



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE

February 9, 2016: 6:30 p.m.
Committee Room #2 City Hall (511 Royal Avenue)

MINUTES

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Jonathan X. Coté	- Chair
Councillor Patrick Johnstone	- Member
Councillor Mary Trentadue	- Member
Jennifer Arbo	- Community Member
Rnold Smith	- Chamber of Commerce Representative (non-voting member)
Nadine Nakagawa	- Community Member
Gabriella Scali	- Community Member
Nancy Shaw	- Community Member

VOTING MEMBERS REGRETS:

Chinu Das	- Community Member
Daniel Fontaine	- Community Member

GUESTS:

Robin Prest	- Simon Fraser University
Sebastian Merz	- Simon Fraser University

STAFF:

Blair Fryer	- Manager of Communications & Economic Development
John Stark	- Senior Social Planner
Lynn Roxburgh	- Planner
Ashleigh Young	- Communications Coordinator
Renee Chadwick	- Manager, Queensborough Community Centre
Debbie Johnstone	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 p.m.

1.0 ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no items.

2.0 ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the November 10, 2015 Minutes

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the minutes of the November 10, 2015 Public Engagement Task Force meeting be adopted.

CARRIED.

All members of the Task Force present voted in favour of the motion.

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 SFU Centre for Dialogue

Mayor Jonathan Coté, Chair, introduced Robin Prest and Sebastian Merz from the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Centre for Dialogue. Task Force members provided an introduction and an overview of their backgrounds.

Mr. Prest advised that the surveys and achievements of the Task Force had been reviewed, and that they would be working towards providing the necessary structure to sort, group and make sense of the information provided. Following this, Mr. Prest explained that their focus would be to create a resource document that guides the Task Force and the City to success in their Public Engagement process.

Mr. Prest requested feedback from the Task Force on the following topics:

What would success for the Task Force look like?

- Ensuring that every representation of the population is included adequately in City engagement;
- An understanding that the quality of engagement is more important than the quantity of engagement;
- Cultivating trust between community members and the City;
- An understanding of the value in community involvement for both the City and the community;
- Community trust in the City's process, even when an outcome is different than anticipated;

- Having residents equally engaged on all issues, not just issues in which they oppose;
- Finding a balance between providing successful engagement while not over-extending the City; and,
- Creating a document that other municipalities could follow as a road map to increase engagement in their own communities.

How can New Westminster create a culture of engagement?

- Implementing a consistent approach at all levels when engaging with the public;
- Providing more education with respect to the feedback loop that Council follows when making decisions could provide the community with a better understanding on how and why engagement is valuable;
- Single parent families, immigrants and those living in poverty should be empowered to feel their voice is important;
- Providing City staff with opportunities for engagement could cultivate the engagement culture;
- Illustrating that the City is creative in exploring solutions to community issues was suggested; and,
- Creating a user friendly framework for staff could reduce issues occurring with the public consultation process.

Mr. Merz furthered the overview of his role as a facilitator in this process, and provided the following information:

- The SFU Centre for Dialogue is based around quality conversations;
- Productive dialogue revolves around in-depth conversations, transformative discussions, and a mutual understanding, even thru conflict; and,
- The SFU Centre for Dialogue program provides a focus on governments working towards implementing a collaborative decision making process.

4.0 NEW BUSINESS

4.1 Public Engagement Visioning (SFU Centre for Dialogue)

Robin Prest, Simon Fraser University (SFU) Centre for Dialogue, initiated a visioning session for the Task Force. Members were requested to envision the year 2021, where New Westminster is being recognized by other municipalities for their outstanding public engagement.

Mr. Prest directed the Task Force to provide feedback on the following items:

What tangible changes within the City have occurred to lead to this?

- Staff knowledge, and an understanding of the internal mechanics of the City;
- Community trust and understanding on how feedback is used to form the decisions made by the Council;
- A sense that the community is being heard by the City;
- A more diverse sense of community involvement; and,
- An increased awareness on how to access the City.

When looking at this vision, what excites Task Force members most, and how can this advance the mandate for New Westminster in a special way?

