



Notes from Budget Information Meeting

January 29, 2020, 6–8 p.m.

West Vancouver Memorial Library, Welsh Hall West

Total Attendees: 24 (18 residents, 6 staff)

Q: *What are the 8 FTEs for?*

A: Eight new FTE positions are requested in order to resource Council's goals and objectives. Staff providing other services cannot be reallocated unless Council directs that the services they are providing are no longer needed. The details of the FTE requests are as follows:

Trails Plan - Two FTEs are requested to create an additional trail crew of skilled carpentry staff that will complete trail improvements consisting of replacing and/or repairing failing trails and trail structures such as foot bridges, boardwalks, stairs, and drainage infrastructure. Plan for Trails on Public Lands recommends additional resources be allocated to trail improvements with a priority for trails that provide high levels of connectivity.

Senior Planner - One FTE would add capacity to undertake Local Area Plans (LAPs), but is not sufficient in itself to complete that work alone. Generally, a team of 4+ FTEs is needed to complete a LAP. Horseshoe Bay LAP currently has about 1.5 FTEs allocated to it, so is under-resourced. In the near term, it is expected that this additional FTE would help staff complete Horseshoe Bay on a more timely basis, and would set the District up to focus on Ambleside on the second half of this Council term. Also, the current limited staff resources dedicated to do the Horseshoe Bay LAP could be impacted by other existing work (such as an extended term for the Neighbourhood Character WG, or because of a series of climate-related directions, etc.) – so this new FTE would add capacity to either focus on LAPs or to allow existing staff to focus on other Council initiatives related to 2019-20 priorities (e.g. DPAs) and priorities for 2021-22 (Taylor Way, Land Use Contracts, etc.).

Community Planner - this request would provide a 0.5 FTE dedicated to heritage planning initiatives including heritage development projects, management of the Heritage Advisory Committee, and implementation of the policy and planning framework described in the policy report approved by Council "Preventing Heritage Demolitions". The remaining 0.5 FTE would be dedicated to working on development projects and would primarily work on projects that would achieve Council's OCP objective to deliver "missing middle" housing. This would help deal with the existing workload where the District is currently very under-resourced.

Business Manager, Corporate Services & Planning & Development Services - This resource is requested to provide financial advisory services, coordinating and participating in the District's financial planning cycle, helping departmental managers

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develop their operating and capital budgets to work programs, tracking expenditures and budgets, and increasing financial reporting functions. Currently the support is provided by Finance at a minimal level and there is a further need for financial advice and analysis in these two divisions. The position would report directly to the Deputy CAO and Director of Planning & Development Services.

Police 1st Class Constable - This position will work with new arrivals to Canada and include general work on crime prevention through environmental design and behaviour.

Commercial Plan Reviewer - This request would increase the complement of Level 3 plan checkers for large and complex building permit applications for multi-family and commercial development. The resource is required to manage existing workload and meet industry expectations for reasonable permit turn-around times.

Police Privacy Analyst - this position would be dedicated to handling Freedom of Information requests.

Q: Will one of the requested FTE planners be responsible for heritage?

A: Yes.

Q: Why are there increased costs for chlorine at the pool – I thought ozone filtration was being used for water treatment?

A: The Aquatic Centre uses ozone in addition to chlorine. The dual system requires less chlorine and disinfects the lap and leisure pools and the two hot tubs more effectively than chlorine alone. Reducing chlorine levels provides excellent water quality, clarity and air quality, and lessens chances of skin, eye and lung irritation. The increase in chlorine costs is due to converting from a gas chlorine system to a liquid chlorine system as it is safer to use and store the chemical.

Q: When people defer their taxes, does the District have use of those funds?

A: The Property Tax Deferment Program is a low-interest provincial loan program designed to help qualified home owners pay their annual property taxes. The Province pays the District and then the Province registers a lien against the property.

Q: The District has over \$1 billion dollars worth of assets and is not decommissioning enough assets. The District accepted \$6 million from a developer for a daycare, but have you considered the cost of taking on that new asset?

