



REPORT

Report Date: June 5, 2020
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Meeting Date: September 15, 2020

[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Acting City Clerk

SUBJECT: Advisory Committees – Expense Reimbursement and Enhanced Training and Childminding at Council and Advisory Committee Meetings

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the report for information.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the preliminary research conducted by the Nominations Subcommittee and City staff regarding options for compensating advisory committee members for expenses they incur through serving on their respective committees. It includes expenses relating to training, attendance at meetings and workshops, and transportation. It also addresses the broader issue of childcare during Council meetings, since decisions on this issue may set a precedent for childcare options during advisory committees meetings. The City's Corporate Strategic Plan is guided by the values of diversity and equity, which inform the formation of City committees. Because the City wants its advisory committees' membership to be diverse and its application process accessible and equitable, barriers to participation (such as transportation and childcare expenses, or uncertainty regarding the functioning of these committees) need to be reduced as much as possible. Reimbursement for expenses and access to more training opportunities are two strategies to meet that end.

The Nominations Subcommittee and staff followed this direction and used the following methodology to prepare this report:

- Consulting with Advisory Committees members about their experiences with regard to expenses incurred as part of their duties;
- Reviewing practices regarding Advisory Committee Members' compensation in other municipalities;

- Reviewing the existing Advisory Committees expense budget to determine capacity;
- Assessing work already in progress for instituting childcare during Council and Committee meetings; and
- Assessing work already in progress for developing training and orientation opportunities for new and continuing Advisory Committee Members.

Finally, while this report has been ongoing for many months, the recent global onset of COVID-19 has changed the landscape for local governments. Given that the pandemic has compelled all businesses and governments to adjust their working practices, Council may wish to allow continued virtual or telephonic attendance at meetings. The report assumes that regular meeting operations will eventually resume but we recognize that the “new normal” may mean a hybrid of in-person and online attendance. Should this be the case, the expenses related to food, transportation, and childcare could probably be reduced but not fully eliminated. As this situation evolves over the coming months, Council will have more information available about how the pandemic will affect future municipal operations.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

At the February 27, 2019, Council meeting, Council directed the Nominations Subcommittee to work with staff to identify policy options for covering the expenses of committee members participating in advisory committee meetings and report back to Council. This direction to the Nominations Subcommittee aligns with the Women’s Equity Strategy (WES), which Council renewed and supported in January 2018. Through the WES, the City identified priorities for making Vancouver fair, safe, and accessible for all women. A key action in this respect is to introduce child-friendly accommodations and training that will support women’s engagement in public life. The forthcoming WES report initially was to include discussion of childcare options for City Hall meetings, but that priority has been redirected to this current report.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager submits the report for Council’s consideration.

NOMINATION SUBCOMMITTEE'S COMMENTS

The Nomination Subcommittee supports implementation of a reimbursement policy for Advisory Committees, enhanced Advisory Committee training (including development of an on-line training platform), childcare reimbursement pilot project for Advisory Committees, and a pilot project for childcare reimbursement and onsite childcare during Council meetings to inform Council’s long term decisions on these issues.

REPORT

Background/Context

At the meeting held on February 27, 2019, Council adopted the recommendations identified in *Establishment of Council Advisory Bodies and The Associated Terms of Reference and Diversity on Advisory Bodies Policies* report, which re-established 15 Advisory Committees following the general local election and also established the Diversity on Advisory Bodies Policy. Included in the approval, Council directed staff to further review options to:

“...cover the expenses of attending or participating in advisory committee meetings, including consideration that expenses be provided to advisory committee members who need them in a non-stigmatizing way and that these expenses include but are not limited to appropriate transportation to and from the meetings and other meetings required by being on the committee, parking, and childcare, and report back to Council”.

