

**DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER
COUNCIL WORKSHOP**

Minutes of the Council Workshop for the District of North Vancouver held at 7:02 p.m. on Monday, September 28, 2020 in the Council Chambers of the District Hall, 355 West Queens Road, North Vancouver, British Columbia.

Present: Mayor M. Little
Councillor J. Back
Councillor M. Bond
Councillor M. Curren
Councillor B. Forbes
Councillor J. Hanson
Councillor L. Muri

Staff: Mr. D. Stuart, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. D. Milburn, General Manager – Planning, Properties & Permits
Ms. T. Atva, Manager – Community Planning
Mr. J. Gordon, Manager – Administrative Services
Ms. J. Paton, Manager – Development Planning & Engineering
Mr. D. Veres, Senior Planner
Ms. J. Simpson, Confidential Council Clerk
Ms. C. Archer, Clerk Typist 3 – via Webex
Ms. S. Clarke, Customer Service Clerk – via Webex

Also in

Attendance: Hesam Deihimi, Bruce Crowe - The Rental, Social and Affordable Housing Task Force

Via Webex: Derek Holloway, Heather Fowler, Katherine Fagerlund, Keith Collyer, Michael Sadler and Phil Dupasquier - The Rental, Social and Affordable Housing Task Force

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1.1. September 28, 2020 Council Workshop Agenda

MOVED by Councillor FORBES

SECONDED by Councillor BACK

THAT the agenda for the September 28, 2020 Council Workshop is adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1. July 13, 2020 Council Workshop

MOVED by Councillor MURI

SECONDED by Councillor BOND

THAT the minutes of the July 13, 2020 Council Workshop meeting are adopted.

3. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL OR STAFF

3.1. Rental, Social and Affordable Housing Task Force: Interim Report

File No. 01.360.20/078.000

Mayor Little introduced the Housing Task Force and explained the purpose of the workshop.

The Rental, Social and Affordable Housing Task Force Chair introduced their members and provided an overview of the report, highlighting the following:

- The purpose of the task force:
 - Retention and maintenance of rental buildings, social housing and affordable housing, such as older strata buildings;
 - The housing continuum;
 - Tenant relocation policies;
 - Providing housing diversity;
 - Housing definitions; and,
 - Partnerships;
- Introduced the Official Community Plan (OCP) established in 2011 and commented on the success of the implementations to date;
- Discussed the four major demovictions in the District and mentioned the reduction of rental replacement units as a result:
 - Maplewood Plaza;
 - Emery Village;
 - Mountain Court; and,
 - Canyon Springs;
- Presented a graph displaying the average vacancy rates for the Metro Vancouver municipalities, stating that the District of North Vancouver struggles with a lower vacancy rate than is considered healthy;
- Expressed the number of new occupancy permits issue since the OCP was adopted; and,
- Expressed the number of new non-market housing units developed.

The task force detailed the following recommendations raised in the Interim Report:

- Staff resources;
- Lands and process;
- Funding and partners;
- Regulations; and,
- Tenant Impacts.

Mayor Little began the conversation commending the efforts of the task force, and further clarified that the OCP focuses on estimates, rather than targets.

Council expressed support of the statistics and facts that were provided in the report, confirming the need to keep the data updated and available.

Council questioned if the task force discussed the conflict of retention versus renewal in urban town centres, in regards to preserving and retaining older, less expensive rental homes.

In response to a question from council, the task force members stated the following:

- The majority of the District's affordable rentals consist of secondary suites;
- The importance of ensuring the existing community members are protected; and,
- Identified recommendations for the Residential Tenant Relocation Assistance Policy.

Council questioned if the task force discussed the issues around maintenance and retention of older buildings, and tailoring tenant protection and maintenance in order to preserve lower rental rates.

In response to a question from council, the task force members addressed the following:

- Commented on respecting the OCP in terms of town centres;
- Mentioned the Standards of Maintenance Bylaw;
- Prioritizing maintenance and retention of purpose-built multi-unit rental buildings in consideration of applicable town centre plans, objectives and policies; and,
- Explained a recommendation to create a registry or matrix of existing purpose-built multi-unit rental buildings and prioritize the retention of these existing buildings that are outside of town centres.

