

**NOTES OF THE CALUC AND UDI COVID-19
MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2020**

1. THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 4:03 PM

Present:

Community Association Land Use Committee (CALUC) Representatives:

Burnside Gorge: Avery Stetski, Land Use Committee Chair
Downtown/Harris Green: Ian Sutherland, Land Use Committee Chair
Hillside-Quadra: Jon Munn, Land Use Committee Co-Chair
Fairfield/Gonzales: Don Monsour, Planning & Zoning Committee President
James Bay: Marg Gardiner, James Bay Neighbourhood Association President
North Jubilee: Jean Johnson, Land Use Committee Co-Chair
North Park: Harold Stanley, North Park Board
Rockland: Bob June, Land Use Committee Co-Chair
South Jubilee: Ben Ziegler, Land Use Committee Co-Chair

Not Present:

Fernwood Community Association
Oaklands Community Association
Victoria West Community Association

Urban Development Institute (UDI) Representatives:

Kathy Whitcher, UDI Executive Director
Adam Cooper, UDI Director
Jordan Milne, UDI Chair

City Staff:

Rob Bateman, Senior Process Planner (Meeting Chair)
Alison Meyer, Assistant Director of Development Services
Karen Hoese, Director of Sustainable Planning and Community Development
Bill Eisenhauer, Head of Engagement
Matt Green, Business Solutions Manager, Information Technology
Bridget Frewer, Engagement Advisor
Andrea Walker Collins, Planning Secretary

2. INTRODUCTIONS

- Rob Bateman thanked attendees for their time and effort during strange and hard times for everyone.

3. REVIEW OF AGENDA

4. BACKGROUND ON COVID-19

- Rob Bateman acknowledged the value in the CALUC process to date and the importance of gathering community input early in the development application process. The City wants to maintain this early input and continue to foster a dialogue between the applicant, CALUC, public and the City. To this end, the purpose of this meeting is to receive feedback regarding the CALUC role in the development application process during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to find temporary solutions, although we may also find tools that are useful in the long-term as well.
- Karen Hoese, Director, expressed thanks to participants for taking the time to join the meeting. A couple of weeks ago staff went to Council with a report to look at development processes including community meetings. Expressed importance of working together to find ways to continue process. Thanks to those who wrote letters to Mayor and Council with helpful suggestions for digital platforms.
- Alison Meyer, Assistant Director, expressed that 15 years ago when the process began it was based on the philosophy that the greatest value came from allowing the community to inform and help shape a development proposal rather than having the developer simply inform the community about a proposal. It was meant to capture those early comments to incorporate before developers had invested a lot into plans and drawings.
- Participant Questions and Comments:
 - Marg Gardiner asked how comments in this meeting can contribute to Committee of the Whole discussion tomorrow?
 - Rob Bateman noted that staff would collect all feedback and prepare a report to bring to a future Committee meeting.

5. ROUNDTABLE

How can the City continue to process development applications during the COVID-19 pandemic while providing options for public comment early in the process and helping to foster a dialogue between the applicant, CALUC, and the public?

IDEA SHARE

- Avery Stetski (Burnside / Gorge)
 - The Burnside-Gorge CALUC will continue to hold meetings using electronic plans and collecting feedback online.

- Depending on the scope of a proposal, the CALUC will determine if community meeting is necessary
- The developer may do a presentation online for public input. A [digital?] bulletin board could be used to collect comments
- Anticipate minimal changes, using technology. Recommend shorten processes by having concurrent processes in place.
- Ian Sutherland (Downtown/Harris Green)
 - The BC Assessment appeal process is a good model for ADP, HAP or Board of Variance, not CALUCs.
 - Not in any way promoting the conducting of CALUC meetings electronically because of the potential for significant numbers of people who may be disenfranchised by the electronic meeting process.
 - Happy to conduct pre-CALUCs electronically and as the wait for Committee of the Whole can take up to a year it would be appropriate to allow the application to be processed through planning circulation. Then depending on the length of the pandemic, up to, but not including, the Committee of the Whole, or the lifting of the ban on public gatherings, whichever comes first.
 - Affordable housing (that meets the City's strict definition of affordable) can go forward beyond this point if the application is "clean". That means no variances and 100% adherence to LAP and OCP.
- Jon Munn (Hillside-Quadra)
 - Important process for public input
 - The City should consider electronic notices as well as hardcopy mail out
 - Letters from neighbours are rarely referenced by Council
 - The pandemic shouldn't have an impact on Strata issues.
- Don Monsour (Fairfield-Gonzales)
 - Hope to continue the same meeting operation, but electronically. Public will be invited to attend electronic meeting going forward (possibly with Zoom).
 - The Mayor had extended an invitation to the CALUCs which had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. Can staff comment on what this was going to be related to?
 - Karen Hoese, Director, noted that there would be no change to CALUCs as a part of this process. The City sees value in the work that the CALUCs do. If something does change, it will be through a Council process.
 - Do we know how many applications go through in a year and how many are successful?
 - Alison Meyer, Assistant Director, 30 to 40 rezoning applications go to CALUCs every year. Additional Variance applications also referred to CALUCs for the 30-day comment period, but it is a different process than rezonings.

