



COMMUNITY SERVICES GROUP
Development Services
Processing Centre

File No.: 11-1200-01

MEMORANDUM

May 13, 2008

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Judy Rogers, City Manager
Jody Andrews, Deputy City Manager
James Ridge, Deputy City Manager
Marg Coulsen, City Clerk
Brent Toderian, Director of Planning
Laurie Best, Director, Corporate Communications
Jennifer Young, Assistant Director, Corporate Communications
Christine Warren, Director, Development Services
David McLellan, Deputy General Manager, Community Services

FROM: Bill Boons, Assistant Director, Development Services
Mary Clare Zak, Director, Social Planning

SUBJECT: Supporting Vancouver's Faith Communities

Overview

On September 18, 2007, Council approved the following motion:

"THAT staff be directed to review the definition of "Church Use" and the applicability of "Social Service Use" with the Faith Community, and that staff report back to Council with a memorandum on the progress made by the City with the Faith Communities on the core issues".

The core issue presented by the Faith Community is that in addition to the activities that constitute formal "worship" in any religious tradition, many of these organizations consider the provision of services to the marginalized in the community to be a fundamental part of their religious practices. These services could typically include the provision of basic supports such as food, clothing, and financial support.

Since last fall, staff have had meetings with a group representing some of the City's Faith Community and have shared information and ideas leading to the pending adoption by the Director of Planning, of a By-law Administrative Bulletin that would clarify the "accessory" uses and activities, customarily associated with Church operations, and describe how the land use regulations and policies for these uses would be administered.

Permit processes and reviews for “new” Churches would remain largely the same, as currently exists; i.e. new church proposals would continue to include public consultation and a comprehensive review by City staff of the Zoning and Building By-law expectations for new buildings of this type.

For “existing” Church operations, the Director of Planning is prepared to accept the typical programs associated with Church operations (including those providing services to the marginalized in the community) as being “accessory” to the principal Church operations and Churches would be able to continue these programs (or implement new ones) without the need to apply for additional land use permits, subject to a number of conditions, including:

- i. programs should be fully contained within the Church building(s) on a site, and external line-ups and activities will generally not be favoured.
- ii. for programs that include or propose activities not part of the original Church approval, it will be the Church’s responsibility to ensure the areas within the building(s) used for specific programs are in compliance with applicable Vancouver Building By-law requirements, Fire Code regulations, and Provincial Health regulations. (This may require a Special Inspection to be carried out by City and/or Coastal Health Authority staff, prior to commencing the program.)

In addition to the above-noted conditions, staff have concluded that an additional condition within the bulletin that would address the Church’s obligations to carry out their programs in a manner that respects the potential impacts on the surrounding communities should also be included:

- iii. If the operations of these programs results in concerns from the surrounding community, that the Director of Planning considers reasonable, the Church operators will be asked to meet with area representatives to resolve the concerns.

Additional Council Direction

While staff believe this would in most cases, be sufficient to ensure an appropriate resolution to the concerns, should such discussions not be successful, staff are not certain what, if any, additional provisions should be included. Staff therefore is seeking Council direction on the following additional options:

- A. Provide no further conditions or provisions than those noted above, i.e. rely on the Church and the surrounding community to come to an amicable resolution; or
- B. Provide an additional condition with the following suggested wording:
 - iv. If the meetings with the community are unsuccessful in resolving concerns, or are not completed in a reasonable period of time, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning, the Church may be required to submit a formal application that would include a public consultation process with the community; or

C. As an option to either A or B above, Council could direct staff to adopt the administrative practises described in the Bulletin, on an "Interim" basis only, for a period of three (3) years, so that the impacts on the surrounding communities could be assessed.

Subject to some additional direction from Council on this single aspect of the Bulletin, staff are prepared to finalize the By-law Administrative Bulletin, and to provide a copy of this document to the Faith Communities in the City.

Staff will be available at the Committee Meeting on May 15, 2008, to address any questions pertaining to this memorandum.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Boons
Assistant Director
Development Services

Mary Clare Zak
Director
Social Planning

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