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Review of Planning Department Public Engagement Procedures

**Paul Pagnuelo
Director**

Submission to
Town of Cobourg
Regular Council Meeting

April 30, 2018

Mayor Brocanier, Deputy Mayor Henderson and Councillors.

I'm Paul Pagnuelo, a Director of the Cobourg Taxpayers Association.

I'd like to thank Councillor Burchat for bringing forward a motion for a review of public engagement procedures in the Planning Department.

As was highlighted by the scheduling of the Public Meeting for the New Amherst school proposal on Day 119 of the 120-day process deadline, this review is certainly needed. However, if this review is going to be a tool for constructive reform then important details need to be included in the motion.

First, the review needs to be time-bound. A timeline of six months for a review of public notification, meeting and public engagement procedures pertaining to applications submitted under the Planning Act seems reasonable. Therefore, the motion should stipulate that a report come back to Council within that timeframe.

Second, it is imperative that the public have an active role in this review. The Town's Public Engagement policy calls for citizens to "identify concerns and issues early in the process" and to "provide input and feedback with project guidelines". Please consider adding a line to the motion that explicitly requires public input in the review.

Third, the motion calls on Planning Department staff to review their own procedures. We're concerned about the internal nature of this review, and how fruitful it will be if it is directed solely by staff – especially when the Director of Planning has strongly argued that the Town of Cobourg's Public Engagement Policy does not apply to his department.

The process would benefit from a more independent review.

We would recommend that a one-time Ad Hoc Committee be established to coordinate the review. Just as the Ad Hoc Remuneration Committee was created with a time-bound mandate to review Council's salary – likewise, Council could create an Ad Hoc Public Engagement Committee to review Planning Department procedures.

The Committee could be made up predominately of members of the public with members of the Planning and other Town departments made available to the committee as resources.

To reiterate, we are asking Council to establish a review that is independent, time-bound, and inclusive of the public. We ask that Council consider the establishment of a temporary Ad Hoc Committee to direct the review proposed by Councillor Burchat and that the public be invited to review and comment on the draft report with the objective of obtaining Council approval prior to January 1, 2019.

Thank you for listening. We have drafted proposed amendments to the motion, which is enclosed in the written version of our delegation, for consideration.

MOTION

WHEREAS the Committee of the Whole considered a Notice of Motion, submitted by Councillor Burchat, Coordinator of Planning and Development, regarding the Town of Cobourg's public notification, meeting and engagement procedures pertaining to applications submitted under the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P. 13, as amended.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct planning staff *to establish a one-time Ad Hoc Committee comprised predominately of members of the public with members of the Planning and other Town departments to be available to the committee as resources* to review the Town of Cobourg's public notification, meeting and engagement procedures pertaining to applications submitted under the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P. 13, as amended, and *to submit by October 31, 2018 a draft report for public review and comment with the objective of obtaining Council approval prior to January 1, 2019.*