A: As soon as an asset is acquired, maintenance costs are incurred immediately. When community groups approach the District with proposals to build or provide new community assets, we request that they follow the steps outlined in the Framework for Evaluating Community Group Proposals for New, Upgraded or Enhanced Facilities, Infrastructure and Equipment. By following these steps, the community can be assured that we are looking at the full cost of potentially acquiring the asset and that a transparent process is being followed.

In the past, municipalities didn't account for their assets with the same approach as the private sector. There was no coordinated or prioritized approach to maintaining our assets. The District was by no means alone in this; governments in general have only recently woken up to the need for infrastructure maintenance, and the infrastructure deficit in Canada as a whole is estimated at many billions of dollars.

Over the last five years, West Vancouver has totally changed its approach to asset management, and it now has a rigorous asset management program in place, with facilities professionals and dedicated funding (the asset levy). Greening the budget will have higher up front costs, but we will reduce our operating costs and our GHG emissions.

Q: Will the daycare be required to pay property taxes?

A: Property owned by the District receives an exemption from property taxes and the daycare, which will be run under contract by a not-for-profit provider, would be eligible for an exemption.

Q: Larco is putting in a 96 seat daycare across the street, will it be exempt from property taxes?

A: For profit daycares are not exempt from paying property taxes.

Q: The Municipal Hall seismic upgrade project was originally projected to cost \$6 million, why are the costs now at \$21 million?

A: The Municipal Hall is over 50 years old, with many building systems at end of useful life, and has not had any major renovations. It needs to be modernized and upgraded to current building and fire codes for life safety, seismic performance and energy efficiency. This is a multi-year project which will be phased over a number of years. Phase 1 is underway and provides for seismic upgrades and a new code-compliant elevator large enough for medical stretchers. The seismic upgrades are essential given the role of Municipal Hall in providing business continuity to the community after a major seismic event. The second phase will include building envelope upgrades (including roof, windows and exterior wall systems), heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) and other mechanical equipment. Phase 2 will result in significant energy efficiency improvements and major reductions in greenhouse gases. The third phase has not yet been designed, and would provide interior space reconfigurations, air circulation ducting, wiring, lighting and plumbing upgrades (including fire sprinklers) to modernize the interior and achieve space efficiencies. The cost of the seismic upgrades is approximately \$6.85M which increased due to factors including cost escalation and a shortage of trades regionally. The budget for phase 2 is \$6.35M. The design for phase 3 has not yet been prepared and so detailed costing and a phasing schedule has not yet been finalized. Once the project is completed, the Municipal Hall will continue to serve the community for decades.

Q: A huge portion of the budget is going to salaries, have you considered a hiring freeze or reworking job descriptions? You should get rid of more assets so that you don't have to maintain them.

A: The District is a \$300 million dollar corporation providing services such as Planning and Development, Police, Fire and Rescue Services, Library Services, Human Resources and Payroll, Financial Services, Engineering and Transportation and we must employ professional staff to provide those services to the community. Our employees are not paid the top rate in the municipal world; they are paid at the 60th percentile relative to other Metro municipalities. If we can't pay our employees what other municipal employees make, then we lose them to other municipalities. Another challenge we face, is that very few of our employees can afford to live in West Vancouver; our employees live everywhere east and north of here.

As for shedding assets, we would encourage you to attend Council meetings where we try to eliminate assets, because we don't often hear from the portion of the community that may have a more fiscally-prudent point of view. We have eliminated assets such as the Lawson Creek studios and caretaker residences in some parks, but there are residents that want to keep low use, poor condition the assets.

Q: *Many councillors are trying to make the community more inclusive, but I believe we're actually making it more exclusive. People in their 30s and 40s can no longer afford to live here.*

A: Thank you for your comment – your feedback will be provided to Council.

Q: *Much effort goes into communicating with residents, but the message comes across wrong when you ask residents what they think, fail to follow up on the communication and then decommission an asset (such as the Larson Bay tennis court).*

A: We have reviewed the engagement and communications process related to the Larsen Bay tennis courts. The input from residents was compiled and presented to the Finance Committee, however we did not appropriately close the loop with residents. We will be bringing the Larson Bay tennis court engagement and communication issue to the Community Engagement Committee and will be making every effort to communicate better in future, particularly where assets are being considered for decommissioning.

