Corporation of the City of
NEW WESTMINSTER

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE

November 10, 2015: 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 (arrived at 6:37 P.M.)
Jennifer Arbo	- Community Member
Daniel Fontaine	- Community Member
Rnold Smith	- Chamber of Commerce Representative (non-voting member)
Nadine Nakagawa	- Community Member

VOTING MEMBERS REGRETS:

Chinu Das	- Community Member
Gabriella Scali	- Community Member
Nancy Shaw	- Community Member

STAFF:

Jennifer Wilson	- Assistant Director, Parks, Culture and Recreation
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
Colleen Ponzini	- Manager, Financial Services
Debbie Johnstone	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

1.0 ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

2.0 ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the October 13, 2015 Minutes

MOVED and SECONDED
THAT the minutes of the October 13, 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 Ipsos Reid survey results

Blair Fryer, Manager of Communications and Economic Development, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the results of the Ipsos Reid 2016 Budget Survey. In response to questions from the Task Force, Mr. Fryer provided the following information:

- Ipsos Reid is a standard telephone survey used in all municipalities of the Lower Mainland;
- The survey was put on by the financial department;
- The Ipsos survey in itself is a valuable public engagement tool;
- Demographic questions were asked to ensure that there is a fair balance in survey results;
- Only landline telephones numbers were called in the survey;
- Progressive changes in areas such as garbage collection show that public engagement has been beneficial;
- The impact of social media has led to an increased satisfaction rate from residents of the City;
- The survey could be improved to ask more questions to target public engagement; and,
- The Ipsos Reid survey has some flexibility for municipalities to add in additional questions. It was suggested that this may be an area to investigate in the future.

3.2 Public engagement external survey results

Ashleigh Young, Communications Coordinator, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the overview of the results from the public engagement external

survey. Following Ms. Young's presentation, the following information was clarified:

- The survey had 451 participants; however, only 396 submitted a fully completed survey;
- Demographic information was collected to clarify survey results; and,
- The large amount of information collected in the survey may be difficult for the public to digest. Participants could feel lost in the process as the outcome is just a summary of all 451 participants.

Following the results of the survey, the Task Force discussed what changes could be made to better the way the City targets public engagement. Discussion ensued, and the Task Force provided the following comments:

- Email correspondence to an external postmaster can cause response delays when staff members are unsure who is addressing their questions or requests;
- It was suggested that the auto reply from emails be personalized to reflect who will be responding to the email, together with a timeframe on when the response is to be expected;
- Communication standards for staff could be implemented;
- Residents may not feel heard because they do not necessarily know who to contact with their issues;
- The City faces certain limitations with privacy which can limit the amount of personal information passed between departments. This can often be a challenge when City residents request to be informed by email for events;
- The public engagement external survey, together with the customer service initiative for City Hall, provide an opportunity for staff to consider how communication can be improved;
- A feedback loop could be established to show community members how their opinions inform the decision making process for Council and the City;
- Creating an appendix to surveys showing all comments received may be helpful to illustrate and validate all participants;
- It was suggested that an up to date City calendar for events could be helpful;
- Staff could consistently work at proactively providing information regarding current engagement opportunities to the public; and,
- It was suggested that there could be standard city protocols regarding public engagement opportunities.

4.0 NEW BUSINESS

4.1 External barriers to public engagement review & discussion

Mayor Coté, Chair, initiated a discussion regarding external barriers to public engagement and asked the Task Force what they felt was preventing people from engaging. It was noted that while the public engagement survey highlighted a few key points, it is also important to look into who did not respond to the survey, and why?

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

- Typical barriers people face are a lack of awareness and time, and a belief that their opinions are not valuable to the City;
- People can feel intimidated and uncomfortable to provide feedback;
- Sometimes people feel safer engaging online when it is anonymous;
- Language could be a barrier that may not have been highlighted in the survey;
- It was suggested that the City could target certain areas (renters, lower income housing) to break down barriers and increase social awareness;
- Engagement should be valuable and interesting;
- Staff could focus on building relationships that can help people feel more comfortable to engage;
- Residents are most engaged six weeks before the election; however, after elections there could be disconnect between residents and elected officials. It was questioned what attributes the City could continue on with after the election to make people feel the same level of involvement;
- Using an engaged city member as a champion or ambassador could help target residents who are not currently engaged;
- It was suggested that the Task Force could investigate other avenues of engagement (i.e. art) to start positive interactions with city residents;
- Public engagement should be treated as an opportunity to educate residents on how the City works;
- Language barriers between the City and multicultural residents can result in misinformation being provided;
- New York's 3-11 service was used as an example on how language barriers can be overcome. New York's program offers a variety of different languages for city services, further promoting engagement in the city;
- It was debated how the City should communicate to people who are completely unengaged. The Task Force agreed that this is a barrier that needs to be better understood;
- An interest was expressed in reviewing which issues have an unrepresented population that should be engaged;

- It was discussed how the task force should evaluate their success in public engagement. Many residents are engaged and are happy with what the City is doing for them; and,
- Success for the task force would be a final report to Council demonstrating how the public has engaged and how this has impacted decisions made by Council.

5.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no items.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

There were no items.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

January 12, 2016 in Committee Room #2

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

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

Certified correct,

Mayor Jonathan X. Coté
Chair

Debbie Johnstone
Committee Clerk