



MINUTES
SOCIAL PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD TUESDAY, 2010-MAY-04
BOARD ROOM, CITY HALL

PRESENT:

Z. Maartman, Chair
B. Barton
E. Forrester
R. Meyerhoff
S. Welch

V. Alcock-Carter
J. Templeman
J. Lekisch
J. Neville
J. Cowling

REGRETS:

J. Kipp

A. Evans

GUESTS:

J. Slater, GCGC Applicant
K. Lam, GCGC Applicant
Y. Phinith, GCGC Applicant
H. Blank, GCGC Applicant

F. Pattje, Councillor
D. Spalding, Daily News

STAFF:

J. Horn, Social Planner
D. Stewart, Planner

J. Holm, Manager of Planning
R. Tubbs, Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:48 pm.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Z. Maartman explained that due to new Committee Terms of Reference recently implemented for all advisory committees, SPAC is required to elect their Chair for a term expiring 2011-Mar-31.

MOVED by E. Forrester, SECONDED by S. Welch, that Z. Maartman be elected Chair of the Social Planning Advisory Committee for a term ending 2011-Mar-31. CARRIED

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by S. Welch, SECONDED by R. Meyerhoff, that the Minutes from 2010-Apr-06 be adopted. CARRIED

5. ITEMS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None.

6. DELEGATIONS

None.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Letter dated 2010-Mar-31 from Nanaimo Community Kitchens Society thanking the City for a 2010 Social Development Grant in the amount of \$7,000 was received.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- a) Application for a Liquor Primary License – 620 Terminal Avenue – The Great Canadian Casino

J. Horn introduced representatives from the Great Canadian Gaming Corporation (GCGC).

H. Blank, GCGC gave a PowerPoint presentation that included information on the casino's corporate background, history, proposed service plans, and benefits to the community.

He explained that as the gaming industry has evolved, customers want more options. The Nanaimo location is GCGC's only facility that does not provide alcohol. Their goal in providing alcohol service is to add to the entertainment experience and they do not anticipate customers coming to the facility solely to drink. He emphasized the high level of responsibility that the casino takes in ensuring that alcohol is served in a safe way and that drinks are priced to discourage purchase.

He also advised that there are currently three other gaming corporations in Nanaimo that serve alcohol. He understands the City would like to reduce or limit the number of alcohol seats, not increase them. He noted, however, that the casino is an adult-only entertainment facility and that their track record would speak for itself.

Questions from SPAC – Answers from H. Blank:

- What is a liquor primary license?
A liquor primary license allows customers to order a drink without having to order a meal.
- What kind of food will be served?
Full food service will be provided. The casino would eventually like to add live entertainment.
- What is the current status of liquor allowance?
There is currently no allowance for liquor in the facility.
- Where in the facility would alcohol be permitted?
There would be full service on the floor and a full service bar.

- What date would alcohol start being served?
The casino would like to start serving alcohol as soon as possible to meet the summer tourism traffic.
- How do you know that your customers want alcohol? Are these tourists or local customers?
A few local customers ask about it, but most have come to accept that alcohol is not permitted. Tourists do ask why alcohol is not permitted in the facility.
- What would it mean to the casino if they do not receive a license?
It will mean that the facility will not be a destination for customers looking to spend an evening of gambling and possibly a drink. They may go to other facilities or towns that provide more options.
- Have you considered the “tribal casino” option where communities choose to be alcohol-free, for the benefit of their own community?
The casino’s business model is to provide customers with options.
- Will liquor be served on the proposed patio?
Yes, they would like to provide alcohol service on the patio.
- What enforcement measures do you currently have in place?
A facial recognition system will soon be implemented in addition to the license plate recognition system already in place. Security is located at every entrance and government identification is requested from everyone under the age of 30.
- Once you start providing a one-stop destination, what do you think the impact will be on smaller surrounding businesses such as lounges and restaurants?
If the casino expands to the size proposed, smaller businesses may be affected; however, the casino will not serve in the same way as pubs or lounges, and customers will choose based on their wallets. With approximately 25% of the casino’s customers requesting alcohol, the service will not be meant to provide a profit but to have people spend more time on the property.

The Chair thanked the GCGC reps. for their presentation.

9. OLD BUSINESS

a) Review of Liquor Control Strategy

D. Stewart gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Liquor Control Strategy and how the City deals with liquor primary licenses. The presentation addressed the role of local government, license retail stores, the application process for new liquor primary licenses, hours of service policy, current licensing in Nanaimo, and health impacts of alcohol.

Mr. Stewart was thanked for his presentation.

Casino Application Review:

Some of the Committee member's comments were:

- Is opposed in general to broadening liquor sales within the community, as Nanaimo already has a very large number of drinking establishments. However, does agree that a license would make sense for this particular application.
- Many seniors go to the casino for an evening out because they do not want to go to bars. Some would like to have a drink while there. Although not in agreement with more drinking establishments in the city, from a tourism point of view it does make sense to serve alcohol in the casino.
- There are pros and cons. It might be nice to leave the casino to get a drink before returning because it would break up the evening. Monopolies should not move into areas of free enterprise however.
- Likes the fact that the service of alcohol is being tied in to some type of entertainment. This would change the entire aspect and atmosphere of the facility because it is not focused solely on alcohol.
- Has concerns that in a place where you are asked to play within your limits, alcohol could impair your judgment to do so, especially for people who already tend to gamble above their limits. Also concerned that as people sit and play a slot machine while drinking, they may not realize how intoxicated they are becoming until they get to their vehicle to drive home.
- Concerned that a license for 800 seats in the casino would be an increase of 25% of the seats in total, and the effect on surrounding businesses. The real issue is not just drinking in isolation, but drinking with entertainment attached, i.e. gambling. Is this what we see when we envision our downtown? How will this fit in with the mall redevelopment?
- Would rather not see more liquor seats opened. Will the casino continue with the expansion if they do not receive the license?