- Marg Gardiner (James Bay)
 - Concerned about a lack of evidence-based decision-making. Need to know how many proposals are being impacted by COVID-19 pandemic. No evidence presented that there would be any delays due to COVID-19.
 - Meetings fluctuate with seasons.
 - the CALUC has requested full-sized drawings from applicants to review as they were not able to view on a large screen.
 - Do not want to go fully electronic for our public meeting, because a large portion of the James Bay community is over 60 years of age. Worried about disenfranchising a large group of our population.
 - Would object to any expansion giving more power to staff regarding variances. The CALUC has expressed concerns about previous rezoning applications in neighbourhood.
 - JBNA had done a Zoom pre-meeting with a developer, and had written letters to the City on two development proposals with the intent of the City technical review being undertaken while we await opportunity for a CALUC Community Meeting.

- Jean Johnson (North Jubilee)
 - North Jubilee is a very small neighbourhood, and does not host regular community meetings. North Jubilee doesn't have a community centre, park, or school, making it difficult to get neighbours together. This process is one way.
 - Expressed feelings of being overwhelmed with electronic process for public meetings, and would like support.
 - Hope to learn from the other CALUCs who have more applications to review currently.

- Harold Stanley (North Park)
 - The City should maintain opportunity to comment on Development Proposals that impact neighbourhoods.
 - Concur with concerns regarding moving to an online platform, given the demographic in their neighbourhood.
 - Could record for other neighbours to watch at a later time or tune in live.
 - Many seniors may not be able to participate with Zoom meetings.
 - Community members could send letters or submit comments using a designated drop box. This may slow down the process.
 - Suggested a time limit on when to review alternative processes. Suggest June 30th to hold another meeting like this to see if CALUCs should continue on with the agreed upon process.

- Bob June (Rockland)
 - Held a preliminary Zoom meeting with a developer.
 - Electronic plans are not suitable for everyone as several members don't have large screen computers. Developers may need to distribute paper plans.

- Could consider moving community meeting to after the staff Technical Review Group (TRG) review. Would like to see a Planner's report as well.
 - Should have no meetings through summer season (post-COVID pandemic). Looking for more support from City, including having staff attend CALUC to provide support.
 - Requests that the city support/facilitate online public meetings. The expertise could be developed there given the likely frequency of meetings.
 - Has asked in the past that the planner be available to attend the CALUC community meeting and they sometimes are.
- Ben Ziegler (South Jubilee)
 - Hope that the City is respectful of the timeline that community associations are working with, given that everyone is working from a distance. Not used to communicating this way.
 - Neighbours need to all have access to a platform where they can hold a dialogue to discuss applications.
 - Non-verbal cues are gone during an electronic process therefore we need to increase the ways that we collect feedback and number of interactions to compensate.
- Kathy Witcher (UDI)
 - Allow feedback from TRG prior to community meetings.
 - Having feedback through email and letters would enable collecting from a larger spectrum of people. Historically people who have children (etc.) are not able to attend evening meetings, so this would enable other members to participate.
 - PlaceSpeak is a great platform. Because we have a housing crisis we hope the ball will keep rolling.
- Adam Cooper (UDI)
 - Thank you for allowing the feedback.
 - Recommend not having the community meeting as a prerequisite to beginning an application to the City.
 - Also recommends using PlaceSpeak. This online tool was created for this exact purpose.
- Jordan Milne (UDI)
 - Have regular check-ins to monitor process during this period
 - The City should pick a unified platform and get a master account
 - Recording meetings offers a strategic advantage
 - UDI has been advocating to have a staff person attend CALUC Community Meetings
 - There could be a silver-lining to all this as changes may enable a greater degree of diversity of who can participate
 - Would prefer to not define these changes as strictly temporary. There may be things that can be valuable post-pandemic for public engagement.

6. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- Marg Gardiner: Did not like working with PlaceSpeak platform. Disenfranchised people cannot attend a digital public meeting. By going digital we are dominated by special interests groups. City Hall can be scary for people just as electronic platforms can be. Two members of our committee could not participate in a pre-meeting because they did not have access to an electronic device. James Bay CALUC meetings can get 40-100 people. The Community Meeting Notice can go to 1000 people.
- Jon Munn: For those people who don't have access to a computer, Hillside-Quadra has a significant poor population, can the participation methods be combined? People could meet in person and on a screen to facilitate access. Childcare is another issue.
- Matt Green (Business Solutions Manager, City of Victoria IT Department): Heartened to hear that there is a desire for multiple platform approach. Staff will support the decision that comes out of this process. There are tools and supports at the City's disposal, and IT is eager to work with staff to develop that for CALUCs.
- Bob June: Disturbed by the comment that the CALUC meeting should take place just before the COTW. There is a lot of dialogue after the CALUC meeting and ideas could be lost. Are there statistics on how many people don't have access to a computer or internet? Some background on this information would be good. Don't know how many public meetings are going forward right now. Zoom worked well at a preliminary meeting, but remain concerned about how long we'll have free access to it. Want to maintain full input into applications.

7. NEXT STEPS

- Rob Bateman: Staff will compile notes from this meeting to ensure everything is captured.
- Please provide additional email based comments by April 22, 2020.
- Staff will produce a report for the Committee of the Whole. At this stage, staff do not have a date set for the report to go to Committee.

8. FURTHER COMMENTS

- Don Monsour: Everyone has access via phone as well.
- Bill Eisenhauer, Head of Engagement, noted that there are a number of digital options in addition to PlaceSpeak that could assist. Staff are looking at various tools for other City engagement activities as well so may be some synergy to apply here.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The CALUC and UDI COVID-19 meeting held April 15, 2020 was adjourned at 5:18 pm.