

MINUTES

SPECIAL MAYOR'S LEADERS' TABLE MEETING
BOARDROOM, SERVICE AND RESOURCE CENTRE, 411 DUNSMUIR STREET, NANAIMO, BC
FRIDAY, 2023-SEP-14, AT 12:04 P.M.

- Present: Mayor L. Krog, Chair
Donna Hais, Chair of Board of Nanaimo Port Authority
Richard Horbachewski, Chief Advancement Officer and AVP External Relations, Vancouver Island University
Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer at Nanaimo Ladysmith Public School District 68
Dave Witty, Past Chair Nanaimo Airport Commission
- Absent: Erralyn Joseph, Councillor, and Assistant Negotiator, for Snuneymuxw First Nation
Bob Moss, Tectonica Management
- Staff: B. Sims, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works
B. Corsan, Director, Corporate and Business Development
C. Horn, Planner, Development Approvals
C. Wood, Social Planner, Community Development
N. Sponaugle, Communications Advisor
S. Gurrie, Director, Legislative Services
K. Lundgren, Recording Secretary

1. CALL THE SPECIAL MAYOR'S LEADERS' TABLE MEETING TO ORDER:

The Special Mayor's Leaders' Table Meeting was called to order at 12:04 p.m.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

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

3. AGENDA ITEMS:

(a) Report Back re: Donna Hais' Presentation to Council 2023-AUG-28

Donna Hais provided an update from her presentation at the 2023-AUG-28 Regular Council meeting regarding the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital. Highlights included:

- Received lots of feedback from the public following the presentation, and it is generating a lot of conversation
- Media campaign took place prior to the presentation and the initiative received a lot of traction from that
- Expect to see rallies in the next couple months lead by medical staff
- Inspirational to both general public and medical staff to stand up for patient advocacy

- Showed groups like Island Health and BC Cardiac Society that there is a lot of traction and community support moving forward
- Surrey Hospital has now been promised a catheterization lab and tower
- Island Health is involved in studies on the catheterization lab and cardiac program, and updates will be provided when they come forward
- Important for medical staff to understand that the community has their back and will be pushing forward

Sheila Gurrie, Director, Legislative Services, informed the Table that the letters of support to the Province for a Catheterization Lab and Patient Tower are in progress, and spoke regarding the upcoming Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) conference and promotion of a media campaign on the City's website and social media platforms.

Table discussion took place. Highlights included:

- The use of City Hall property to host a rally
- A study is currently underway that will help with advocacy and will be distributed as soon as it is available

(b) Equitable Housing

Dave Witty provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding equitable housing. Highlights included:

- The previous Mayor's Leaders' Table Infrastructure Working Group identified five projects that would benefit the community, one of which was equitable housing
- The cost of a single family home in Nanaimo has risen by 69% between 2018 and 2023
- The average rental cost has increased 104% from 2017 to 2023
- The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) identifies healthy rental vacancy of 3%- 4% of all units and Nanaimo is currently at 1.6%
- CMHC suggests that monthly housing cost should not exceed 30% of before tax income, which currently is not happening
- In 2008, a BC study found that on average a person experiencing homelessness with addictions and/or mental illness cost \$55,000 per year in health care and correction services compared to \$37,000 for a person in supportive housing
- The Federal Government's role remains poorly defined; however, money is available and left unspent
- As housing becomes more unaffordable, homelessness is increasing
- "Housing First Plus" is a policy that offers unconditional, permanent housing as quickly as possible
- Compared Nanaimo's homeless situation to other locations such as Quebec, Medicine Hat, and London, Ontario
- Zurich, Switzerland, in 1991 experienced an excessive drug problem; therefore, the Swiss developed a model addressing the root cause of homelessness
- The Swiss Model is "Housing First" and is combined with the four pillar approach to drug use: harm reduction, treatment, prevention, repression

- Basel, Switzerland, has been very successful after adopting a “Housing First Plus” model
- Potential next steps include the following:
 - Quantify the real cost of homelessness
 - Explore the Basel, Medicine Hat, London and Quebec models
 - Explore “Housing First Plus” as a foundational concept
 - Play a leadership role in BC in attracting federal and provincial funding
 - Explore the ways and means the City can partner with others
- The Swiss have much lower overall taxes as it saves money to provide affordable housing

Table discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Housing the portion of population on the streets who would be in care due to depth of brain injury and/or health issues
- Interested in understanding how other cities or countries deal with the drug use issue which poses a major concern for public safety
- Not possible to force people into a program if they are unwilling
- There are a lot of people living on the street simply because they can’t afford rent
- Other places have been successful in eliminating homelessness and suggesting the City look at what those places are doing
- The need to build affordable housing as well as address the people on the street

(c) Housing Needs Report 2023

Introduced by Christy Wood, Social Planner.

