

MINUTES
GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
SHAW AUDITORIUM, VANCOUVER ISLAND CONFERENCE CENTRE,
80 COMMERCIAL STREET, NANAIMO, BC
MONDAY, 2021-OCT-25, AT 1:00 P.M.

Present: Acting Mayor T. Brown, Chair
Mayor L. Krog
Councillor S. D. Armstrong (joined electronically 2:07 p.m.)
Councillor D. Bonner (joined electronically)
Councillor B. Geselbracht (joined electronically)
Councillor E. Hemmens
Councillor Z. Maartman
Councillor I. W. Thorpe
Councillor J. Turley

Staff: J. Rudolph, Chief Administrative Officer
R. Harding, General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture
D. Lindsay, General Manager, Development Services
B. Sims, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works
T. Doyle, Fire Chief
B. Corsan, Director, Community Development
P. Stewart, Manager, Engineering Projects
M. Elliott, Project Manager
K. Kronstal, Social Planner
S. Gurrie, Director, Legislative Services
S. Snelgrove, Recording Secretary

1. CALL THE GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE MEETING TO ORDER:

The Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS:

- (a) Agenda Item 6(a)(1) REIMAGINE Nanaimo Update – Add delegation Daniel Appell.
- (b) Agenda Item 6(b)(1)(1) Diana Krall Plaza Redevelopment Plan – Add delegation Daniel Appell.
- (c) Agenda Item 6(b)(1)(2) Commercial Street Revitalization Study Update – Add delegation Daniel Appell.
- (d) Agenda Item 6(b)(1)(3) Downtown Hub Project – Add delegations:
 - 1. Daniel Appell
 - 2. Carla Samson
 - 3. Grant Payne
 - 4. Kevan Shaw

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

It was moved and seconded that the Agenda, as amended, be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

4. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES:

It was moved and seconded that the Minutes of the Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting held in the Shaw Auditorium, Vancouver, Island Conference Centre, 80 Commercial Street, Nanaimo, BC, on Monday, 2021-SEP-27, at 1:00 p.m. be adopted as circulated. The motion carried unanimously.

5. AGENDA PLANNING:

1. Governance and Priorities Committee Agenda Planning

Sheila Gurrie, Director, Legislative Services, spoke regarding the upcoming Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meetings.

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Housing affordability as a future GPC agenda topic
- Referencing the Langford model of housing affordability and having conversations about affordability
- Rezoned properties reverting to original land zoning if development hasn't taken place within a specific time frame

It was moved and seconded that a Governance and Priorities Committee meeting be held on housing affordability which includes an environmental scan of innovation in housing affordability and reference to the Langford model. The motion carried.

Opposed: *Councillor Turley*

- Structure of pedestrian priorities presentation and policy discussion
- Council receiving information on sidewalk prioritization as part of the capital planning process

6. REPORTS:

a. REIMAGINE NANAIMO:

1. REIMAGINE Nanaimo – Phase 2 Update

Introduced by Dale Lindsay, General Manager, Development Services.

Presentation:

1. Karin Kronstal, Social Planner, provided the Committee with an update regarding Phase 2 of REIMAGINE Nanaimo. Highlights included:

- Public engagement closed September 23rd, Staff are preparing analysis and will then prepare a summary report
- Policy review is underway where City departments are looking at which policies need to be revised, which policies need to be elevated from secondary to primary policies and which need to be updated
- Policy gaps will be identified and analyzed
- Engagement summary will identify early themes and will inform policy work and draft targets and indicators
- Estimated 2,220 participants in phase 2 engagement
- Overarching City Plan is the foundational document
- Noted connections between City Plan, Council's Strategic Plan, Integrated Action Plans, Monitoring Plan and supporting plans
- Action plan could include geographic maps where projects are located
- Timelines are fast paced and aggressive with Staff working across departments
- Next steps include providing the engagement analysis to Council in November
- Policy review work is ongoing
- Land use scenarios are being reviewed
- Council workshop will be held on December 8th
- Goal is for adoption of plan in April

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Not all City plans are incorporated as some policies are being elevated, some elements are taken into the action plan and Staff anticipate having one document for all priorities rather than multiple documents
- Political voice added as one component and the metrics are still being determined

Delegation:

1. Daniel Appell spoke regarding the need for useful data gathered through the public engagement process, developing comprehensive survey questions, including the questions in phase 2 engagement and public engagement versus validation processes.

b. COMMUNITY WELLNESS/LIVABILITY:

1. Downtown Update

1. Diana Krall Plaza Redevelopment Plan

Introduced by Dale Lindsay, General Manager, Development Services.