Mr. Blank responded that he was not sure whether the casino would continue its expansion without the liquor license. They would not be trying to compete with smaller surrounding businesses, but would like to provide liquor service to people who already frequent the casino. If the expansion does proceed, they would want to include a wide range of entertainment as well as alcohol.

- Does not see the need for an outdoor patio. If people are coming to the facility for entertainment, they do not need to be outside.
- Accepts GCGC's comment that providing liquor is not the casino's sole purpose, but to enhance the experience.
- Can see how serving alcohol would go hand in hand with the casino, but also sees that addiction goes hand in hand. Some people may have gambling addiction problems, and these people would also be susceptible to alcohol addiction.
- The majority of customers in the casino are seniors. Understands the idea of alcohol being provided as part of the entertainment experience, but is also concerned for smaller surrounding businesses if the casino became a "one-

stop-shop". Another concern is that the use of alcohol would loosen a person's inhibitions, causing them to over-spend.

- With the casino's high prices, many people may still choose to leave and visit a surrounding business before returning to gamble.
- Could the casino be asked to offer a community contribution?

D. Stewart explained that because the site is zoned for casinos, they would not be required to offer one.

- Agrees that the patio is unnecessary and would be underutilized in this climate.
- If Nanaimo's social goal is to reduce the number of liquor primary seats downtown, is there a way that the casino could apply for a license that requires them to serve a meal with alcohol?

J. Horn advised that the goal is not to reduce the amount of liquor primary seats downtown, but to reduce alcohol-related disorder within the downtown.

- Pricing to discourage purchase will help people to self-limit.
- If the casino was granted the 800 seat license but decided to change locations, would the liquor primary license stay with the property or organization?

D. Stewart replied that if the organization was to change locations, the license would stay with the location. With the current zoning, a nightclub, pub, etc. would have the ability to occupy the space and take over the license. He noted that a covenant could be put on title that the site be used for "casino use" only.

- As this application is for the current site, will the casino have to reapply for a liquor primary license if their expansion is approved? Will this license translate to their new facility?

D. Stewart advised the application will not be required to return to SPAC once it is approved, but would have to go to Council.

- Consideration needs to be given to how the casino will affect the residential development proposed in the mall redevelopment.
- Don't believe people will go to the casino solely to drink. It will not entice a new client base just because they serve liquor – it will be the same people who always attend the casino.
- Noted the application currently being discussed is for the current facility, and not the proposed redevelopment of the mall.

H. Blank advised that if they expand the casino and want to increase the seats, they will have to reapply for the new number of seats. D. Stewart added that such application would not come to SPAC, but would go directly to Council. Only new applications are considered by SPAC and go to a public meeting.

- What kind of notice is given to a neighbourhood for this type of license?

D. Stewart advised that a notice and public comment sheet are delivered to property owners within 100 metres of the establishment. Once comments are received, they are sent to Council.

- SPAC's mandate is to consider social impacts. Does not like the idea of gambling or alcohol defining the downtown. There are social costs to this. It is not entertainment – it's gambling and alcohol.

MOVED by J. Neville, SECONDED by V. Alcock-Carter, to recommend that Council approve the application for a liquor primary license at 620 Terminal Avenue (LA52) with the following recommendations:

- That the patio be constructed as an alcohol-free zone.
- That a covenant be placed on the property that, in the event of a change in ownership, the liquor primary license would apply to casino use only (i.e that the license not be transferred to a nightclub, pub, etc.).

In Favour

E. Forrester
Z. Maartman
J. Neville
V. Alcock-Carter
J. Cowling
J. Lekisch
B. Barton

Opposed

S. Welch
R. Meyerhoff
J. Templeman

CARRIED

The Committee also suggested that if the application is approved, that Council take the following concerns into consideration:

- The use of alcohol with gambling.
- The new drinking and driving regulations that are being implemented.
- The applicant may apply for more seats once the expansion is complete.
- Gambling and drinking is not the vision for a downtown focal point.
- Approval of this application would add 800 liquor primary seats in the downtown area (25% increase).

The applicants thanked the Committee for their consideration and left the meeting.

10. COMMITTEE UPDATES / COUNCIL UPDATE / INFO ITEMS

- a) PNAC – No report.
- b) Grants Advisory Committee – No report.
- c) Safer Nanaimo Working Group – No report.

d) Nanaimo Working Group on Homelessness – No report.

e) Council Update:

Apr. 12 – Z. Maartman reported that Council had a lengthy discussion regarding the use of pesticides for cosmetic reasons.

Apr. 26 – B. Barton noted that VIHA and L. Medd gave a presentation on harm reduction and provision of crack-pipe kits. L. Medd emphasized to Council that the kit does not contain an actual pipe. One of the Mayor's biggest concerns was that the service not be mobile.

f) Other Business

a) R. Meyerhoff noted that the Child Development Centre is having a 2-5 km walk on 2010-May-15 at Pioneer Park. Registration is \$20 and more information can be found on their website.

b) J. Horn reported that approx. 25 people attended the meeting regarding social issues in the Harewood area and the proposed John Howard Society transitional housing project. Services currently located in Harewood were discussed, as well as services that are needed. Further consultation meetings such as this will be held to assist in coming to a rough consensus of the residents' needs and what they are in support of.

11. STRATEGIC PLANNING

None.

12. NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting date is Tuesday, 2010-Jun-01. [Was subsequently postponed until 2010-Jul-06]

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:48 pm.

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Chair

Date