

LATE DISTRIBUTION FOR COUNCIL - April 4, 2006

6



CITY OF VANCOUVER

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 22 AND 23, 2006

A Special Meeting of the Council of the City of Vancouver was held on Wednesday, March 22, 2006, at 7:30 p.m., in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, City Hall, for the purpose of hearing from delegations on the 2006 Preliminary Operating Budget. Subsequently, the Special Meeting reconvened on Thursday, March 23, 2006, at 7:30 p.m. to continue hearing speakers. The minutes are consolidated for ease of reference.

PRESENT:

- Mayor Sam Sullivan
- Councillor Suzanne Anton
- Councillor Elizabeth Ball
- Councillor David Cadman
- Councillor Kim Capri
- Councillor George Chow
- Councillor Heather Deal
- Councillor Peter Ladner
- Councillor B.C. Lee
- Councillor Raymond Louie
- Councillor Tim Stevenson

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Tina Hildebrandt, Meeting Coordinator

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MOVED by Councillor Capri
SECONDED by Councillor Lee

THAT this Council resolve itself into Committee of the Whole, Mayor Sullivan in the Chair.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MOVED by Councillor Ball

THAT Council close the speaker's list for the Special Council meeting on the 2006 Operating Budget.

CARRIED
(Councillors Cadman, Deal and Stevenson opposed.)

1. 2006 Operating Budget (File 05-1000-30)

Vancouver City Council, at its meeting on January 31, 2006, received a Report Reference on the 2006 Operating Budget - Preliminary Estimates and instructed staff to proceed with a public consultation process, to include a public meeting on the 2006 Operating Budget to be held prior to the Interim Report on the 2006 Operating Budget.

Accordingly, Annette Klein, Director of Budget Services, presented an overview of the 2006 Operating Budget, which included details on the preliminary budget position, additional funding requests, budget challenges, property tax impacts, options for balancing the budget and public consultation.

Estelle Lo, General Manager and Director of Finance, and Ken Bayne, Director of Financial Planning & Treasury, were available to respond to questions.

MOVED by Councillor Ladner

THAT Council, at its Special Meeting on March 22, 2006, continue hearing speakers on the 2006 Operating Budget until 11:10 p.m.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The following expressed concern regarding the service cuts being proposed in order to address the 2006 Budget shortfall as well as other budget-related issues:

Commissioner Heather Holden, Chair, Vancouver Park Board
John Buckberrough, Vancouver Public Library Board
Paul Faoro, President, CUPE 15
Loring Bohach, Friends of the Vancouver Public Library
Dave Park, Vancouver Board of Trade
Elizabeth Wilkinson, Vancouver Children's Safety Association
Caryn Duncan, Vancouver Women's Health Collective
Anne Way
Carol Lloyd, 411 Senior's Centre Society
Kelly Ip, SUCCESS (*petition on file*)
Kelly Ng, SUCCESS (*brief on file*)
Diane Sugars, Learning Disabilities Association (*brief on file*)
Janice Jickels, Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH)
Carole Christopher, Vancouver Food Policy Council
Jason O'Brien, My Own Backyard (MOBY)
Karen Cho, Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
Terry Stanway, Association of Neighbourhood Houses
Ingrid Kastens, Pacific Community Resources Society
Joy Miller, Inland Refugee Society
Sharon Gregson, VSB Representative - Civic Child Care Council
Cindy Soules, YWCA of Vancouver
Sheila Duffy, Pacific Post Partum Support Society
Martha J. Lewis, Tenant's Rights Action Coalition
Eleanor Hadley
Isabel Minty
Nancy A. Chiavario, Mount Pleasant Community Centre Association (*brief on file*)
Trish Barry, Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgendered community

Speaker's comments included the following:

- the Vancouver Park Board asks that Council recognize the role that Parks & Recreation plays in creating an active and healthy city; it is understood there are limits to financial

resources, however, Council is strongly urged to reduce the Park Board funding as little as possible;

