

DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER COUNCIL WORKSHOP

Minutes of the Council Workshop for the District of North Vancouver held at 7:06 p.m. on Monday, April 19, 2021. The meeting was held virtually with participants appearing via video and telephone conference.

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

Absent: Councillor B. Forbes

Staff: Mr. D. Stuart, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. G. Joyce, General Manager – Engineering, Parks & Facilities
Mr. D. Milburn, General Manager – Planning, Properties & Permits
Ms. S. Walker, General Manager – Corporate Services
Mr. A. Wardell, General Manager – Finance/CFO
Mr. R. Danyluk, Manager – Business Planning and Decision Support
Mr. J. Gordon, Manager – Administrative Services
Mr. E. Iorio, Manager – Financial Services
Ms. G. Lanz, Deputy Municipal Clerk
Ms. C. Archer, Confidential Council Clerk
Ms. S. Ferguson, Committee Clerk

RESOLUTION TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING WITHOUT THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

MOVED by Councillor BACK

SECONDED by Councillor HANSON

WHEREAS:

- the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General has issued Order M192; and,
- Order M192 requires British Columbia municipalities to use best efforts to allow members of the public to attend open meetings of council in a manner that is consistent with the applicable requirements or recommendations of the *Public Health Act* and Public Health Officer orders; and,
- the District has assessed its ability to allow members of the public to attend open meetings of council in a manner that is consistent with the applicable requirements or recommendations of the *Public Health Act* and Public Health Officer orders; and,
- the District has taken into consideration its Covid-19 Safety Plan as required by Worksafe BC; and,
- the District has determined that, at this time, it cannot safely allow members of the public to physically attend open meetings of council in a manner that is consistent with the

applicable requirements or recommendations of the *Public Health Act* or its Covid-19 Safety Plan;

THEREFORE, this meeting of the Council for the District of North Vancouver is to be held virtually and without members of the public, or Council, being physically present;

AND THAT the principles of openness, transparency, accessibility and accountability are being ensured through:

- Providing an online subscription service for residents to sign up and be apprised of upcoming meetings and the post-meeting availability of meeting minutes and meeting videos;
- Providing advance notice of this meeting in accordance with the *Community Charter* and advising the public on how they may participate in the meeting by providing public input;
- Providing the availability of the agenda for this meeting on the District's webpage six days in advance of the meeting;
- The live streaming of this meeting via a link readily available on the District's webpage;
- Maintaining the thirty minute public input opportunity at each regular meeting and the discretionary public input opportunity at each workshop;
- The ability of the public to provide input on agenda items by full two-way audio and video means;
- Adhering the rules of procedural fairness and acting with respect and courtesy at all times when hearing the public;
- Conducting meetings in a manner that resembles in-person meeting as much as possible;

And reminding the public that they may contact Mayor and Council at any time on any topic via its council@dnv.org email address.

CARRIED

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1.1. April 19, 2021 Council Workshop Agenda

MOVED by Councillor CURREN

SECONDED by Councillor BACK

THAT the agenda for the April 19, 2021 Council Workshop is adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1. February 9, 2021 Council Workshop

MOVED by Councillor MURI

SECONDED by Councillor BACK

THAT the minutes of the February 9, 2021 Council Workshop are adopted.

CARRIED

2.2. February 16, 2021 Council Workshop

MOVED by Councillor MURI

SECONDED by Councillor BACK

THAT the minutes of the February 16, 2021 Council Workshop are adopted.

CARRIED

2.3. February 23, 2021 Council Workshop

MOVED by Councillor MURI

SECONDED by Councillor BACK

THAT the minutes of the February 23, 2021 Council Workshop are adopted.

CARRIED

2.4. March 1, 2021 Council Workshop

MOVED by Councillor MURI

SECONDED by Councillor BACK

THAT the minutes of the March 1, 2021 Council Workshop are adopted.

CARRIED

3. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL OR STAFF

3.1. 2021 Property Tax Distribution

File No.

Mr. Andy Wardell, Chief Financial Officer, introduced the property tax distribution workshop, noting that Council has approved a 3% property tax increase, with 2% for inflation and 1% for asset renewal.

Mr. Wardell reviewed rates for capped and non-capped port properties, noting that property taxes are tax deductible expenses for businesses. Mr. Wardell advised that tax rates for non-capped properties were lowered starting in 2010 and this affected all waterfront industrial properties. He noted that tax shifts and assessment appeals have created challenges and that the District is advocating for the elimination of the *Ports Property Tax Act*. Mr. Wardell advised that the proposed rate for this class is \$17.52, significantly lower than the regional average of \$21.25.