Presentation:

1. Christy Wood, Social Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Housing Needs Report. Highlights included:
 - The Housing Needs Report provides a current snapshot in housing supply and identifies gaps
 - Provincial legislation requires a Housing Needs Report to be completed once every five years
 - The housing network demonstrates a range of housing types in the community and these sources of supply are interrelated
 - Nanaimo’s population has reached approximately 100,000 and is expected to grow to over 126,200 by 2031
 - The Housing Needs Report’s key findings indicate that Nanaimo is on track to achieve the housing units needed
 - The City will need to facilitate the correct mix of housing types to address affordability and suitability
 - Nanaimo is experiencing a chronic shortage of rental units; however, it is on a positive trend

(d) Infill Housing and Secondary Suite Regulations

Caleb Horn, Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation and an overview of the proposed amendments to “City of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500” (Zoning Bylaw) related to infill housing and secondary suite regulations. Highlights included:

- Staff are looking at ways to increase the supply of market housing
- Proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw include the following:
 - Allowing more than one suite on a property
 - Allowing detached suites on smaller lots
 - Allowing secondary suites in duplexes and townhouses
 - Infill will specifically target areas where infill was envisioned through the City Plan such as corridors between urban centres
 - Reducing lot sizes and setbacks
 - Conversion of older homes and permitting additional units and floor area on a lot where a house built before 1975 is preserved
 - Amending the R7 zoning to allow multiple types of residential tenure to provide flexibility

Table and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Support for the work done by Staff
- Concerns regarding parking, such as the additional cost it adds to the developer
- The Parking Bylaw dates from 2018 which is before our current Official Community Plan
- Parking considerations were a major conversation discussed at the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness meeting on 2023-SEP-06
- A lot of the City's infill sites are brownfield sites; therefore, limited to surface parking
- Council can consider parking variances on a case-by-case basis; however, it adds time to the process

(e) Increasing Adaptable Housing in Nanaimo

Caleb Horn, Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation and an overview of the proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw related to increasing adaptable housing. Highlights included:

- Adaptable housing refers to housing units being built in such a way that they could be converted into accessible units
- Proposed changes to enable more adaptable housing include requiring more adaptable units in multi-family buildings

Table discussion took place regarding the cost of adaptable units and recognizing that the added costs creates concern for affordability.

Caleb Horn, Planner, continued to presentation.

- Proposed changes to enable adaptable housing also include:

- Requiring that 100% of the housing units in “Seniors Congregate Housing” be adaptable
- Incentivising additional adaptable units through density bonusing

(f) Increasing Family-Friendly Housing in Nanaimo

Caleb Horn, Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation and an overview of the proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw related to increasing family-friendly housing. Highlights included:

- Family-friendly housing is a dwelling unit that contains two or more bedrooms
- There is a need for two and three bedroom units in stratas, rental apartments and townhouses as these housing types are more attainable for families than single family homes
- Proposed changes for family-friendly housing include the following:
 - Zoning Bylaw amendment where a multi-unit development has 10 or more units, a minimum of 30% of the units must be 2+ bedrooms, and 10% must be 3+ bedrooms
 - Allowing for a density bonus when family-friendly units are proposed within 400m of a public school, and when family-friendly units are ground-oriented
 - Amending the evaluation criteria in the “Consideration of a Parking Variance” Policy to allow reduced parking to be considered for underground parking spaces for 3-bedroom units in a multi-unit development
- Staff received push back on the amendment to the parking variance at the previously held open house

Table and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Developers are finding that, even in the current guidelines, there is not enough parking
- Suggesting that much of these amendments be directed to the corridors
- When designing units beyond the corridors, design them in such a way that the site can be converted over time
- Significant change in demand for parking between rental and strata units
- Engagement is taking place between now until the end of next month and Staff will be returning to Council with the bylaw's proposed changes
- Work that the City is doing needs to be supported and carried on, and Staff have received a positive response to the engagement survey so far
- Potential opportunity to lease School District land to BC Housing which would be more tenable than using City parkland
- Challenges with students attending university and living in tents/supportive housing creates issues particularly with international students
- Suggest exploring what cities/provinces have done to reach net zero on homelessness and explore the Four Pillar Approach
- Community projects should always look for joint partnerships
- Support for investigating the Four Pillar Approach; however, unsure on the involvement needed from other levels of government
- City of Victoria started a “missing middle initiative” and eliminated single family zoning; however, have not received any applications on that program yet

- Builders will build what the market wants and affordability is market driven
- Federal Government recently announced that it will eliminate the GST on new rental apartments
- There are a number of things that the City has already done such as the Situation Table, System Planning Organization, MOU with BC Housing, the Housing Needs Report, Affordable Housing Strategy, and meeting with the Premier
- Suggested that a package be prepared outlining what the City has been doing, to help the Table come up with the next course of action
- The City is doing a great job at looking at new forms of housing and this group could be involved as an advocacy piece like it has been doing with the hospital

It was moved and seconded that the Mayor’s Leaders’ Table support Staff’s proposed amendments to “City of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500” related to infill housing and secondary suite regulations, increasing adaptable housing, and increasing family-friendly housing. The motion carried unanimously.

It was moved and seconded that the Mayor’s Leaders’ Table recommend that Council direct Staff to prepare an information package for the Mayor’s Leaders’ Table that outlines steps the City has taken to provide a coordinated approach to health and housing, and identifies opportunities for further advocacy and collaboration with the Province of BC and Government of Canada. The motion carried unanimously.

4. OTHER BUSINESS:

By unanimous consent the Mayor’s Leaders’ Table selected the next meeting date to be held Friday, 2023-OCT-20, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 2:09 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

C H A I R

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

CORPORATE OFFICER