

Mayor and Councillors

Schedule 82 to the Minutes of
the Public Hearing meeting of
Richmond City Council held on
Tuesday, September 8, 2015.

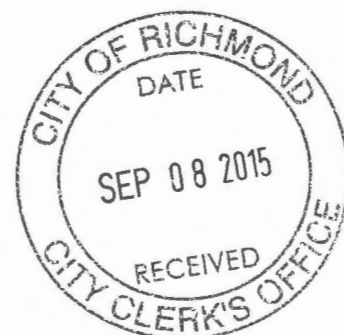
From: Jim Wright <jamesw8300@shaw.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, 8 September 2015 01:42
To: Mayor and Councillors
Subject: For Bylaw 9280 Public Hearing
Attachments: JWright-re-2015-09-07_9280.pdf

Categories: 12-8060-20-9280

To Public Hearing	
Date:	SEPT. 8 2015
Item #	6
Re:	BYLAW 9280 + 9281

Please see my attached contribution to the public hearing.

Jim Wright
778-320-1936



To: Bill 9280 Public Hearing of September 8, 2015
From: Jim Wright, 8300 Osgoode Drive, Richmond
Date: 2015-09-08

There is both progress and need for improvement in the pair of new-house bylaws for public consideration. The main progress is the new-house height limit, a real 9.0 metres. Other improvements include better control of dropped ceilings and excessive garage roofs.

There are two extremely important ways to improve:

- Double-count the floor area of rooms with ceilings above **3.7 metres**.
- Apply the 9.0 metre limit to **all** new houses (including 2.5-storey ones).

By listening at council meetings that discussed the new-house bylaws, I've come to realize that the **3.7 metre ceiling height** threshold for double counting—as in Vancouver, Surrey and Burnaby—is a key way to control house bulk that conflicts with neighbourhoods. The extra-height exemptions that Richmond would still allow make it very fair.

Making *exceptions* to the **9.0 metre house-height limit** threatens the quality of life of my family and our neighbourhood. I will therefore focus on ways to resolve that problem.

First, we know the problem has no reason to exist. Kathryn McCreary, P.Eng., explained that to planning committee on June 16, 2015. Her [speaking notes](#) (from the minutes) are clear:

2.5 storey houses have been permitted for the better part of the last century in most municipalities, and no other municipality differentiates between the height of a 2 and 2.5 storey house. . . . Also, the FAR for a potential 2 or 2.5 storey house for a given lot is identical, so why should their building heights and consequently envelopes differ?

The builder of a true 2.5-storey house creates compact living space—within the height of a 2-storey house—where there might have been an attic void. It tends to be affordable and eco-friendly, requiring less building material, upkeep and heating.

By nature a true 2.5-storey house suits medium-height ceilings. Limiting the ceiling height in order to enable a partial third floor is the normal tradeoff. Increasing the house height to enable high ceilings and a partial third floor as well creates a different concept (under an old name) that invites 10.5 metre houses bulking up in every way to loom above neighbours, with maximum height and volume from the permitted floor area. It enables conspicuous waste, a status symbol. Sooner or later the new loophole would become popular—at the cost of a lot of harm.

I've given plenty of thought to the effect if a 10.5-metre-high house replaces the 2.5-storey house next door, as shown. It would devastate our quality of life. Any new house there will be large but should fit into the neighbourhood, as intended in the Richmond Community Plan. (White chevron = 9 m height; red = 10.5 m.)



At a council meeting, it was said that changing the new bylaw wording to apply the 9-metre height limit to all new houses would be complicated. I think you will find it is a simple matter of deleting complications, as shown on the next page. That leads to two evident options. I like one better, but either is good. Please improve the bylaw for my family and my neighbourhood, which happens to be particularly affected, and for the future of Richmond.

Refining Bylaw 9280 so the height limit for ALL new houses is a real 9 metres

The aim is to refine the new Bylaw 9280 (or 9279) so that the maximum building height of 9.0 metres applies to **ALL** new houses. A good effect of being consistent is that it retains the option of real 2.5-storey houses while eliminating problem ones. (The bylaw uses the name of the long-established concept of 2.5-storey houses but alters the essence.)

The definition below is an image that was copied and pasted from the first page of Bylaw 9280:

Height, building	means the vertical distance between finished site grade and: a) for single detached housing with 2 and half (½) storeys, having a roof pitch greater than 4-to-12 and not exceeding a roof pitch of 12-to-12, the mid-point between the bottom of the eave line and ridge of a roof, provided that the ridge of the roof may not be more than 1.5 m above the mid-point; and b) for all other buildings , the highest point of the building , whether such building has a flat roof, pitched roof or more than one type of roof."
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That Bylaw 9280 definition of "Height, building" includes many words that not only complicate the definition but also alter the long-established **2.5-storey** concept for the worse.

In the following illustration, **red type** denotes complicating words that I suggest deleting.

Height, building	means the vertical distance between finished site grade and : a) for single detached housing with 2 and half (1/2) storeys, having a pitch roof greater than 4-to-12 and not exceeding a roof pitch of 12-12, the mid-point between the bottom of the eave line and ridge of a roof, provided that the roof may not be more than 1.5 m above the mid-point; and b) the highest point of the building , whether such building has a flat roof, pitched roof or more than one type of roof.
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Along with the **red type** to denote all suggested deletions:

- The **yellow highlighting** denotes what *most* needs deleting because it is so *harmful*.
- The ~~striketrough~~ in the last part denotes complicating words that may not be particularly harmful. In normal editing for plain English, they would be deleted, but the deletion is not essential.

The suggested deletions result in two options that resolve the problems:

- A. Height, building** means the vertical distance between **finished site grade** and the highest point of the **building**, whether such **building** has a flat roof, pitched roof or more than one type of roof.
- B. Height, building** means the vertical distance between **finished site grade** and the highest point of the **building**.

In theory the change could complicate the main zoning bylaw in some way, but there seems to be no need for cleanup, which staff could handle well anyway.

Adapting Bylaw 9280 with 9.0 metre height limit for ALL new buildings

Height, building means the vertical distance between finished site grade and :

- a) for single detached housing with 2 and half (1/2) storeys, having a pitch roof greater than 4-to-12 and not exceeding a roof pitch of 12-12, the mid-point between the bottom of the eave line and ridge of a roof, provided that the roof may not be more than 1.5 m above the mid-point; and
- b) the highest point of the building, ~~whether such building has a flat roof, pitched roof or more than one type of roof.~~

Along with the **red type** to denote all suggested deletions:

- The **yellow highlighting** denotes what is *harmful*.
- The ~~strikethrough~~ denotes **superfluous** words.

Two options appear from the suggested deletions:

- A. Height, building** means the vertical distance between finished site grade and the highest point of the building, whether such building has a flat roof, pitched roof or more than one type of roof.
- B. Height, building** means the vertical distance between finished site grade and the highest point of the building.