2011 Service Delivery Dialogue

File No. 01.0620.30/003.000

Presentation: Mary Bacica, Ipsos Reid

Memo: Charlene Grant, Manager, Corporate Planning and Services

Ms. Bacica reviewed the methodology used to conduct the September 2011 survey advising that a random sample of residents was recruited through telephone calls; respondents were provided background information prior to completing the survey and were provided an opportunity to submit surveys on-line or in hard copy format. A follow up was conducted and the respondent rate was 41% with 829 responses.

She then presented the Summary of Results for the Service Delivery Dialogue Study highlighting the following key findings:

- Going green was noted as a divisive issue for respondents;
- Residents expressed concern about affordability on the North Shore, suggesting the District may not be an affordable place to live;
- Overall attitudes towards living in the District are good to very good;
- District performance perceptions are moderately rather than strongly held;

- Residents noted they are generally satisfied with the District services received;
- A majority expressed they were satisfied with the service received the last time they contacted the District;
- Majority of respondents advised that the most common reason for last contact with the District was to pay bills, taxes, and obtaining information; and,
- When queried about taxation majority of respondents advised they feel they get good value for their taxes.

Respondents noted that their top priorities are:

- Fire & Rescue;
- Sewer System operations & maintenance;
- Police services;
- Water system operations & maintenance;
- Residential garbage collection; and,
- Road safety & maintenance.

Respondents noted that their mid level priorities include:

- Emergency planning & management;
- Building inspections & building plan reviews;
- Bylaw enforcement & education;
- Development permitting;
- Recycling & green waste collection;
- Natural hazards management programs;
- Land use planning; and,
- Recreation facilities & programs.

Respondents noted that their lowest priority services include:

- Communications & community engagement;
- Specialized park and recreation attractions;
- Horticulture and maintenance of plantings throughout the District;
- Corporate energy management; and,
- Arts and culture.

The results indicate that the following areas are the most divisive in terms of desired priority:

- Trails & natural parkland maintenance;
- Animal welfare;
- Environment planning & projects;
- Social planning & other support to seniors, youth and children; and,
- Economic development.

Ms. Bacica advised that when respondents were asked if they think the service should be increased or decreased, most felt that the service levels should be maintained at current levels and any increases should be focused on police and road safety.

Ms. Bacica advised that where there was an appetite for increased services, most residents indicated the funding should come from taxes; however, it was noted that residents preferred a combination of taxes and user fees for recreation funding increases.

Respondents indicated a willingness to increase revenues and reduce cost through the following methods:

- Sponsorships with private sector business/organizations;
- Consolidate services with the City of North Vancouver;
- Contract out services to private companies where cost savings can be realized;

- Increase fees for private encroachments on municipal land; and,
- Charge non-residents for parking in major parks.

It was noted that 58% of respondents opposed or strongly opposed charging non-residents for parking in major parks.

When answering questions regarding amalgamation, the majority of respondents identified the most important outcomes would be cost savings and efficiencies in operations.

Residents responded with a high degree to maintain the current level of financial assistance for recreational, social, and artistic groups with the highest indicator allocated to grants given to organizations that provide social services to groups such as seniors, youth, or the disadvantaged.

The survey indicated that residents "green buying" opinions are somewhat divided; 56% of respondents advised they only make "green" purchasing decisions if they are cost neutral or provide cost benefit and 39% advised they try to buy or make "green" purchasing decisions whenever possible, even if there may be some additional costs. Ms. Bacica noted that this is in comparison to the 2007 survey which identified 88% of residents strongly or somewhat supported the District purchasing more environmentally friendly products/technologies, even if they were more expensive.

Discussion:

In response to a query from Council, Ms. Bacica advised that, in her experience, she has not had such a notable response to an affordability question in a survey before. Council expressed concern that the survey did not identify specific affordability issues.

Ms. Bacica confirmed that the finding that newspaper ads are the greatest source of information for a majority of residents is consistent with findings in other communities. Having a source of information which is readily accessible and requires no searching for information is important to municipalities. Other forms of information portals include email subscriptions and twitter. Staff advised there will be a email subscription service for Council agendas available in the near future.

In response to concerns raised by Council that there was a low percentage of respondents under 35 and with children, staff advised they will review the Stats Can statistics for households with kids in the District; staff advised that of the households surveyed, 59% had children and 41% were without children.