Bill Corsan, Director, Community Development, provided a verbal presentation. Highlights included:

- Dr. Witty facilitated the process, involving the Masters of Community Planning students at Vancouver Island University
- Project started in late 2019, was put on hold during the pandemic and finished this summer
- Trying to take the work that has been done through the REIMAGINE Nanaimo process and The Hub project and tie it together to create one plan for downtown with linkages to capital planning and Staff direction

Presentation:

1. Dave Witty, Former Provost and Vice President, Academic, Vancouver Island University, and Sonal Deshmukh, provided a PowerPoint presentation. Highlights included:
 - Diana Krall Plaza has the potential to be a magical place
 - The space needs to be animated and needs to address REIMAGINE Nanaimo's vision for a healthy downtown
 - Needs careful strategic investments and acknowledgement that Diana Krall is world famous and deserves to be celebrated
 - Challenging site due to its elongated layout
 - First impression is an empty, isolated space surrounded by stairwells
 - Advisory committee created which identified design parameters, site context and promoting development that includes Snuneymuxw First Nation
 - The plaza is a connection between downtown and the waterfront with a well-connected road network
 - Various public engagement methods were used such as ideas forum, charrettes, website feedback and a survey
 - Feedback identified three broad themes of Diana Krall, entertainment and an ethnic food theme
 - Key aspect is structural engineer's letter noting ability to construct a new one or two storey structure overtop the existing parkade, with a light building system, with the caveat that some foundation and parkade column upgrades may be necessary
 - The plan should be realistic, fluid and offer suggestions and possibilities for future consideration
 - Phasing suggestions:
 - Phase 1, 2022-2023, redefine entry, include pergola, covered seating, activate space through night market and programming

- Phase 2, 2024-2024, work on centre of plaza as flexible space, animate blank wall, create venue for entertainment, use creative pavers
- Phase 3, 2028+, Close Wharf Street, include restaurant in airspace, install viewing platform and connection to waterfront
- Next steps include agreement to implement phase 1, Explore Snuneymuxw First Nation involvement, work with Chamber of Commerce and Business Improvement Association for night market, explore food truck vendor options for all days during the summer

Councillor Armstrong joined the meeting electronically at 2:07 p.m.

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Supporting downtown by taking action in this area
- Animating the west wall of the Port Theatre
- Plaza not an access point for the Port Theatre and the Port Theatre scaling back building in this area
- Existing landscaping near the entry creating a wall
- If opening up the site takes place then investment will be needed to create mass activity and interest for people to move into the site
- Reinstallation of the TV
- In phase 2 animate the Coast Bastion blank wall
- Suggest bike racks be included throughout the site
- Presenting the whole plan to the public for engagement on concepts

Delegation:

1. Daniel Appell noted his experience with Diana Krall Plaza, and previous predictions regarding the space remaining empty. He advised of concerns with the previous planning process, business competition for Commercial Street businesses if businesses are added to the plaza and incorporating residential areas in the space.

It was moved and seconded that the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to consider the material from the Diana Krall Plaza Redevelopment Plan as part of the upcoming discussions around the Commercial Street Revitalization Plan. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Commercial Street Revitalization Study Update

Introduced by Dale Lindsay, General Manager, Development Services.

Presentation:

1. Bill Corsan, Director, Community Development, provided the Committee with a PowerPoint presentation. Highlights included:
 - Council's priority for downtown revitalisation
 - Objective to tie everything together and focus on the public realm
 - Study area is from Tideline Park to Dallas Square, branching off to Skinner, Wharf and Bastion Streets
 - Connected projects include The Hub, Terminal Avenue upgrades, Diana Krall Plaza and REIMAGINE Nanaimo
 - Commercial and Bastion Street intersection redesign and Downtown Street Tree Replacement Projects are on hold as this project guides how to move forward
 - Must collaborate with partners downtown
 - Key project elements include day of learning for the consultants to update them on policies
 - A discovery charrette will be held in late November for the public as well as a series of events to discuss the project and receive feedback
 - In December 2021 a Council workshop will take place
 - Staff expect to look at design work in early February and have a final plan prior to summer 2022

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Physically visiting the site
- Including a budget when projects come forward in order for Council to make informed decisions
- Transportation Department analysis regarding one-way, two-way or pedestrian-only streets
- Incorporating secure bike parking
- Possibility of adding a City operated commercial space

Delegation:

1. Daniel Appell spoke regarding concerns with extensive remodels to the Vancouver Island Conference Centre, adding value to the retail market, and lack of a positive impact on businesses.

The meeting recessed at 2:47 p.m.
The meeting reconvened at 3:00 p.m.