- the Vancouver Public Library urges Council not to impose further cuts on its 2006 budget submission as there will be significant impacts on the ability to keep libraries open and accessible; libraries promote literacy, which has been found to play a key role in helping to prevent and reduce crime;
- CUPE 15 is troubled by Council's decision of January 31, 2006, to restrict all civic unions, representing 8000 employees, from participation in budget discussions; Council's actions on how to get through this budget shortfall is going to set the tone for negotiations - the employees will clearly be watching Council over the next month;
- the City is struggling to keep municipal property tax increases to a reasonable level in 2006, however, it's imperative that the 50 additional police officers be added to the force otherwise the rampant crime in the city will not be dealt with as effectively as it should; our citizens deserve to have the police resources required to reduce crime rates throughout the city and are willing to pay for it;
- believe a high priority for the 2006 budget should be given to increasing animal control officers as fines for off-leash dogs are currently not being enforced and this is a lost revenue for the City;
- many speakers explained the benefits of their community organizations to citizens and the impacts should these organizations lose civic grant funding;
- the City will not realize a significant savings from making cuts to the community service grants program but there will be a devastating blow to such community organizations as the Women's Health Collective;
- ask that Council carefully consider the most vulnerable residents in this city such as at-risk youth, battered women and seniors - protect our social infrastructure by voting against cuts to community service grants;
- being deaf I listen with my eyes and use interpreters here tonight to be able to access what is being said- these interpreters are here because of the City's grant to WIDHH;
- the local food system plays an important role in our economy - hope Council will consider continuing to fund the Food Policy Council;
- MOBY is a grassroots community engagement organization working on a pedestrian walkway and garden and the Food Policy Coordinator has been the number one contact from the City over past couple of years - this relationship is integral to the sustainability of this and all future community projects;
- the Broadway Youth Service Centre has been recognized for various awards including Youth with Colour, Homelessness, and Best Practices in Youth Engagement and couldn't carry out its mandate without the funds provided by the City;
- here to plea on behalf of refugees, a marginalized segment of our community, the volunteers that assist them and the Board of Directors for Inland Refugee Society and implore Council to continue to fund this vital service;
- ask that Council continue providing the relatively small amount of funding that is so important and vital to child care in this city;
- residential property owners will have taxes increased by 10% if commercial taxes are frozen; seniors shouldn't be taxed out of their homes;
- suggest Council consider increasing the Property Endowment Fund interest contributed to the annual operating budget to cover at least a portion, if not all, of the funds needing to be recovered and review this fund in terms of its role and responsibility for the City and citizens of Vancouver; and
- suggest the City and Park Board look into Public Private Partnerships for redeveloping and contracting of services for all concessions or restaurants in the Park Board system.

The following expressed concern with regard to rising commercial property taxes:

Edward Des Roches, Co-Chair, Vancouver Fair Tax Coalition (*brief on file*)
Sharon Townsend, South Granville BIA (*article on file*)
Stephanie Clarke, Yaletown BIA
Norm Stickleman, Burgess Crawley Sullivan (*taxation calculations on file*)
Leonard Schein, Cambie Village BIA (*brief on file*)
Bob Laurie, BC Richard Ellis Ltd. (*brief on file*)
Mark Startup, Retail BC
Deanna Geisheimer, Art Works Gallery (*brief on file*)
Bill Rempel, Building Owners and Managers Association of BC (BOMA)
Don Low, Global Estates Ltd. (*brief on file*)
Madeleine Lesniem, Strathcona BIA
Lyn Hellyar, Davie Village BIA
Cheryl Easton, Kitsilano 4th Avenue BIA
Federico Fuoco, Federico's Supper Club

Speaker's comments included the following:

- Vancouver has a municipal property tax budget approaching the half billion mark and although residents have the largest investment in city (over 82% of property value) they pay less than 45% of the property taxes whereas business owners pay 55%;
- taxes on business owners are too high and it is time for these tax increases to be stopped;
- many business owners are considering leaving Vancouver because of the rising commercial property taxes - only the multi-nationals can survive;
- urge Council to cap the business property tax rate for 2006 to 2005 rates and work together with the Fair Tax Coalition to find a sustainable long-term solution; do what's right for the long-term health of this city;
- analysis shows that with the current assessment role in 2006, if Council leaves allocations as they are, approves a 4% budget increase and maintains the same tax levy allocation, the average residential property would pay \$14 more and the average business property would pay \$700 more - it's imperative that the City implement a responsible long-term tax distribution policy;
- the Park Theatre pays \$50,000 per year in property taxes and has to sell 120,000 tickets per year or 2,400 tickets per week or 350 tickets per day just to pay these taxes; no surprise that Vancouver is losing many of its neighbourhood movie theatres such as Stanley, Varsity and Vogue;
- staff has stood up before Council over the last three years and has agreed with this statement: "for every dollar of City service consumed by residents in Vancouver, they currently pay .51 cents" - that's why the business owners are here tonight;
- business owners need more competitive commercial tax rates now, before it is too late - a competitive tax ratio of 3 to 1 is essential;
- calling on Council to bring taxes in line with regional business tax rates;
- Council needs to recognize that residents are willing to pay more to keep their small community businesses in their areas; and
- believe the business property taxes in this city are the highest in North America and there's no need for that; understand property taxes are a huge source of revenue for the City but can't keep increasing the property taxes on businesses - need a broader tax base.

Staff responded to questions regarding concerns raised by the foregoing speakers, in particular the proposed cuts in community service grants, property taxation issues and the public consultation process.

RISE FROM COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MOVED by Councillor Ball

THAT the Committee of the Whole rise and report.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADOPT REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MOVED by Councillor Stevenson

SECONDED by Councillor Anton

THAT the report of the Committee of the Whole be adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The Special Council recessed at 11:10 p.m. on March 22nd
and adjourned at 10:36 p.m. on March 23, 2006.

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