



Report to Council

From the Office of Councillor Hunter Madsen

Date: July 19, 2020

Subject: Updating Corporate Policy – Mayor and Council Guidelines

Purpose

To propose several adjustments to the Mayor and Council Guidelines of our Corporate Policy that clarify optimal procedure in certain particulars, define a new weekly update on Port Moody in the news media, call for quarterly Council cross-briefings for certain types of member activity, add clarifying notice to the public regarding input to Public Hearings, and redefine the mayor's weekly updates as a requirement reserved for designated acting mayors when mayor is on leave.

Recommendation

THAT Council direct staff to draft modifications to the Corporate Policy – 01-0530-2019-01 – Mayor and Council Guidelines as recommended in the report dated July 19, 2020 from Councillor Hunter Madsen regarding Updating Corporate Policy – Mayor and Council Guidelines to accomplish the following:

- 1) Initiate Weekly Media Updates;**
 - 2) Initiate Quarterly Council Cross-Briefings;**
 - 3) Change Weekly Acting-Mayor's Update Requirements;**
 - 4) Amend Daily Role Of Mayor; and**
 - 5) Add Standard Response regarding the inclusion of input at Public Hearings.**
-

Background

On May 28, 2019 Council passed *Corporate Policy – 01-0530-2019-01 – Mayor and Council Guidelines* during the context of the Mayor's temporary leave, in order to clarify roles of Mayor and Council and specify additional procedures, especially some of those pertaining to the Executive Assistant to Mayor and Council. While most of these guidelines remain relevant and helpful today in improving transparency, process, and accountability on Council, the past year has highlighted additional opportunities to improve the updating of Council on matters related to our city, as well as the need to adjust the Guidelines in certain particulars, which are offered as proposals in this report.

Discussion

- 1) Initiate Weekly Updates to Council Regarding “Port Moody in the News.” Council should be kept abreast of how our city is being covered in the news media, yet currently notices of press coverage come to some or all of us in a random and disorganized fashion, and are not shared with our body in any systematic, comprehensive format or process, other than, to a very limited and incomplete extent, in the Mayor’s Weekly Updates, which cover only the Mayor’s media contacts.

This motion proposes to correct this information gap by initiating a new weekly update, to be assembled and shared by the Executive Assistant to Mayor and Council, which will list and provide links to any new third-party media coverage that makes reference to Port Moody, City Hall, or specific city and elected officials and/or includes statements from them. Where appropriate for audio and video coverage, these links would go to edited clips excerpted in full from show broadcasts. The intention here is to capture all third-party press coverage of the city, its officials, and issues, but we would not ordinarily include posts or exchanges with journalists or others that may take place *exclusively* in social media – that would probably become too complex and unmanageable to keep track of.

To make sure that we’re not overlooking any important exchanges, we would ask Council members to alert staff in a timely manner to any Port Moody-related press coverage of which they may be aware.

These weekly media reports would also include a section listing the City’s own press releases that may have been issued during that time period.

These weekly updates will become an important and popular record of interest to the public and future historians of our city, and should be posted, archived, and made available for public viewing through the City’s website.

- 2) Initiate Quarterly Council Cross-Briefings on Our Special Assignments. Council members are often assigned by the Mayor and/or Council to serve on internal or external task forces, on issue-specific working groups, or representing the City in organizations outside City Hall on an ongoing basis. In many cases, Council and our Executive Leadership Committee may not hear back from such participants about those groups and their respective agendas for very extended periods of time, if ever, and a degree of transparency and accountability about City activities and relevant concerns is lost in the process. To help close these information gaps and share useful input, this report proposes that Council institute a regular check-in discussion, at least once per quarter, in which designated participants in groups and initiatives that do not otherwise provide regular updates get an opportunity to provide the rest of Council and ELT with verbal updates, either in closed or public session as appropriate, on the status of the initiatives to which each may have been assigned.

It is the intention of this motion that such updates need not include discussion of citizen committees, the activities of the Metro Vancouver Regional District Board of Directors or

standing committees, or Translink: Council already receives substantial, regular updates from these bodies.

- 3) Require Weekly Updates for Acting Mayors Only. In the view of this report, it may make good sense to require the issuance of weekly updates by designated acting mayors under specific circumstances when the Mayor may be away on leave for some reason, and the continuation of weekly reports under those conditions is recommended here.

But this report argues that for the Guidelines to require a sitting mayor to dutifully file weekly reports detailing each element of their daily actions is unnecessary and unreasonable, and amounts to intrusive overkill. Such weekly reports are not conventional practice, being basically unheard of in other municipalities; they imply unwarranted distrust in the accountability of anyone occupying the mayor's office and thereby demean that office, and they can and should be discontinued with no meaningful risk to relevant transparency or accountability, which can be ensured by all the usual requirements and reporting processes at the disposal of Council and the community in regard to Council member activities.

In the view of this report, the highly unusual circumstances of temporary interim mayorship last summer warranted more extensive mayoral activity reports, since we were all going through that difficult period collaboratively, in the well-intended spirit of collectively filling in for the mayor on leave. Thankfully those days are now past, the elected mayor is back in charge, and we're back to standard operations.

In the view of this report, if it is right and proper for Council to be demanding a weekly log of all conversations and contacts by the mayor, then it is equally warranted to mandate "for the sake of full transparency" that all other members of Council - and perhaps all members of the ELT as well - must begin to circulate comprehensive contact reports concerning everyone we communicate with, each and every week from now on.