3. Downtown Hub Project Update

Introduced by Bill Sims, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works.

Presentation:

1. Bill Sims, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works, provided a PowerPoint presentation. Highlights included:
 - Intent is to set the stage with an interim update on an active, evolving project and include factual information in the public realm
 - Downtown is a Council priority as noted in the July 2019 Governance and Priorities Committee meeting
 - Opportunity exists to permanently site a transit exchange
 - There are a number of goals for the project including improving vibrancy, creating a gateway to an accessible core for transit users and creating a link for transit networks
 - Staff intend to engage often with the community on this project
 - Staff's multidisciplinary team wants to make sure Commercial Street and Terminal Avenue tie together
 - Creating a pedestrianized, commercial feel, taking advantage of opportunities to renew utilities and refresh the entire area
 - Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure will provide almost \$1 million in funding to resurface the road
 - Trying to create a space that is accessible, bright, contains greenery, incorporates softened edges, and is a welcoming and vibrant space
 - Three basic concepts for the site but nothing has been finalized:
 - Existing two-way street
 - One-way street from Wallace Street towards Terminal Avenue
 - Pedestrian/bike only
 - Public engagement process included an open house with over 1000 interactions which is significant for a small, short project
 - Opportunity to improve safety and revitalization has triggered owners of the A&B Sound building to start to share plans
 - Concerns regarding loss of parking although a small number of parking spots are affected
 - Staff are requesting Council's input regarding the remainder of the Jean Burns building site
 - Ongoing work around transit exchange
 - Opportunity to include end of trip facilities for cyclists
 - Interim treatment options include:
 - Pocket park - \$750,000
 - Fill site and add screening to the fence - \$300,000

- Add screening to the fence - \$10,000
- Staff will bring forward a report to Council and follow up with key stakeholders

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Transit depot versus transit exchange
- Consultation with emergency services
- Potentially filling in the Jean Burns site and putting it on the market for redevelopment
- Proceed cautiously, take time and include the Hub project as part of the bigger picture of downtown development
- Requesting assurance that this is the best site for a transit exchange and hearing from the Regional District of Nanaimo whether they feel other options are available
- Potentially complete a visioning exercise to create a coherent vision
- Trying to create comfort for pedestrians and address the four way intersection at Victoria Crescent, Wallace Street and Albert Streets
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure agreeing to funding road improvements for Terminal Avenue

Delegation:

1. Daniel Appell spoke regarding concerns with the project, methods of public engagement and involvement of planning staff.
2. Carla Samson, downtown business owner, requested that Council reconsider the location and concept of a bus exchange situated in this area. She noted concerns with cutting off Commercial Street near Victoria Crescent from the rest of the downtown, problems with loiterers using the space and increased number of traffic lights. She noted over 910 people have signed a petition opposed to a bus exchange at this location.
3. Grant Payne, President, Nanaimo Blues Society and Artistic Director, Summertime Blues Festival, spoke regarding concerns with the removal of parking spots near the Queens, safety concerns near Lois Lane and redevelopment of the area into commercial spaces on the bottom floor and residential on the top.
4. Kevan Shaw, President, Victoria Crescent Association, spoke regarding concerns with closing Commercial Street traffic near the Jean Burns Building/A&B Sound and the loss of parking spaces. He suggested a residential building with commercial on the ground floor be built. He suggested to include a Chinese element as the area was the original China Town in Nanaimo.

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Enhancing parking signage

- Including retail/residential on Jean Burns building site
- Using the space in the interim for food trucks and a market
- Transit exchange in this location does not preclude transit stops on Front Street
- Transit exchange along Front Street is challenging to develop with 1 Port Drive development and encroachment
- Potential for senior government funding
- Returning to Council with a parking study
- Including Snuneymuxw First Nation and the Nanaimo Port Authority
- Developing subsidized housing for seniors
- Surveying transit riders to determine where they want the exchange
- Snuneymuxw First Nation land claims and relationship at a political level

It was moved and seconded that the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to focus on proofing concepts that accommodate a multi-story mixed use building on The Hub project site. The motion carried unanimously.

7. QUESTION PERIOD:

- Les Barclay, re: Diana Krall Plaza redevelopment, animated spaces and the creation of more public spaces
- Kevan Shaw, re: Snuneymuxw First Nation involvement in waterfront development and transportation centre
- Kevan Shaw, re: Meeting with Snuneymuxw First Nation regarding The Hub project
- Kevan Shaw, re: Factual statistics on the impact of a bus exchange in terms of rider spending in surrounding areas

8. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 4:57 p.m. that the meeting terminate. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

CHAIR

CORPORATE OFFICER