Council spoke to the demovictions as a result of new developments and continued the discussion with the following:

- Stated that the intentions of the OCP policies did not produce what they meant to;
- Stated that the improvement of town centres outlined in the OCP increased prices and decreased affordability;
- Commented on the report's acknowledgement of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation producing affordable housing in the District; and,
- Questioned what the rental rate is right now.

In a response to a question from council, staff advised that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) does a survey every October on rental rates and is published a few months afterwards.

Council proceeded in discussion noting:

- Tourism and the rental market have decreased due to COVID-19;
- Expressed interested in knowing future rental rates;
- Illuminated the issue of non-restrictions in rental units;
- Questioned if the non-restrictions have increased prices;
- Questioned the percentage of multi-family units used for short-term rental versus long term;

- Expressed interest in the valuation and percentage of availability of rental on First Nations land;
- Requested an update on the challenges that BC Housing faces in their approval processes; and,
- Commented on the increase in valuation in regards to affordability and the increase in the number of renters in the District.

The task force members detailed one of the reports recommendations being for the District to establish stronger working relationships with First Nations and BC Housing.

The task force members spoke to the changes that COVID-19 has generated:

- Housing values have increased by 7%;
- Rental rates have decreased; and,
- Spoke to the difficulties of predicting what will happen in the development industry.

Council noted that secondary suites are a significant source of affordable housing in the District, but are underutilized.

In a response to a question from council, the task force members spoke to the issue of secondary suites and the change in the Residential Tenancy Act.

Council recommended contacting Hollyburn Family Services Society in regards to their roommate registry to explore different opportunities.

In a response to a question from council, staff confirmed that the secondary rental market, or investment properties, makes up approximately twenty percent across the region.

Council spoke to renter's need for long-term security and addressed the following:

- The gap between renters median income versus the District's median income;
- Appreciated that the environmental aspect was looked at through an economic lens in the report;
- Suggested buying hotels to avoid demovictions;
- Expressed interest in looking into the Whistler Housing Authority model; and,
- Appreciated that renters with pets were considered in the report.

Council spoke in support of the recommendation for good partnerships and questioned how it could be improved upon in the future.

In a response to a question from council, the task force members spoke to the need for establishing stronger working relationships and suggested appointing someone to identify those partners.

Council questioned if the task force addressed the varying dates of data and if they could be aligned better in the future.

In a response to a question from council, the task force members agreed with the difficulty of getting correlated data and that it is being addressed as an ongoing issue.

Council commented on the median income in the District being skewed and suggested the Metro Vancouver median income be used instead to calculate prices.

In a response to a question from council, the task force members expressed the difficulty with calculating rents, along with how affordability should be defined in the District.

Council questioned if there was any discussion around rent-to-own properties.

In a response to a question from council, the task force members stated that their mandate was to focus on rental, social and affordable housing, however, there is a continuum with rent-to-own so this can be looked into further.

The task force members spoke to the District partnering with BC Housing and CMHC in regards to developing properties which can maintain lower rental rates. Additionally, it was suggested to be more creative with the types of housing.

The task force members commented on providing more options for residents subject to demovictions.

Council commented on demographic data in regards to income, noting the following:

- The median income is more stable in town centres with multi-family developments, compared to single-family homes;
- Spoke to defining affordability;
- Commented on finding out who is in need of housing, rather than just looking at the median income, and driving council decisions towards which housing types are in greater need;
- Spoke to security of tenure and minimizing tenant impacts; and,
- Questioned the security of tenure on secondary markets.

In response to a question from council, it was stated that the task force members has not specifically focused on this issue, however, mentioned that one of the biggest reasons people purchase houses is to avoid eviction.

Council commented on the desire to strengthen the Residential Tenant Relocation Assistance Policy and questioned the discussion of compensation for relocations.

In a response to a question from council, the task force members noted the difficulty of coming to a consensus on appropriate compensation, however, they will research this further.

Council questioned what discussions were had regarding rental-only zoning.

In a response to a question from council, staff stated that there are some municipalities that have done differing degrees of rental tenure zoning.

Council questioned the BC Building Code change in regards to secondary suites.

The task force members stated that the task force will review the scope of how secondary suites are used.