Q: *In 2011, we wanted to purchase a neighbouring property with a road that was to be decommissioned, but it took two years to get through the process with the District. Have you improved this process?*

A: In 2011, the process was difficult, but we have made a lot of improvements since then. Municipal land sales must follow specific legislative requirements that can be difficult and slow at times, but we have done our best to streamline the process.

Q: *In the 2018 Statement of Financial Information Act report, the base salary for five directors were identical, why is that?*

A: All of the salaries are compared across Metro and six other municipalities. The divisional directors across the municipalities have similar levels of responsibility. A director, such as the Director of Parks, Culture & Community Services, who has a higher number of staff to manage may make a slightly higher salary. It should be noted that the Parks, Culture and Community Services portfolio is a very large

portfolio and has significant offsetting revenues. Salaries are reviewed every two years.

Q: I live next to Navvy Jack Park, and we were promised improvements would be made to the park.

A: The work hasn't started yet on improvements to Navvy Jack Park.

Q: Could more staff be employed to work on the issue of communications with the community?

A: Communications used to be decentralized across the organization. It was not coordinated, and we had staff in many areas doing many different things. We have now centralized all of the communications function, but there is a lot going on in the community, so we have to make decisions about which key messages need to be communicated to the community. The communications department would love to have more staff, but it's really about prioritizing and getting the right message out.

Q: Why is the cost of solid waste disposal decreasing?

A: The cost of solid waste disposal is going down because manufacturers are taking on the cost and responsibility of recycling their own packaging. The recycling pickup will continue as usual, but it will now be paid for by the producer responsibility group.

Q: Is the increase in the sewer utility due to the new North Shore Wastewater Treatment Plant?

A: Yes, almost all of the increase is due to the increased requisition from the region for the construction of the new plant.

Q: It seems as though a decision has been made to move to tertiary treatment, do you know who is paying for this?

A: Discussions are taking place between different levels of government, and no decision about Federal or Provincial contributions has yet been made. However, we are anticipating increases to both regional water and regional sewer costs in the future.

Q: The proposed tax rate increase is 5.48% for West Vancouver, and the City of Vancouver proposed a tax rate increase of 8%, can you provide a perspective on how West Vancouver compares to other municipalities in terms of increases?

A: We can't make that comparison. Each municipality has different priorities. West Vancouver is prioritizing asset management and natural assets, while Vancouver has very targeted programs for addressing social issues. However, we're seeing tax rate increases between 3% and 7% across the region.

Q: Although West Vancouver's population is decreasing, there are so many new homes, how do the new homes impact the budget?

A: The new homes don't increase tax revenue; they change the share of what people pay in property taxes. You may have heard that the cost per capita is higher in West Vancouver. This is because our tax base is mostly residential. West Vancouver has no density and no industry, so the cost of services is shared among the residents.

Q: Why don't you put a hotel where Klee Wyck is located?

A: Klee Wyck is located in the middle of a residential area, and the traffic generated by hotel patrons would be difficult to manage. On the other hand, Ambleside is a desirable location for a hotel, and once the local area plan for Ambleside is complete, a hotel may be considered for that location.

Q: I am a West Vancouver resident and I represent a group called Community Skateboarding. I would like to volunteer to do things within the community, such as recycling, community gardens, and maintenance of the skate park. How do you champion the smaller community initiatives?

A: We have hundreds of volunteers that want to give of their time to West Vancouver initiatives. Interested volunteers can contact Nina Leemhuis, Chief Administrative Officer or Anne Mooi, Director, Parks, Culture & Community Services to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

Q: We recently moved to West Vancouver, and we see the oil tankers coming in and out of the harbour with cancer-causing exhaust being expelled from the tankers. Is there anything the District can do to restrict them?

A: The municipality doesn't have the power to restrict harbour traffic as that would fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government. However, the Port of Vancouver is doing a lot relative to the natural environment and green house gas emission issues. There is a North Shore Ports community liaison group that we can put you in touch with, who may be able to bring this issue to the attention of the Port authorities, and get more information on what the Port is doing to preserve local air quality.