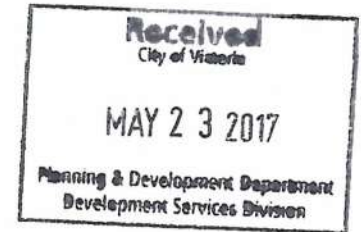**FAIRFIELD GONZALES**
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
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Fairfield Gonzales Community Association Land Use Committee

Community Meeting Report:

Mount Edwards Court Rezoning 1002 Vancouver
Applicant Cool Aid representing BC Housing, owner of property
Rezoning from R-K residential to make the existing building conform to its
residential use; renovate the building for two floors of supportive housing and one
floor of affordable housing and to designate the building heritage

Meeting was held on Monday April 24th, 7PM at the Christ Church Cathedral School
Chair: David Biltek
Note Taker: various members of the CALUC
Attendance: approximately 150

This was a unique rezoning request. It was unique because people attending the
meeting were not concerned about setbacks, heights, landscaping, density, traffic,
parking, etc. or the physical impact of the building. Instead concerns raised at the
meeting were not about the building but about the proposed management and operation
of the building and who would be living in the building. Who would be living in the
supportive housing units? Who would be living in the affordable living units? How
would they be selected? How would the residential building be managed?

It should be noted that throughout the meeting there was a very low level of trust, -
or no trust at all: Many people spoke about their:

- Lack of trust for Cool Aid.
- Lack of trust for the city, processes, and various levels of
  government due to past experiences; some examples raised.
- Cool Aid's previous minutes were misrepresented.
- Historical issues of zoning passed without public consultation.
- Previous back room deals and lies.

As well there was substantial fear about the impact this proposed residence would
have on the school and neighbourhood, who are still anxious from their previous
experiences with tent city.

And to be fair there is also a perceived lack of trust on behalf of Cool Aid and the parents group and some neighbours.

To say this is a conflict of values would not be too far off the mark

The major Concerns raised

Safety in general, and in particular for children at the school

Safety of children should be paramount

Maybe a third party offering safety oversight would be better

Perceptions that crime and emergency services incidents have increased, although no direct evidence was delivered, only perceptions and some anecdotal notes.

As well there were many references may to unacceptable public behaviours, but again given nature of these, no evidence except anecdotal

As result of the safety concerns is that the school has experienced a severe rate of families removing children, which is causing some hardship financially for the school.

Scope, size, and nature of project

There are too manty people, and units being proposed, will have a negative impact on nature of community

Project may be too large and will make it too difficult to manage and will in a critical mass of people with unpredictable behaviours

Who is to be housed? What is supportive housing? low barrier or not low barrier, and what does that mean, how are residents to be selected?

Lack of accountability

Who is accountable for any incidents at or around Mount Edward Court?

Contravention of provincial laws, and commitments

There were two lengthy presentations which outlined an extensive list of provincial laws and regulations which the presenters believe the Province and City may have contravened. These assertions were lengthy and are far beyond the competence of this committee to assess their veracity. The options are for these people to present the same to City Council and/or take legal action against the provincial Government

On the Other hand, ...

There were a number of people who spoke in favour of the project saying:

That Cool aid and this project are welcome and have a reputation of operating sound premises

There have been few issues in the neighbourhood

We must be a welcoming and supportive community accepting diversity and access to housing

Opportunity to help homeless in Victoria

As well two current residents on mount Edward Court spoke:

And encouraged people to know the stories of those living at MEC

They want to be part of the community and help protect it

And there are good things happening at MEC and people should know that

That Vote

Near the end of the meeting a vote on the project AS PROPOSED was requested. The results were 80 opposed and 28 in favour.

However immediately following the vote several individuals approached the chair and said:

You should NOT count this vote because many people do NOT live here

(and yes several people who spoke were from Esquimalt, Saanich or Oak Bay, or other parts in Victoria)

People from BC Housing and Cool Aid should NOT be allowed to Vote, tow which a fellow standing close by said: "Well at least I live in the neighbourhood although I do work for cool Aid!"

And yet again someone else asked not to count the vote because he was a school parent and supported the MEC but did not want to be "bullied"

And then there were as many as 50 people who did not vote, some of whom said they would have supported another option

So yes the vote appears on first blush to support denying the application but there are many caveats as mentioned above which may modify the vote

In the discussion our notes reflect that 36 people spoke, 28 were opposed while 8 were in favour. Again if one was just to count the parents or just the neighbours who spoke that ratio would be different.

Possibilities

The FGCA CALUC does not normally take sides or positions on applications and in this case we will not speak for one side or the other, however given the substantially different nature of this meeting and the concerns raised we felt it worth mentioning some possibilities or options we heard or see ourselves which Council might consider

City Council has three options:

Approve as proposed

Deny application

Approve with conditions

Deny and take some other actions

Approve as proposed is self explanatory and requires no further comment

Deny application is the same, requires no further comment

Approve with conditions

As stated earlier there is a lack of trust all around. Council could if it wanted approve the application but with conditions which might make everyone unhappy but may help arrive at a compromise

Such conditions might include

Appoint a mediator who might help negotiate some agreements amongst the neighbours, the School, Cool Aid and BC Housing

A third party monitoring group, which assesses MEC and monitors progress towards specific operational goals and standards

A phase in of number of residents and move forward with more as the standards and measures mentioned above are achieved. So limit number of new residents in first phase, monitor, and if standards achieved permit more residents. This might help with accountability

Stuart Hall, Principal of the School requested a Restrictive Covenant on the property between The Diocese, School and BC housing. This also might help with accountability.

Ask the school to engage with residents such as was done at Central Middle School and Our Place. VIHA has just awarded the students and school an award for Community Service for their efforts. This might also help with trust.

Restructure the accommodations proposed, limiting the size of the Centre, or changing the conditions for accommodation

Deny and take other actions

Some people suggested that BC Housing sell the Mount Edwards Court site and purchase another building somewhere else more suitable for the purposes

At the end of the meeting the CALUC presented a summary of what we heard, and we asked the people still at the meeting to advise if we "got it right"…and we were told essentially we did, maybe with not enough emphasis on specific words, comments or ideas, but essentially right.

This has been to date one of the more interesting and challenging applications with which we have been involved. We hope we have represented what we heard well enough and have added to the decision Council has to make.