In response to a question from Council, Mr. Wardell advised that improvements on properties are taxable and this is not within municipal control. To offset these costs, the District's strategy has been to lower the tax rate so that these improvements are effectively not taxed. As the value of improvements declines naturally over time, rates will increase.

In response to a question from Council, Mr. Wardell advised that the District is unique in having both capped and non-capped waterfront industrial properties.

Council discussion ensued and the following comments and concerns were noted:

- Expressed support for the staff recommendation, noting that the District has made efforts to support industrial businesses and the proposed taxation rate is below the regional average;
- Recommended returning tax rate to level that effectively does tax improvements for non-capped class as all other classes are taxed on improvements; and,
- Expressed concern regarding assessment appeals by heavy industrial businesses.

In response to a question from Council, Mr. Wardell advised that pending assessment appeals could cost the District \$3 million if successful and that the balance of the Tax Growth reserve fund is \$3.6 million. He noted that estimating the exposure to future appeals is not possible at this time and a levy on this class was not needed in 2020 as the reserve level was considered adequate at the time.

In response to a question from Council, Mr. Wardell advised that the District has continued to discuss the elimination of the *Ports Property Tax Act* with the provincial government, but no change is expected until the resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. David Stuart, Chief Administrative Officer, advised that the District is discussing a number of taxation-related issues with the province, including highest and best use, taxation of air space and the *Ports Property Tax Act*. Mr. Stuart further advised that if Council wishes to add to the Tax Growth Reserve Fund, this levy could be applied directly to heavy industry rather than all tax classes.

MOVED by Mayor LITTLE

SECONDED by Councillor BOND

THAT staff is directed to hold reserve funds at current levels.

DEFEATED

Opposed: Councillors BACK, CURREN and HANSON

Mr. Wardell provided an overview of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on small businesses, many of which are struggling. He noted that some businesses are having difficulty accessing provincial and federal grants and that the District cannot provide assistance in this area. He advised that the District is limited by legislation to taxing at the class level and is not able to provide targeted relief through taxation to businesses that are struggling due to the pandemic. Although business licence fee reductions could have been used to reduce small business costs, the fees were set in 2020 and business licence renewals are already due for the current year.

Mr. Wardell provided options for class 6 taxation, including not applying the overall 3% property tax increase, or applying further discounts to bring the tax rate below that charged in 2020. In response to a question from Council, staff advised any discount for this class would be one-time reduction.

Council discussion continued and the following comments and concerns were noted:

- Requested an inventory of small, medium and large businesses in the District;
- Commented that some businesses are doing very well during the COVID-19 pandemic, but many are not, such as tourism, group fitness and restaurants;
- Expressed concern that business owners who do not own their properties may not see any benefit from property tax reductions;
- Expressed support for the 3% property tax increase to be applied to all classes and for the District to leave targeted relief to the provincial and federal governments;
- Commented that discounts at the class level will not assist businesses that are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and will assist businesses that have not been negatively impacted; and,
- Expressed concern that residents may object to businesses having their taxation rates discounted when the residential class, many of whom have had financial impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, are not receiving a discount.

MOVED by Councillor MURI
SECONDED by Mayor LITTLE

THAT staff are directed to prepare the 2021 Tax Rates Bylaw in accordance with the proposed rates in the approved 2021 Budget.

CARRIED

Councillor BOND left the meeting at 8:51 p.m.

4. PUBLIC INPUT:

4.1. Mr. Jamie O'Connell:

- Advised that he was speaking on behalf of Allied Shipbuilders;
- Noted that Allied Shipbuilders is one of the non-capped waterfront industrial properties in the District;
- Opined that the proposed increase to the Class 4 properties amounts to a 50 percent increase;
- Opined that Class 4 property tax rates do not reflect their consumption of municipal resources and services;
- Commented on the disparity between capped and non-capped industrial properties; and,
- Commented on the increase in property values and tax rates.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED by Councillor MURI
SECONDED by Mayor LITTLE

THAT the April 19, 2021 Council Workshop is adjourned.

CARRIED


(8:54 p.m.)

Absent for Vote: Councillor BOND

Mayor

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Little', written over a horizontal line.

Municipal Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'James Godar', written over a horizontal line.