Staff suggested the appropriate frequency for surveys may be every three years and the information be made available to every new Council. Mr. David Stuart, Chief Administrative Officer, noted that surveys help Councils understand the shifts happening in the community. He noted these surveys can be useful in identifying how the community feels about service adjustments and what direction staff should be pursuing; it was suggested that this survey is reflective of the District's current strategy, with some minor changes.

Public Input:

Dr. Corrie Kost, 2800 Block Colwood Drive,

- Commented on the survey question regarding green initiatives;
- Opined that the Council agenda should be advertised in the North Shore News; and,
- Queried if the District would have access to the individual statistics for District regions?

Ms. Bacica responded that the District could be provided with regional responses to the survey.

In response to a query from Council, Staff advised they did not delve into questions which queried if respondents wished to pay a premium for green initiatives; as a result, the survey did not elaborate on green issues or initiatives. The survey is described as a societal picture at this point in time and reflects the value of taxes for services. Ms. Bacica advised she can review surveys from other municipalities to provide

benchmarks and to identify the general population consensus on green initiatives.

Mr. Peter Thompson, 900 Block Clements Avenue,

- Noted that the green purchasing support has halved in a five year period;
- Queried what the green trending is across other municipalities;
- Spoke in support of shortening the survey time length to a three year period; and,
- Queried if IPSOS can construct a pulse survey for the District where they can get quick answers bi-monthly.

Ms. Bacica responded that a panel of residents can be created and surveyed bi-monthly; however, this would be at a cost to the District.

Council inquired what the minimum survey sample size for a community of 87,000 people would be. Ms. Bacica advised that the industry minimum standard is generally 400 depending on the margin for error; the initial target for this survey was 600 with a final response rate of 829 and the margin for error was listed as +/- 4%.

Staff advised that the high number of survey completions is attributed to email and telephone follow ups, and the ability for respondents to respond on paper and on-line. Staff further advised that this survey had a “date” deadline, not a “quota number” deadline.

Mr. Erik Andersen, 2500 Block Derbyshire Way,

- Queried if respondents to the survey considered the District tax levy as high.

Mr. Lyle Craver, 4700 Block Hoskins Road,

- Queried how the average house price of \$903,000 was arrived at.

Staff responded that this was the average house price in the District of North Vancouver based on the annual tax roll.

Council commented that future surveys could include an option to identify residents who wished to be re-contacted and identify how they would be willing to participate in future surveys.

The meeting recessed at 6:23 pm and reconvened at 6:26 pm.

Mr. Stuart advised that management has reduced District costs by in excess of \$4 million over the last three years. Staff have identified three approaches to ongoing service adjustments:

- Systematic Program Review;
- Shared Services Review; or,
- Specific Challenges and Opportunities Reviews.

Staff advised they are seeking Council input on the proposed options for service adjustments. It was noted that these options are not exclusive and can be incorporated on different levels. Engaging the public on a level such as was done during the OCP process is a resource laden exercise so the outcome should be clearly identified to ensure that value is added to Council's decision making process.

Council further discussed the proposed service adjustment review methodology noting:

- The survey suggests a strong support for partnering with the private sector or City of North Vancouver;
- Council has previously provided direction to the Finance and Audit Committee to do a systematic review of one or two departments annually;
- An accurate understanding of service costing could assist in identifying efficiencies and measuring performance;

- Ensure that the services delivered, and their associated costs, will address future needs and expenditures; and,
- Encouraged staff to continue to be strategic with resources.

The meeting recessed at 7:01 pm and reconvened at 7:08 pm.

3. Tax Strategy Update

File No. 05.1610.01/000.000

Presentation: Andy Wardell, Manager – Financial Services

Mr. Andy Wardell, Manager – Financial Services, presented the preliminary tax information noting that it is in line with the proposed tax levy increase. Mr. Wardell reviewed the impact of the Tax Strategy Policy on the municipal tax classes during the previous five years indicating that the numbers will not be finalized until receipt of the final tax roll review in March.

Mr. Wardell advised that the District remains competitive within the regional averages for most tax rates; the one area where the District is not at the regional average is in the heavy industry class although, through the implementation of the tax strategy, the blended rate is coming close. Staff noted that a Provincial panel is reviewing business competitiveness, including municipal taxation, with a report expected in 2012. Staff advised they will continue with development of the tax rates according to the existing Tax Strategy Policy.

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Confidential Council Clerk