- An interest was expressed in bringing an element of fun back to public engagement;
- Receiving feedback from the Community that is a true representation of the entire community, rather than just a group of select individuals;
- Providing the public with better information on how the City operates;
- Creating a new outlook on engagement in New Westminster could promote a greater sense of excitement from employees and residents in the community;
- The idea of building public engagement from a street level up was suggested;
- Having City staff dedicated and interested in providing more quality interactions with the community;
- Providing the community with positive opportunities to consult on important issues;
- A belief that the process the City follows to make decisions is representative and fair; and,
- Providing transparency in the decision making process, so the community feels they are able to predict the steps and outcomes of the City.

Identify important criteria that would be useful two to three years from now. How can these criteria evaluate public engagement in the future?

- Feedback gathered from the community is representative of census data;
- Engagement is more complete and participatory. It was suggested that rather than clicking a box for yes or no, community members are encouraged to provide more in depth feedback;

- An increase of positive feedback from the uniqueness of the types of engagement (i.e. Food Truck Festivals);
- Information gathered from surveys is easily utilized. Community members can understand what they are being asked, and how their answers can form decisions made by council;
- Participants involved in engagement may feel that it is a consistent and predictable process;
- A focus is placed on the quality of data being collected, rather than the quantity;
- Implementing public engagement into all aspects of the City;
- Utilizing a flowchart to indicate how to engage based on the targeted issue. Not all issues require the same level of engagement, and a flowchart could offer guidance when determining if it is required;
- Creating a feedback loop with a midpoint check-in could ensure that the proper steps are being taken to engage before reaching the end of the process; and,
- Lengthy surveys and public consultation can lose community interest along the way. Following a more realistic timeline could promote continued engagement.

Mr. Prest suggested that the Task Force consider defining a list of tools that would help drive public engagement in the future. The Task Force felt that more discussion on this topic would be important and it was suggested that the item be tabled to discuss at a future meeting.

4.2 Public Engagement Task Force Road Map (SFU Centre for Dialogue)

Sebastian Merz, Simon Fraser University (SFU) Centre for Dialogue, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the achievements of the Task Force, and a suggested road map that could be followed to obtain their public engagement goals.

Following the presentation, Mr. Merz enquired what other tactics the Task Force would like to see included in this process.

Discussion ensued, and the Task Force provided the following suggestions:

- A recommendation regarding how engagement can be resourced could be provided;
- Guidance regarding ways in which this strategy could be utilized as a future investment for the City was suggested;

- A timeline could be created to ensure that the City is on track after the implementation of the public engagement strategy; and,
- Issues were raised regarding staff capacity and competency when implementing the engagement process.

Following this discussion, Mr. Merz summarized the Public Engagement Work Plan. The goal would be for the Task Force to finalize an engagement strategy document by June, 2016.

Discussion ensued, and the Task Force provided the following comments:

- It was suggested that background information be provided to those attending the public engagement workshops in both March and April to ensure that productive discussions take place;
- Concerns were raised regarding whether larger workshops would actually advance the goals of the Task Force;
- Engaging the public earlier may help the Task Force have a greater sense of accountability for their work;
- Once a draft engagement strategy is created, it was suggested that other City Committee's or Residents' Associations review the document;
- Involving the community in the visioning workshop, rather than after a draft is produced, may be more effective;
- Reviewing the draft document with a focus group could provide a more representative selection of the population;
- Committee members and those involved in Residents' Associations are already highly engaged individuals. An interest was expressed in reaching out to those not already involved in the community;
- Concerns were raised with respect to the timeline for the project. It was suggested that ensuring adequate engagement could take additional time; and,
- It was expressed that the finalized document incorporates a 'made in New Westminster' approach, rather than becoming too much of an academic process.

5.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no items.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

6.1 Meeting Dates for 2016

This item was received for information.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

~~March 8, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. in Committee Room 2.~~ T.B.A.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Certified correct,

Mayor Jonathan X. Côté
Chair

Debbie Johnstone
Committee Clerk