In a response to a question from council, staff stated that a key change in the BC Building Code regarding secondary suites was the removal of maximum floor area.

Council commented on looking at this through the lens of sustainability and how housing and affordability may differ between demographic cohorts.

In a response to a question from council, task force members said District staff has provided substantial support and resources and encourages council to continue providing feedback and direction.

Council continued its discussion highlighting the following:

- Supported reducing restrictions for renters with pets;
- Suggested gentle densification in single-family neighbourhoods;
- Commented on secondary suites in regards to affordability;
- Spoke to the Standards of Maintenance Bylaw in regards to maintaining older buildings, rather than letting them become a tear down development;
- Commented on revisiting the relocation policy;
- Supported the rent-to-own model and partnering with Habitat for Humanity;
- Mentioned that current applications are using 2018 rental rates to determine below market rental, however, rates were much higher then;
- Questioned what will happen when the short-term rental market returns after travel restrictions due to COVID-19; and,
- Questioned if the value of a strata would decrease if restrictions on rentals were removed.

In response to a question from council, the task force members stated that it is very difficult to discern if removal of restrictions on rentals would decrease the value of a strata and that a strata council is responsible for whether rentals are allowed in the building.

Council noted its policy where the District does not allow restrictions on rentals in new strata buildings, which is put in place during the rezoning process.

The task force members expressed their preference for rental-only zoning and suggested finding sites to rezone and put in place covenants to specify the proposed market rate.

Council spoke to the high valuation of land in the District due to location and attractiveness, and suggested looking at land values of current social housing properties for further evaluation.

Mayor Little mentioned the appeal in the real estate market to note that rentals are allowed on listings.

Council commented on the high rental prices in some multi-family properties in regards to finding a new home when being displaced.

Mayor Little spoke to the unequal and unfair application of the Residential Tenant Relocation Assistance Policy in some demoviction cases.

Council continued discussion with the following points:

- Spoke to COVID-19 impacting some people more than others and the impact that is forthcoming due to the pandemic;
- Spoke to the lack of childcare space availability and supports adding this to affordable housing projects;
- Expressed interest in seeing size variations between new single-family homes and multi-family developments;
- Commented on foreseeable policy and land use planning changes in correlation with the climate, ecological and equity crises;
- Suggested that duplexes should be reconsidered;
- Advocated for new building techniques and suggested identifying the barriers these may present;
- Questioned the number of tenants currently living in the District that are at risk of being displaced; and,
- Spoke to the amount of people that will be disproportionately affected as a result of COVID-19.

Mayor Little questioned how childcare was considered as being an affect on affordability.

In a response to a question from council, the task force members spoke to the barriers and delays that the current development regulations present.

Council questioned if the task force was thinking in terms of leveraging District-owned lands and their sale for social and affordable housing.

In a response to a question from council, the task force members stated that staff provided a document with a list of District-owned lands which started the conversation for determining which lots would be suitable for affordable housing. The inventory was examined for location and proximity to services.

The task force members stated that the number one recommendation would be to appoint a staff member to be in charge of managing all of these issues.

Council suggested the use of alternative homes, such as tiny homes and recreational vehicles. Additionally, both single-family and multi-family homes should be considered when determining value as to whether a property can be rented or not.

Council continued its discussion, commenting on the following points:

- The District's outdated regulations for single-family homes in regard to size;

- Suggested work force housing and evaluating its challenges; and,
- Spoke to the level of enforcement that the District can exercise in respect of the Standards of Maintenance Bylaw and suggested speaking with the provincial government.

The task force members identified that affordability was not a primary topic when the OCP was being drafted in 2009. However, in 2015 prices started greatly appreciating, increasing awareness of, and the need for, affordability.

MOVED by Councillor BOND

SECONDED by Councillor MURI

THAT the September 10, 2020 report of the Senior Community Planner entitled Rental, Social and Affordable Housing Task Force: Interim Report is received for information.

AND THAT staff report back to Council on the immediate action items recommended in the report.

CARRIED

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED by Councillor CURREN

SECONDED by Councillor BOND

THAT the September 28, 2020 Council Workshop is adjourned.

CARRIED
(9:10 p.m.)

Mayor



Municipal Clerk