



## Report to Council

### From the Office of Councillor Meghan Lahti and Councillor Steve Milani

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Date: May 19, 2020  
Subject: Amending the Current Community Planning Advisory Committee Terms of Reference and Reinstating Advisory Design Panel

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#### Purpose

To provide rationale regarding suggested changes to the committee system. In particular this report will outline proposed changes to Community Planning and Advisory Committee (CPAC) and request that the Advisory Design Panel (ADP) be reinstated, with some amendments to the terms of reference for both.

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#### Recommendation

**THAT the Community Planning and Advisory Committee terms of reference be amended as recommended in the report dated May 19, 2020 from Councillors Meghan Lahti and Steve Milani regarding Amending the Current Community Planning Advisory Committee Terms of Reference and Reinstating Advisory Design Panel;**

**AND THAT the Advisory Design Panel be re-instated with amended terms of reference as recommended in the report dated May 19, 2020 from Councillors Meghan Lahti and Steve Milani regarding Amending the Current CPAC and reinstating ADP.**

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#### Background

Port Moody has a longstanding and proud history of providing its citizens with opportunity for input through the civic committee system. Citizens have the opportunity to have meaningful input while they meet to discuss and advise on all issues related to the decisions of council. It is essential to council that the civic committee structure allow for citizen input for development applications, however doing so has remained an ongoing challenge for a number of reasons. It is important to note that while reviewing other municipalities throughout the lower mainland, there was only one other (Surrey) that allow for citizen input at any point of the process prior to required public hearings and information meetings. Most other planning committees in municipalities are made up of council members and city staff only. Unlike other committees, such as Parks, Heritage, Environment, the Planning Committee is tied to development applications from a third party, which are managed by staff. Difficulties regarding process, timing and mandates can have a negative impact on the Planning Department of the City and ultimately on how the City is perceived by their customers.

## Discussion

The 'Planning Committees' in Port Moody have changed over the years. At one time this committee was known as the 'Land Use Committee', and had all members of council as well as civic members from various neighbourhoods being represented. The focus of that committee was land use specifically, and it provided advice on land use changes and rezoning applications. While this committee served a purpose, other important factors regarding proposed development applications were not considered, such as design elements, architecture, accessibility, environmental aspects, etc. To fill this void, the Advisory Design Panel (ADP) was formed in 2012. The role of the ADP was to advise staff and/or City Council on the aforementioned aspects of development projects under review by the City.

There have been challenges with both of these committees for various reasons over the years. With the Land Use Committee, difficulties arose when members of the committee felt that their input was being limited to land use only, as well, at times there was a sense from the members of the committee that their role was to 'approve or not approve' of a given proposal, which was not the case, as committees are not decision-making bodies, but rather are advisory bodies. In addition, there was public input at these meetings, which gave members of the public a sense that they were attending some sort of public hearing, and this was upsetting when the proposals were referred to council. In essence there was a sense that their input was not being listened to, when in fact, the committee did not have the mandate or the 'power' to stop an application or in any way provide direction to the applicant. With the ADP, the Terms of Reference (TOR) required that at least one architect be present at every meeting, which proved to be problematic, giving rise to meetings being cancelled. Ultimately this resulted in delays in the process, which was problematic for both staff and the developer.

More recently, there have been a number of changes to the civic planning committees, culminating with removal of council members and public input at Community Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) meetings and the disbanding of the ADP. The thought was to bring all of the 'experts' onto the newly formed CPAC, along with the residents, and have a chair and vice-chair as members from council, similar to the other committees in the city. While the intent was to 'streamline' the committee and not to lose the expertise that ADP had provided, this has resulted in an extremely large and cumbersome committee that struggles to be operational. The focus on land use has been lost, with discussion often focusing on extraneous and unnecessary details. Members, particularly those who bring expertise to the table, have expressed frustration. In addition, the committee members have expressed concern regarding their purpose, as it relates to where in the process they 'fit', as well as what they view as a superfluous function.

As indicated earlier in the report, a planning committee is different than all other civic committees because of the nature of its existence. Planning and development within the city is steered by staff and there is an in-depth process outlined in the community charter as to what the legislative requirements are, including: public processes, public hearings, etc. Unlike other committees which provide comment and input on items that are on a council approved work plan, a planning committee's work is determined by the applications that the City receives and the staff direction. Our desire to have citizen input into aspects of the process is sincere, as it can be a valuable tool to aid Council in the decision-making process.

Both the broader aspect of land use, as well as the more detailed aspects of a development proposal, such as architecture, accessibility, etc., are important, and it is our contention that both of these aspects should be considered through different lenses.

It is our recommendation that the Community Planning and Advisory Committee terms of reference be revised, and that the Advisory Design Panel be re-established.

#### **Community Planning Advisory Committee:**

We recommend that the terms of reference be amended to allow for a more focused purpose for the committee – that being land use. Council needs to receive, at an early stage, the opinion of the community-at-large, regarding proposed land use for various areas in the city. The information provided to the committee should be limited to form and density in reference to:

- current OCP designation and population projections,
- proposed form and density, (type of housing mix, form of development)
- context of the proposal (ie. Where is it located, what is the neighbourhood context, how close to transit, etc.)

It is our contention that proponents of an application would not be required to attend CPAC, and that staff could provide the information and context to the committee and would advise as to the level of support from staff. Upon receipt of the proposal, the committee would consider these aspects and make recommendation to staff/Council based on the advisability of the proposed land use change. These recommendations would be worded as such:

“The Community Planning Advisory Committee recommends to council that the proposed land use is appropriate/not appropriate for the following reasons:

- As it pertains to the current OCP designation:
- Form and density:
- Context of the proposal
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This information would be immensely helpful for council when considering a proposal, particularly at an early stage.

#### **Advisory Design Panel:**

We recommend that the ADP be re-established to allow for input by industry experts regarding the quality of design of development projects under review by the City. The TOR for the previous ADP should be amended to address the previous concerns regarding the necessity to have an architect review plans at an early stage of any application, by requiring that at least one of the architects appointed be retained by the city for the purposes of attending these meetings. Port Moody has hired an architect on retainer, who is brought in to review plans when necessary. As the concern regarding the ADP was that the TOR required an architect to be present in order for the meetings to proceed, the City could consider appointing the architect that is currently retained by the City to sit on the ADP. Alternatively, the City could provide to a stipend to an appointed architect to attend the meetings.

#### **Other Option(s)**

THAT the report dated May 19, 2020 from Councillor Meghan Lahti and Councillor Steve Milani titled Amending the Current CPAC Terms of Reference and reinstating ADP be received for information.

#### **Financial Implications**

There would be no financial implications, as the city has already budgeted for the requirement of architectural oversight.

## Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

There are no communications and civic engagement initiatives related to this report.

## Council Strategic Plan Objectives

These recommendations align with the Strategic Plan in the following areas:

- Exceptional Service – providing a more focused and streamlined process our customers, both internal and external will receive better service.
- Healthy City – reviewing and advising on the type of housing
- Community Evolution – reviewing proposed development applications in the context of the OCP and population projections

## Attachment(s)

1. Proposed Terms of Reference for Community Planning Advisory Committee
2. Proposed Terms of Reference - Advisory Design Panel