Yet asking all of us to go through such an exercise would, of course, be unnecessarily invasive: I'm sure it would have a chilling effect on the willingness of some constituents to come forward and connect with us if they knew that any personal communications by them on any and every issue or concern that they may have would result immediately in alerts to every other member of Council and the ELT, if not to the general public. There's no good reason to impose that same chilling effect on constituents who may want to talk one-on-one with our mayor.

What's more, asking us to produce weekly contact logs would amount a colossal collective waste of work time for all members of Council and for the Executive Assistant. After all, each of us is already legally and ethically bound to proper handling of the people's business, under code requirements that are clear and enforceable, and we should all be entrusted to do our jobs without one another constantly peering over each others' shoulders and vetting our every move. As for ensuring public transparency and accountability, whenever it becomes important to track down specific correspondence involving any of us, that's exactly

what the standard Freedom of Information process is for, and this is precisely what fellow members of Council and the general public and press are empowered to initiate at any time.

Otherwise, none of us has any particular need to see a log of daily communications from other members of Council, including the Mayor. We're all busy officials focused on serving the public's interest, and we should trust one another to do our respective jobs conscientiously. Any time a Council member engages in communications with others that the member thinks their Council colleagues should be made aware of, we should trust them to speak up on their own and let the rest of Council know. We must expect just the same from anyone in the mayor's seat, who deserves the same respect, assumption of integrity, and consideration of daily operation in confidence that any other member should be accorded.

- 4) Refine Daily Role of Mayor in Guidelines List. The Guidelines currently enumerate 15 "duties" within "the daily role as Mayor," and this report proposes that one of those items be removed: that the Mayor has the duty "9. *To attend Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce events.*" With Council's approval, the Mayor has, in fact, designated another member of Council to be the City's official representative to the Tri City Chamber of Commerce, which renders the Guidelines non-compliant with Council direction, and duty 9 is, in any case, out of place on that list and should not be deemed essential to the Mayor's duties. Note that we do not list attendance at any other community organization (Rotary, other business groups, real estate groups, UDI, etc.) as a specific expectation for any official. The report's recommended deletion of point 9 helps to create an even playing field of prioritization among many competing demands on the Mayor's attention and leaves prioritization to the discretion of Mayor and Council.
- 5) Improve Mail Correspondence regarding Input for Public Hearings. Under the *Procedures* section, *Mail Correspondence*, this report proposes to add a standardized response, to be sent by the Executive Assistant to Mayor and Council, in the case of those who are emailing in regard to Public Hearing items. The response should make clear that their input will not be included in the public record as part of the Public Hearing process unless that input is email to the Clerks. Suggested language for such a response might be as follows:

"Thank you for your email to Mayor and Council. Your email has been received by Council, however it will not form part of the public record. If it is your desire to have your correspondence form part of the public record for the Public Hearing on <date of public hearing>, then you are required to submit it directly to the Clerk's Office by email at clerks@portmoody.ca".

Therefore should Council pass the above resolution, the following would be the changes to the policy:

- 1) WEEKLY MEDIA UPDATES. Staff will initiate a new weekly update to Council, Port Moody in the News, which will list and provide links to third-party media sources, press stories and op-ed pieces, as well as any recent City press

releases – to include, where appropriate, video and audio clips edited for easy viewing – in regard to the latest news events in which Port Moody, City Hall, City officials, and/or the Mayor and other Council members may be cited or quoted.

- a. Council members will alert staff in a timely manner to any Port Moody-related press coverage of which they may become aware.
 - b. Will not ordinarily include posts or exchanges with journalists or others that appeared exclusively in social media.
 - c. These Weekly Updates shall be posted, archived and available for public viewing through the City's website;
- 2) **QUARTERLY COUNCIL CROSS-BRIEFINGS.** At least once per quarter, Council will schedule and conduct a verbal cross-briefing session wherein members appointed by Council to serve on internal or external task forces, working groups, or representing the City in organizations outside City Hall shall provide the rest of Council and the Executive Leadership Team with verbal updates in closed or public session, as appropriate, on the status of these initiatives, in order to further transparency, mutual awareness, and accountability. These cross-briefings shall supplement, rather than displace, any other modes of reporting from these activities that may already be in place. These updates need not cover citizen committees, Metro Vancouver Board or committees, or Translink, regarding which Council is already briefed regularly through other means.
- 3) **WEEKLY ACTING-MAYOR'S UPDATES.** Modify the language of the "Weekly Update" section to specify that issuance of these updates shall be required only by designated Acting Mayors in the event that the Mayor goes on leave.
- 4) **DAILY ROLE OF MAYOR.** Delete bullet #9 – "to attend Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce events" from the enumerated list of duties within "the daily role of Mayor."
- 5) **MAIL CORRESPONDENCE FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS.** Under the Procedures section, Mail Correspondence, draft a standard response directed to members of the public who are emailing in regard to items related to pending Public Hearings, routinely notifying them that their input will not be included as part of the Public Hearing input unless they send it to the City's Clerks.

Other Option(s)

THAT Council reject these proposed changes to Corporate Policy – 01-530-2019-01 – Mayor and Council Guidelines.

OR

THAT Council affirm some of these changes, but not all, to be specified.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

There are no communication and civic engagement initiatives.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

Support Council Strategic Plan #1: Exceptional Service, especially “to provide the public with transparent and open government, and opportunities to provide input on City issues.”

Attachment

1. Corporate Policy – 01-0530-2019-01 – Mayor and Council Guidelines.