

NO: R239

COUNCIL DATE: November 15, 2010

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **November 15, 2010**  
FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development** FILE: **3760-01**  
SUBJECT: **Foundations for Single Family Residential Buildings**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council receive this report as information.

## PURPOSE

At its Regular meeting on July 12, 2010, Council adopted the following resolution (RES.R10-1346):

*"That Council refer to staff the consideration of amendments to the Building By-law, introducing the requirement for a legal survey of the completed foundation of a single family residential building as a condition that must be satisfied prior to construction proceeding above the foundation".*

This report responds to this referral from Council.

## BACKGROUND

Currently, as part of the City's building inspection process, builders are required to submit a forms survey to the City prior to pouring concrete in the forms for a building foundation. The forms survey must be completed by a registered BC Land Surveyor and be submitted to the City Building Inspector at the time of the foundation forms inspection. This is a requirement for all buildings in the City. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that the foundation forms are set such that the concrete foundation will be at the correct elevation and setbacks as shown on the approved building permit plans.

This procedure is standard across the lower mainland and works very well. In a very few instances over the years the foundation for a single family dwelling has been constructed in the wrong location even though the forms survey that was submitted to the City illustrated the forms as being sited correctly. Based on a review of City records, over the course of the past 10 years, there have been fewer than 5 such instances in Surrey. In these cases, either the surveyor made an error on the forms survey or the builder moved the forms after the forms survey had been completed. Typically, by the time such errors are discovered, the framing is completed. Considering that the City issues between 1,000 and 2,000 building permits each year for the construction of single family dwellings, the incidence of problems associated with the incorrect placement of foundations is considered to be very minimal.

It is recognized that although problems related to a foundation being constructed at a wrong location are rare, when such issues have arisen, the cost to rectify the problem can be substantial. These costs fall to the lot owner who can typically take recourse against the builder and/or surveyor in relation to the costs of correcting the problem. Some builders and most surveyors would carry errors and omissions insurance to address these types of circumstances.

## **DISCUSSION**

If a survey of the completed single family residential foundation was required prior to framing, it would not eliminate the possibility of a foundation being poured in the wrong location; however, it would bring such an error to light earlier in the construction process, which would reduce the potential costs of the remedy. Staff has determined that if a foundation survey was required after the concrete is poured, such a survey would cost approximately \$350 to complete for an average single family dwelling, not including the cost of the delays to the construction process, which such a survey would cause and the related administration costs to the City in receiving, reviewing and filing the survey information. Such a process would add costs to the construction of each single family dwelling in the City and, hence, would add to the price of such housing, which is already considered to be unaffordable to many households.

## **CONCLUSION**

The experience of the City with respect to the incorrect siting of foundations shows that this is a very infrequent occurrence. In view of the costs that would be incurred if the City were to require a survey of the completed foundation for each single family dwelling prior to framing and the benefits that would be derived from such a requirement, the imposition of such a new requirement is not considered to be justified.

*Original signed by*  
Jean Lamontagne  
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JKM/vll/saw