



Report to Council From the Office of Councillor Steve Milani

Date: October 9, 2020
Subject: Capturing Written Public Input

Purpose

For Council to consider fair and equitable treatment of all public input by including written input in the minutes so that it forms part of the public record the same way that in-person verbal input does.

Recommendation

THAT staff be directed to capture and acknowledge written public input in Council meeting minutes and public hearing minutes to ensure fair representation in public records as recommended in the report dated October 9, 2020 from the Office of Councillor Steve Milani regarding Capturing Written Public Input;

AND THAT written public input received before noon on the day of a meeting be made available online on the city website for those who cannot participate in-person.

On September 17, 2019, resident Hazel Mason presented to Council as a delegation as follows (from minutes).

Files: 01-0230-01

Hazel Mason gave a presentation regarding the need to improve public records and access to information. Ms. Mason recommended improvements to the City's website, the timely release of closed information, and the inclusion of written public input in Council minutes.

CW19/132

Moved, seconded, and CARRIED

THAT this item be referred to staff for action;

AND THAT the delegation be received for information and the delegate thanked for their presentation.

Approximately 8 years ago and earlier, public hearing minutes summarized specific written input but that changed without notice.

Example from public hearing minutes (January 25, 2011)

"The following written submissions were provided on-table:

[NAME WAS HERE], Parklane Homes, email dated January 25, 2011 in support of the application.

[NAME WAS HERE], email dated January 25, 2011, in opposition to the application.

Up until about 3 years ago, written public input, if received by the noon deadline on the day of the meeting, was made available online on the City's website. Currently, the written input is not posted online until the following day; however, anyone attending a meeting in person has access to "on-table" material. This results in a lack of transparency and is therefore discriminatory to the remote attendee, and should be corrected.

Discussion

Council and public hearing minutes contain brief descriptions of in-person public input, but written input is not summarized and this situation, therefore, creates an unfair barrier to those people who cannot attend a meeting in person.

There are many reasons people may be unable to attend a meeting in person, such as work schedules, family responsibilities, illness, and mobility challenges. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in physical distancing challenges.

With the technical tools available, there is no reason remote attendees should be less heard than those who can appear in person, in terms of capturing names and brief comments in any public record minutes where public input is captured such as public hearings as well as regular and special Council meetings. It could also use hyperlinks to take the reader to the full written correspondence.

Example from the City of Richmond

[BC - Public Hearing - October 16, 2017 - Minutes](#)

Applicant's Comments:

Chris Evans, Executive Vice-President, Onni Development, commented on the history of the application and spoke on various efforts by Onni to address the concerns of the City and other stakeholders. He remarked that Onni has met with the Steveston Merchants Association, the Steveston Community Association, the Steveston 20/20 group, and the Steveston Harbour Authority. Mr. Evans advised that an Open House was held in September 2017 for the public to provide input on the current proposed application. Mr. Evans remarked that Onni has made every effort to address the comments of the different stakeholders in Steveston Village, and was of the opinion that the proposed 32-unit hotel will be a tremendous addition to the area.

Blair Erb, Coriolis Consulting Corporation, representing the Applicant, spoke to his role as it relates to the calculation of the proposed amenity contribution, noting that the intent of the process was to determine the potential increase in land value should the proposed application be approved. Mr. Erb noted that the City does not have a policy that prescribes the appropriate amount for an amenity contribution based on the potential increase in land value. Mr. Erb then commented on other municipalities' practices with regard to community amenity contributions, and was of the opinion that a community amenity contribution reflecting 50% of the anticipated land lift is fair and equitable.

Written Submissions:

- (a) David Chinn, Richmond resident, ([Schedule 6](#)) (hyperlink)
- (b) Ann Phelps, International Dragon Boat Festival Society, ([Schedule 7](#)) (hyperlink)
- (c) Matthias Meier, 4333 Bayview Street, ([Schedule 8](#)) (hyperlink)
- (d) Alexander and Margaret Brodie, Richmond residents, ([Schedule 9](#)) (hyperlink)

Conclusion

Providing Port Moody residents with knowledge and tools about the public process and encouraging public participation is an integral part of good governance. Involving the public in discussions on matters that affect them improves the quality of decisions made and ensures that diverse opinions, information, and experiences are considered in the decision-making process.

Other Options

THAT the report dated October 9, 2020 from Councillor Steve Milani regarding Capturing Written Public Input be received for information.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

Ensure residents and stakeholders know to send written input by the deadline noted (typically noon on the day of the meeting), and to send their input to clerks@portmoody.ca with a notation that the input is intended for public input for a specific meeting.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

This recommendation aligns with the following Council Strategic Plan Objectives:

Provide exceptional service to our residents, businesses, and stakeholders, by encouraging open communication, partnerships, and a 'can do attitude'.

- Commit to a high and consistent standard of service
- Review customer processes regularly to improve accuracy and efficiency, and encourage feedback
- Consider cultural differences and accessibility needs when providing service

Provide the public with transparent and open government, and opportunities to provide input on City issues.

- Increase access to City information
- Commit to effective public engagement
- Encourage public participation