During this meeting, several speakers from Council-appointed committees shared their views on the financial costs members are required to bear to participate in their committee. In particular, speakers noted that those with mobility issues or dependents for which they are responsible are more likely to experience increased financial pressures due to participation in a City committee. Speakers also emphasized the City’s mandate to provide an inclusive environment for all, and indicated that financial costs might present a barrier to some who wish to participate in City committees.

Training is an important component of effective committee participation and the overall healthy functioning of committees. Council members as well as staff liaisons have independently requested more training both for committee members and for committee liaisons (both staff and Council). Advisory committee training addresses roles and responsibilities as well as cultural competencies that will enable committee members to align their conduct with the City’s priorities for inclusivity and fairness. In order to receive this training; however, members must of course dedicate additional time and may therefore incur additional expenses.

While childcare was not included in the particular direction, the Women’s Equity Strategy that Council renewed did mandate research into childcare options for meetings. That priority has been included in this report because childcare and its attendant costs is among the barriers to civic participation that committee members face.

Strategic Analysis

There are important connections between the various threads that run throughout this report: (a) the desire for inclusivity in the City’s recruitment of committee members, (b) the proposal to reimburse committee members for the costs of participating in committee activities, (c) the prioritization of increased cultural competency training for committee members, and (d) the provision of childcare during Council meetings. Reimbursement for committee participation is intended to increase civic engagement by making committee membership more accessible for a wider range of people, and ongoing education for committee members will help to guide them as they represent the City. A pilot project for childcare services at City Hall will not only enable the possibility of broader civic participation in Council meetings, but may also be a model for the provision of childminding during advisory committee meetings. This may enable more participation in City committees and could also have a positive effect on the number of applications received during the recruitment process. By reducing these basic barriers to

committee participation, it is possible the City may receive a larger and more diverse pool of applicants for committee positions, which would in turn make the City's advisory committees more representative of Vancouver's population.

While these issues are all connected, they each have unique challenges. This report therefore presents for consideration information in three distinct categories: (1) reimbursement for expenses incurred through committee participation; (2) training for committee members; and (3) childcare during meetings.

Reimbursement:

After reviewing practices in other communities, we noted some differences in how larger versus smaller municipalities managed the issue of compensating advisory committee members for their expenses. Smaller municipalities indicated that serving on a committee is considered a form of community service and no remuneration nor expenses are provided for regular participation, such as meeting attendance. Larger cities are more likely to provide some type of compensation for committee members' committee-related activities, although none that we surveyed used a cash reimbursement system. Several examples of other large cities' practices are summarized below:

- Seattle: Parking passes, meeting refreshments, and staff support are provided for committees.
- Toronto: There is a reimbursement policy for travel and expenses (including childcare).
- Edmonton: No out of pocket costs are incurred by committee members in Edmonton's limited committee system, so no reimbursement or compensation policy is in place.
- Calgary: Those volunteering on committees do not receive any compensation or reimbursement for expenses.
- Ottawa: Committee members are reimbursed for parking, dependent care, and transportation.
- Halifax: Refreshments during meetings are sometimes provided.
- Vancouver: Provides refreshments and food for regular meetings but not workshop sessions. Committee members receive parking passes for parking around the City Hall complex.

In addition to surveying other municipalities, we also reached out to current committee members for their perspective on the financial costs associated with committee participation. We disseminated a six-question survey to committee members that consisted both of yes/no responses and individual written feedback. The survey results indicated that the majority of respondents incur costs in order to attend committee meetings, but few consider these costs to be a hardship and/or found that those costs were a factor in their decision to apply for a committee seat. However, survey feedback also revealed that many committee members, even if they themselves did not experience hardship, felt that reimbursement of some kind was necessary in order to reduce barriers to participation for all. This survey and its results are detailed in **Appendix A**.

While committee members appreciate the City of Vancouver's compensation efforts, they also suggest that more needs to be done. Noting the size of Vancouver and the cost of living in this city, committee members believe it is time to introduce some sort of reimbursement policy to mitigate the costs they incur through their volunteer participation. Details regarding possible reimbursement costs and the suggested budget adjustments are outlined in **Appendix B**. Since large cities do not offer direct remuneration to advisory committees, we suggest any policy

options be in keeping with these larger municipalities. Instead, as identified in Appendix B, the 2021 budget considerations might include expanding existing incentives such as parking, transportation and the provision of healthy foods for all meetings (not just regular meetings). The City's Corporate Plan is guided by the values of diversity, equity, and equal opportunity, and we suggest that these enhancements could reflect these values by promoting inclusive and accessible civic engagement.

Training:

The City requires committee members to understand the advisory committees' code of conduct policy as they exercise their roles and responsibilities, and therefore this report identifies further investment in their training opportunities. While orientation and onboarding, which the City currently facilitates, are important parts of that training, staff suggests that additional funds be considered in the 2021 budget in order to enhance these current efforts. Ongoing education in the fundamentals of committee activity, including competency and sensitivity training, requires further attention. Staff have therefore been developing various short- and long-term possibilities, including enhanced training on basic roles and the option of an online platform to deliver all levels of training.

While basic orientation is included in the status quo expenses, additional training is needed in order to ensure members understand and enact the City's values, particularly since members represent the City via their work on their committees. Enhanced training will help committee members to be sensitive to cultural differences and supportive of inclusivity and justice for all. Training in cultural competencies can strengthen not only individual committee members' own education but also the overall healthy functioning of advisory committees in relation to the City and its citizens. Staff have already begun increasing our training; in 2019, with one-time funding from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion budget, staff were able to initiate specialized training for advisory committees that included Indigenous Awareness modules with workshops on residential school impacts and trans/gender variant inclusion strategies. With a revised budget, staff hope to continue on this path.

The preliminary research identifies Seattle's new online training platform for committees as a possible model for Vancouver to pursue. Approximately three years ago, responding to the inconsistency of the in-person onboarding training offered to committee members, Seattle purchased the licensing to use an online platform to streamline and centralize the onboarding process. Their online platform effectively, offers user-friendly modules to guide trainees through the key information they require for their committee positions. This training is more convenient and available for members and, in the long-term, requires less staff time. Given that under our "new normal" in-person activities may be significantly reduced, online training modules may be an optimal delivery model.

Staff have identified additional funding required for enhanced competency training and the development of streamlined online delivery of training and asks that it be included in the 2021 budget cycle considerations. Please refer to **Appendix C** for an outline of the proposed training budget. If Council approves the implementation of these enhanced training tools during the 2021 budget considerations, an online training platform similar to Seattle's model will be developed and used for future committee orientations, and to deliver enhanced competency training.

Childcare:

We have received feedback on the possibility of childcare during meetings from several sources, including personal conversations and emails from the public, the Women's Advisory Committee, the committee members' survey identified below, and the Procedures By-law Review survey done last year. In conducting research on this issue, City staff surveyed other municipalities for their childcare models, reviewed the City's own past childcare initiatives, and convened a working group (including Risk Management, Social Policy & Projects, Engineering Services and Planning, Design and Sustainability) to solicit high-level feedback on operational requirements, logistics, feasibility, and liability. These resources all informed this section of the report.

According to public feedback and our research, the need for childcare is a common reason many people are unable to attend Council or committee meetings and thus participate in civic processes. Should the City commit to the delivery of childcare services during Council meetings, staff suggest a 6-month pilot project that would include both childcare during Council meetings as well as reimbursement option for parents who pay for caregivers at home during those meetings. A separate 6-month pilot project to reimburse advisory committee members for childcare during their meetings is also suggested. These pilot projects could run concurrently.

In addition to these requested considerations in the 2021 budget, and to support parents' participation in Council processes, this report also acknowledges that the City is increasing its public messaging regarding options that already exist for parents who wish to attend Council meetings. For example, parents can sit with their children on the first floor of City Hall, where they can watch a live stream of the meeting while they await their turn to speak. If they need to leave the room, or if they need to be at home until the relevant portion of the meeting, they can follow the live updates of the meeting on their phone/computer devices. Parents are also always welcome to bring their children into the Council Chamber. Of course, for some, these options may prove challenging and childcare would be preferred, and therefore this report presents possible strategies to meet that need. Once the "new normal" is better understood, these messages will be updated accordingly and could possibly include telephonic options which would eliminate the need for attendance at City Hall and hence the need for childminding at all.

There is some precedent for childcare services within the City. In the past, the City provided childminding during special public engagement events, such as workshops and open houses. Unlike Council meetings, such events are by definition one-time only and therefore the arrangement of childcare had fewer potential complications. Several childcare options were used during such events, including independent contractors, corporate contractors (such as the YMCA) and partnering with the Park Board by hiring staff from community centres. The latter two allowed us to use the corporate structured programs rather than undertake separate processes for insurance, liability, payment etc. The City has also used reimbursement on a limited scale, since Vancouver Public Library approves childminding as an allowable expense claim for Library Board members.

We surveyed other municipalities for childcare models and found only two in British Columbia that currently offer care during meetings: North Vancouver and Victoria. For both cities, childcare during Council meetings is offered free of charge and for up to two hours, with the requirement that the parent/caregiver remains at City Hall the entire time (per the provincial legislative requirements). Reservations are recommended but not required, since drop-in space depends upon the ages of the children in attendance and how many staff are available. North

Vancouver also added a concurrent childcare reimbursement option for parents who wish to keep their child at home with a caregiver while they attend the meeting.

This report suggests, subject to 2021 budget considerations, a 6-month pilot program that is similar to North Vancouver's, in that parents can choose between childcare reimbursement or childcare onsite. **Appendix D** offers a general estimate of childcare costs, a note on categories of childcare, and a brief outline of the how the pilot project can inform a more specific budgetary framework, should childminding be advanced into future considerations.

Staff's suggestion of a pilot project to introduce both onsite childcare for Council meetings and reimbursement would reveal parental preferences for childcare since it will clarify whether reimbursement or onsite care has more uptake. This will provide Council with useful information as they make longer-term decisions on this issue, both for Council meetings and for advisory committees meetings. Community Care Facilities Licensing has already been consulted to inform this report and will be further consulted regarding specific regulations and requirements if the pilot to move forward is approved during budget considerations. The additional pilot project for childcare reimbursement for advisory committee members will provide a clearer sense of the extent to which childcare is a barrier to committee participation.

Staff emphasize these pilot projects will be conditional upon Council's decisions regarding the "new normal" for meetings and the provincial health recommendations in relation to COVID-19. The possibility of regular telephonic options to attend Council meetings may affect the childcare program's uptake and thus inform Council's decision making on this issue.

Financial

This report is informational only and does not include specific recommendations for new or increased funding. Any such requests will be put forward for consideration through the annual budgeting process *with potential funding sourced from new tax revenue* and balanced with other competing *with potential funding sourced from new tax revenue* priorities.

For informational purposes, staff have identified the potential costs associated with the introduction of a reimbursement policy and other possible changes identified in this report. These costs are summarized in the table below.

Table 1: High-Level 2021 Cost Estimate for: Advisory Committees Reimbursement Options and Childminding during Council Meetings and Advisory Committees

Item	Annual Cost	One-time Cost	Notes
Advisory Bodies Reimbursement Policy Options	\$15,330		Reimbursing Advisory committee members for expenses they incur. Appendix B for further detail.
Advisory Bodies Training: Program Development & Delivery, Materials, Online Platform	\$12,000	\$7,500	In-house consultant led specialized cultural competency and sensitivity training. Appendix C for further detail.
Childminding during Advisory Committees (Subsidy Option)	\$12,000		Estimate to be refined post initial 6 month pilot. Appendix D for further detail.
Childminding during Council	\$30,000		Onsite at City Hall. Estimate to be

Meetings –Option #1 Onsite			refined, post initial 6 month pilot. Appendix D for further detail
Onsite Childminding Space Upgrades		\$5,000	Appendix D for further detail
Childminding during Council Meetings – Option #2 Subsidy	\$10,000		Estimate to be refined, post initial 6 month pilot. Appendix D for further detail.
TOTAL	\$79,330	\$12,500	

CONCLUSION

The City’s Corporate Strategic Plan identifies civic engagement as a key priority, and mandates that it be accessible for all citizens of Vancouver, regardless of gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Reducing barriers to participation in Council and committee activities is one path through which we can increase civic engagement. Under this umbrella of civic participation are the threads of this report: committee member reimbursement for expenses they incur by committee participations (an issue Council directed staff to explore), childcare options during City Hall meetings (initially raised in the Women’s Equity Strategy), and enhanced training for committee members. Being mindful of the City’s overall mandates and the objective to reduce barriers to participation, this report has responded to Council’s directive by conducting research into options for expense reimbursement, training needs, and childcare. The 2021 budget presentation will include information regarding the financial impact of all these options at which time Council can formally debate their merits and make decisions alongside other competing projects in the overall budget.

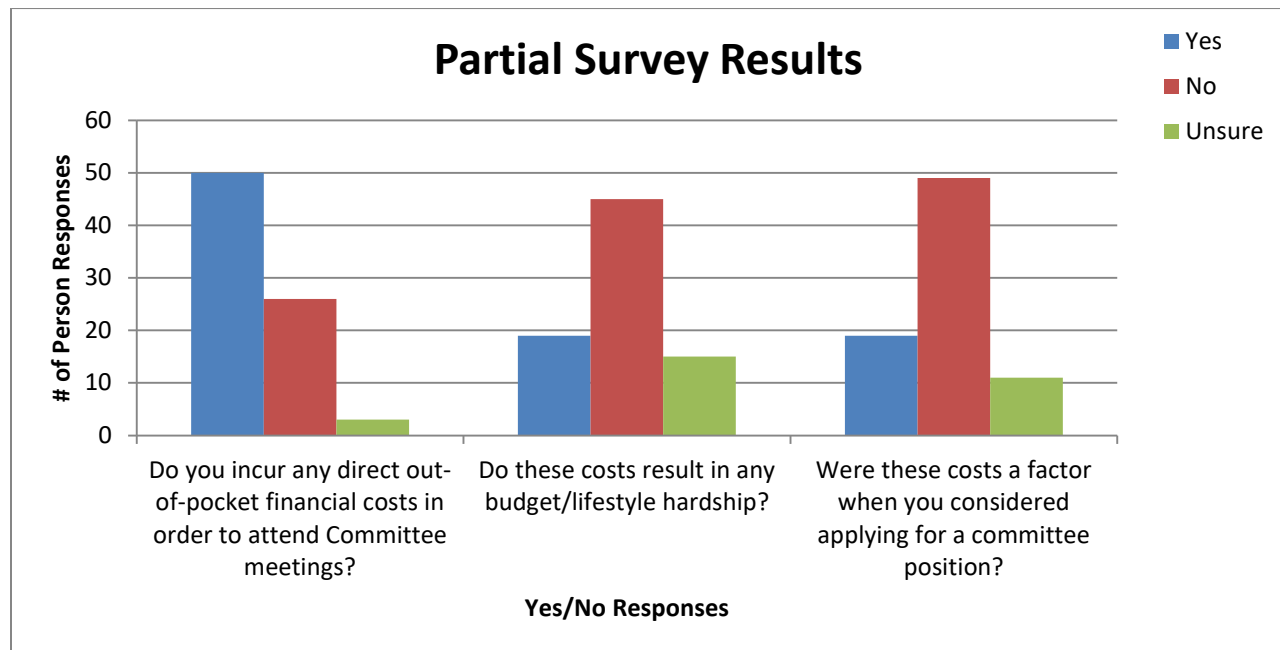
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Appendix A: Advisory Committee Survey Results

The six questions included on this survey were as follows:

1. Do you incur any direct out-of-pocket financial costs in order to attend Committee meetings?
2. If you answered yes, what costs specifically?
3. Would you consider these costs as having a tangible hardship effect on your overall budget and lifestyle?
4. When you first considered applying to serve on a City Committee, were these kinds of costs a factor in your decision?
5. Do you have any suggestions of strategies the City could implement that would support members' engagement and participation in their respective committees?
6. Any additional feedback?

For ease of viewing, we have presented the yes/no responses to Questions 1, 3, and 4 in chart form below ("Partial Survey Results"). As this chart makes clear, the majority of respondents incur costs in order to attend committee meetings, but a minority consider these costs to be a hardship and/or found that those costs were a factor in their decision to apply for a committee seat. Indeed, the numbers are nearly inverted; approximately 75% have incurred costs, but between 65% and 75% reported that they do not experience negative repercussions as a result.



For convenience, below we have summarized the main points raised in the survey's comments¹:

¹ For privacy reasons we have included a succinct summary of survey responses within this report and have refrained from the provision of the actual survey results because it could easily identify certain individuals and hence violate their privacy rights.

- Meetings should be scheduled outside of regular business hours, because scheduling them during the workday results in additional costs (missed work hours) for many
- Providing healthy food and beverages at the meeting would make committee members feel appreciated, raise morale, and incentivize participation for those rushing from work to meetings
- The City should provide (or continue to provide) parking passes, bus passes and other transportation needs
- The City should consider direct financial compensation (honorariums or bursaries) to incentivize committee participation, and in particular to recruit a wider socioeconomic, gender, and racial range of applicants
- The City should establish a clear time commitment from the beginning (time of appointment) in order to allow committee members to prepare adequately

While at first glance these responses might suggest that committee compensation is not of critical importance to committee membership, it is important to consider all members' perspectives and not only the majority. In support of the City's priorities of inclusiveness and accessibility, we highlight the fact that a substantial minority of committee members experience financial and logistical challenges as a result of committee involvement, including childcare or dependent costs, transportation difficulties, and often needing to attend meetings close to the dinner hour without healthy food provided, or no food at all in the case of workshop meetings. In addition, many committee members who did not experience financial hardship themselves expressed concern on behalf of others who might not be so fortunate. One survey respondent expressed it as follows:

I don't think it's a fair expectation for any volunteer to need to incur ANY out-of-pocket costs, regardless if it has a tangible hardship effect. These are the types of barriers that prevent persons with lower incomes, whose voices are typically underrepresented in the public discourse, from participating in key public decisions.

Another respondent made a similar point:

Spending \$18 a month on Handydart to volunteer...can be a big chunk of someone's income if they are living in poverty, which a large number of people with disabilities are. We need the voices of everybody, not just the more privileged people with time & resources to get to meetings. Since the meetings happen at dinner time [...] having food provided at ALL meetings, including the working sessions would also help to include lower income folks.

Many other comments in the survey raised similar points as the two quoted above, emphasizing that providing compensation in some form (parking passes, transit passes, cash reimbursement, meals) will make committee involvement more accessible to a wider range of people, and meeting this City objectives. While some committee members have the scheduling flexibility and financial cushion to mitigate any costs incurred through committee involvement, others do not. The survey responses clearly indicated respondents' belief that the City must ensure committee participation is open to all.

Appendix B: Advisory Committee Reimbursement Policy – Estimate Costs for 2021

Reimbursement:	\$/Item	Acceptance per total members	No. of Meetings	Annual Cost
Bus Fare	\$5	20	15	\$1,500
Handy Dart	\$5	20	15	\$1,500
Parking*	\$6	17	15	\$1,530
Enhanced Food Regular Meetings	\$3	225	6	\$4,050
Food Workshop Sessions (new)	\$5	225	6	\$6,750
TOTAL				\$15,330

**Free at City Hall upper deck (passes provided to committee members for attending meetings)*

Appendix C: Advisory Committee Training Basic and Specialized – Estimate 2021

Item	Cost	Unit Costs	No. of Events	Annual Cost
Specialized Training in Cultural Competency and Sensitivity	\$3,500	Catering \$1000 Contractors \$2000 Materials \$500	3	\$10,500*
Online Platform Maintenance Costs	\$1,500	\$1,500	n/a - online so available 24/7	\$1,500
TOTAL				\$12,000

Item	Cost	Comments	One-Time Cost
Online Platform Training Development	\$7,500	External cost	\$7,500
TOTAL			\$7,500

**Previously funded by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) budget as one-time assistance in 2019. This is no longer available from EDI.*

Appendix D: Childcare Options for Council and Advisory Meetings

Function	Cost	Unit	Annual No. of Meetings	Annual Cost
Childminding* Staff (contracted service)	\$500	Per Meeting (4 staff x 5 hours)	50	\$25,000
Room Maintenance and Cleaning (setup and take down)	\$100	Per Meeting	50	\$5,000
Childcare Subsidy Option –Council	\$200	Per Meeting. \$40 per subsidy (est. 5 claims per meeting)	50	\$10,000
Childcare Subsidy Option - Advisory Committees	\$800	Per Meeting. \$40 per subsidy (est. 20 claims per meeting)	15	\$12,000
TOTAL				\$52,000

Item	Cost	Comments	One-Time Cost
Space Upgrades	\$5,000	To accommodate to Provincial regulations	\$5,000
TOTAL			\$5,000

***Note on Childminding (Less than two hours of care) vs Occasional Care**

- Staff recommend that the Childminding model be adopted for the pilot project.
- Under the Child Care Licensing Regulation, Childminding is exempt from requiring a license. Childminding is:
 - A program for children that is operated for 2 hours or less each day (per group of children)
 - Directly operated and funded by a municipality
 - Open to children of any age
- Within a Childminding program, both parents and children must remain on-site (in this case, at City Hall).
- The category of “Occasional Care” (vs Childminding) provides for up to 8 hours of childcare. However, given that parents often do not have to attend an entire meeting in order to participate, and given the more challenging policy and legal requirements for Occasional Care, staff have outlined the Childminding option for the pilot project.
- Occasional Care requires licensing and mandates that children are at least 18 months old, versus Childminding which requires no license and allows care for children of any age.
- Both North Vancouver and Victoria’s childcare programs are categorized as Childminding and not Occasional Care.

The table above offers a general cost estimate of childcare options to facilitate a pilot project. Once the City gleans more concrete data from applying the pilot, this will inform a report and

recommendation for future, including a solid budgetary framework. It is anticipated that these will include:

- Whether childcare will be provided just for public Council meetings, or for advisory committees meetings as well. In the latter case, the hours will greatly increase, as will the logistical details to be considered. **Staff have therefore suggests that only Council meetings be considered during this initial childcare pilot, with advisory Committee meetings to be considered in future. However, staff also suggest a concurrent 6-month pilot project to reimburse advisory Committee members for childcare costs incurred due to meetings. This has precedent within the CoV (the Arts, Culture and Community Department reimburses Library Board members for childcare).**
- Whether to include childcare onsite or a subsidy/reimbursement or both options. **Staff have suggested that both be used during the 6 month pilot project in order to inform Council's long-term decision on this issue.**
- Whether an external contractor or staff already associated with the City would provide such services. Two potential external contractors, the YMCA and the Developmental Disabilities Association, have provided preliminary comment on this possibility. They have indicated that limited childcare staff are available and there are regulations restricting their working conditions. Therefore the preliminary research suggests that hiring through an external contractor may present complications. If approval to proceed is granted during budget considerations, staff will explore the best option for the pilot and include the possibility of Community Center staff.