

**MINUTES**  
**GOVERNANCE REVIEW CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Held in the Kirby Room, 760 Vernon Avenue  
**Wednesday, September 28, 2016 at 7:00 pm**

Present: John Schmuck (Chair); Julian Anderson; Art Beck; Joe Calenda; Matt Gauk; Phil Lancaster; Mano Sandhu; Jim Schneider; Brian Wilkes

Staff: Paul Thorkelsson, Chief Administrative Officer; Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Caleb Horn, Andrew Medd, Zig Hancyk

Guests: Casey Edge, Victoria Residential Builders Association  
John Sercombe, builder, Limona Group

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**CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and welcomed the Committee and guests. He advised that Committee must rise and report a motion to Council that was made at the August 24, 2016 in-camera meeting.

**RISE AND REPORT**

**Motion from In-Camera meeting of August 24, 2016:**

**“That the GRCAC recommend that Council amend the Terms of Reference of the GRCAC to a composition of 12 members and a quorum of seven.”**

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

**MOVED by J. Calenda and Seconded by M. Sandhu: “That the Minutes of the Governance Review Citizen Advisory Committee meeting held August 24, 2016, be adopted as circulated.”**

**CARRIED**

**GRCAC EXPENSES AND BUDGET STATEMENT ENDING AUGUST 31, 2016**

Committee received a financial statement up to August 31, 2016 for information.

**REPORT ON THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) was present to discuss the recent Request for Proposals for a Committee consultant. The public process was satisfied, but not successfully, so a more targeted approach was used. Five organizations were contacted directly by the CAO; two expressed interest and three did not. One response was received earlier this week and is before Committee today and it was confirmed that no more applications are expected.

A discussion occurred and it was suggested that the Committee should have this applicant go through same extensive interview process that they had for the first group of applicants to ensure that they can do the job. After discussion of whether this should be vetted by a working group/sub-committee or the whole committee membership, members decided that the entire committee will be present to receive the proposal. Instead of using the form like last time, general comments can be sent to Art Beck after the next meeting.

**ACTION:** The CAO will contact the consultant to set up a meeting for October 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

Committee received correspondence from J. Anderson, R. Wickson, R. Bish and W. Magnusson.

## **PRESENTATION – VICTORIA RESIDENTIAL BUILDERS ASSOCIATION**

Casey Edge, Victoria Residential Builders Association and John Sercombe, Limona Group were present to discuss Saanich's process for development permit applications and building permit. They provided suggestions to create a more efficient, effective and affordable process in Saanich as noted:

- There is concern that a lot of information is required by staff that usually requires a big financial commitment (sometimes more than \$10,000 for reports that should not be required at the beginning of the process), and then the application is rejected.
- It would be better to separate rezoning and subdivision processes.
- Langford has a two-day building permit process when no variances or changes are being requested. If the applicant ensures all tasks in the checklist are complete it should be a really smooth process. Saanich can take up to six weeks, which discourages contractors from doing business in the municipality.
- An expedited system for professionals (a fast-track system) is recommended for reputable professionals. When suggested to Saanich staff, they were told that everyone needs to be treated the same. This again costs builders time.
- Contractors have said they add at least 5% to a project when doing business in slower municipalities like Saanich. This increases the cost of housing and could also mean lost opportunities if building becomes too expensive.
- Community Associations can disagree with projects and their opinions hold far too much weight with Council. These groups are self-appointed, not democratically elected, and may not accurately represent the community. Applications that fit within the Official Community Plan and Local Area Plans should hold more weight. Projects need to be looked at for the benefit of Saanich as a whole.
- Saanich policies can obstruct development, density and affordable housing within the Urban Containment Boundary.
- Saanich's population is declining, compared to Victoria and Langford's growing numbers. There are many higher density communities with small lots that are very livable because they have well-designed and well-crafted homes (eg. James Bay, Fernwood areas). Smaller homes are more affordable homes.

In response to questions from Committee, the following was noted:

- Council could immediately improve the permit process if they gave staff this direction. It feels like the waiting time is more of an administrative process.
- The buerocratic culture of Saanich staff has existed for many years. The organization's leader has to take initiative for change.

- Saanich departments don't seem to communicate well with each other; sometimes projects are left on an absent staff member's desk for weeks. In efficient municipalities, department reps gather to review proposals together.
- The main issue to focus on is that if someone applies for a permit and has a lot to build on, why does it take six weeks, versus two days with other municipalities.
- In other municipalities, if staff are poor communicators or unfair, they will be let go. With one of their last projects done in Saanich, they had a staff member that was so difficult to work with, they had to bring in external engineers to sign off on the project. Home warranties are very important, so the process from building to final inspection has to work well.
- Sometimes Code changes will present a challenge with staff having to learn or interpret the changes.

Comments from committee members were noted as follows:

- Approval processes are all different; can see how sometimes a building permit can be issued in two days and other times not so quickly.
- Prior to applying for a permit, it may be useful for builders to speak to City Planners to discuss the neighbourhood plan, check the OCP, and see what the Planner thinks of a proposed plan.
- Projects should not be defeated by Community Association opposition if they work well within the OCP. Council should be told that good city planning has higher value than citizen opinion.
- If Council votes against a plan that works well within the OCP then what is the message they are sending?

Mr. Casey stated that this is the first time in 15 years that a committee like this has been struck and is encouraged by the potential for positive changes this committee can make with recommendations to Council. They are not expecting applications to be automatically approved by staff, but would like to know that there is at least a chance for consideration before being made to do costly tasks.

Mr. Casey and Mr. Sercombe were thanked for their presentation.

**ACTION:** Planning staff to be invited to a future meeting to discuss the building and rezoning application process.

## **PRESENTATION – GRUMPY TAXPAYERS OF VICTORIA**

John Treleaven, Grumpy Taxpayers of Victoria, was scheduled to attend the meeting for a presentation, but did not arrive.

## **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSISON**

Committee members took a brief break from 8:06 pm to 8:26 pm and then a roundtable discussion occurred. The following points were noted:

- The Chair reviewed the process for hiring a consultant and conducting a public survey which will provide talking points (survey to be advertised). Information to be compiled by December and report results in January. Hopefully there will be 10-20 major points at the end of the process. Focus groups to be held (both mixed and not mixed) and public meetings to be held at each of the recreation centres.

- Feedback on what is wrong will be received however it is hoped that feedback on what is working right will also be received. If people are reporting problems, it is hoped that they will also report on possible solutions to the problems.
- Need to engage the population that does not know this process is occurring (eg. younger population). An on-line town hall meeting may be an innovative way to reach out to the community youth.
- Recommendations could be tested with focus groups. Mixed groups are good but some focus groups should be specific groups to address specific problems.
- More funds are needed. In response to a questions about funding, the CAO stated it will be easier to figure out budgets after a consultant is on board. The consultant will plot out the process and estimate costs for events. Budget meetings are coming soon; it is a good time to give Council a heads up about funding needs.
- The CAO reminded committee members that the hiring of a consultant will have to be approved via Council because of the use of public funds.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm.

The next meeting will be held on either October 12, 2016 or October 13, 2016.

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John Schmuck, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary