

NO: **R162**

COUNCIL DATE: **July 23, 2012**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **July 17, 2012**

FROM: **City Clerk**

FILE: **o480-01M**

SUBJECT: **Community Consultation Project – Town Hall Meetings**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information about Town Hall meetings that were held as part of the City's ongoing community consultation efforts and about other actions that the City is taking to remain engaged with the City's communities.

BACKGROUND

In early 2010 the Community Consultation Project was initiated to engage with the City's residents in building stronger communities within the City. To ensure meaningful and equitable consultation, the Community Consultation Project was based on principles and protocols that were developed between the City and a group of representatives from the City's community associations. Based on the discussions and collective work of the group, a Consultation Principles Document was developed.

At the October 13, 2011 Regular Council Public Hearing, Council endorsed the Consultation Principles Document as guide for communications by the City with community groups and the community-at-large. The endorsement of the Principles Document was to form the basis for on-going dialogue with the community. As part of the commitment to communicate and seek input from community groups and the community-at-large, six Town Hall meetings were held over a period of four weeks; one in each of the City's six distinct Town Centres.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the Town Hall meetings was to encourage and facilitate dialogue with the residents and community groups with a view to understanding resident concerns and ideas for building stronger communities. The structure of each of the six Town Hall meetings was an "open microphone" session with no set agenda. This process was focused on ensuring that residents had an opportunity to direct the agenda of the meeting and speak about/ask about any topic. Residents/community groups had a chance to voice concerns, provide feedback, offer ideas and/or ask questions.

At each of the six Town Hall meetings, representatives from City Council, each of the City Manager's Office, the Planning & Development Department, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, the RCMP and the Engineering Department were in attendance to hear the dialogue and answer questions when required. Town Hall meetings were held as follows:

- Cloverdale Town Hall, April 11th, 2012 at Cloverdale Recreation Centre;
- Newton Town Hall, April 12th at Newton Seniors' Centre;
- South Surrey Town Hall, April 16th at Elgin Hall;
- Guildford Town Hall, April 18th at RCMP District 2 Office;
- North Surrey Town Hall, April 30th at City Centre Library; and
- Fleetwood Town Hall, May 1st at Surrey Sport and Leisure Complex.

A total of approximately 250 residents attended the meetings. Notes were taken of all comments that were made at the meetings with these being posted on the City's website and emailed to all meeting attendees who provided follow-up contact information. Whenever possible staff followed-up with meeting attendees who requested a direct response to a specific question that was raised at but which could not be immediately answered at the Town Hall meeting.

A survey questionnaire was distributed to those in attendance at each meeting and was also emailed to each meeting attendee who provided contact information. The questionnaire was focused on what the City could do to improve future Town Hall meetings. The common response was to hold further such meetings on a regular basis. In response to a question about the usefulness of such meetings/forums, attendees generally responded positively, stating that the meeting was of great benefit as a means to dialogue with Council and other citizens regarding common concerns. In relation to topics for discussion at future Town Hall meetings respondents advised that discussion topics should focus on crime prevention, transportation, schools, support from other levels of government and the associated responsibility/authorities, by-law enforcement, environmental issues, agricultural land protection, recreation and the role of arts/culture.

Next Steps:

Online Chat Session: "Talk Surrey with the Mayor"

A virtual/online session called "Talk Surrey with Mayor Watts" will be held on July 25, 2012 to allow citizens to discuss community issues with the Mayor. Members of the community will be able to submit questions and comments to the Mayor by way of Twitter, Facebook and email. Following this online chat session, written notes and streamed video of the session will be posted on the City's website.

Community Summit:

A sub-committee of the Community Consultation Group is working with City staff to plan a "Community Summit" that will be held in April of 2013. The Community Summit will provide an opportunity for:

- The City to share information on current initiatives, strategies and processes that are being undertaken in the City to ensure the continued vibrancy of the City and to assist in addressing the concerns and opportunities that were raised through the Town Hall meetings; and
- Residents to learn how they can participate in civic processes and assist in building strong and vibrant communities within the City.

The Summit's objectives include:

- Encouraging dialogue and connections between the City and its residents;
- Engaging the community in the civic process;
- Strengthening the capacity of neighbourhood associations; and
- Advancing work based on the guiding principles for community consultation.

A webpage will be launched on the City of Surrey website by the end of July, 2012 which will be populated over time with more detailed information on the Community Summit and will encourage community input related to planning the Summit.

Five Year Financial Plan Development

The City is commencing the process of developing the 2013-2017 Five Year Financial Plan and will give due consideration to the concerns and opportunities that were raised through the Town Hall meetings in the preparation of that Plan. The proposed Five Year Plan will be forwarded to the Finance Committee later in the year of consideration.

CONCLUSION

As part of the Community Consultation Project, a Town Hall meeting was held in each of the City's six unique Town Centres. The meetings were well attended, generated valuable discussion and identified the community ideas and concerns specific to each area. Further opportunities for dialogue with the community are being planned as is follow up on the ideas and concerns that have been raised to date.

Jane Sullivan
City Clerk