

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, April 17th, 2000

Place: Council Chambers
Richmond City Hall

Present: Mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt, Chair
Councillor Linda Barnes
Councillor Malcolm Brodie
Councillor Derek Dang
Councillor Lyn Greenhill
Councillor Kiichi Kumagai
Councillor Ken Johnston
Councillor Bill McNulty
Councillor Harold Steves

Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

1. It was MOVED and SECONDED
That the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Monday, April 3^d, 2000, be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES DIVISION

2. **RICHMOND BUSINESS TASK FORCE REPORT**
(Report: Apr. 13/00, File No.: 4150-01) (REDMS No. 148111)

Mike Boehm, Chair, accompanied by Lorraine Palmer, Vice Chair, Richmond Business Task Force, introduced members of the Task Force who were present this afternoon. He then provided information on the background and process used to prepare the Task Force report, and with Ms. Palmer, reviewed each of the recommendations put forward by the Task Force.

Discussion then ensued among Committee members and the delegation on the content and recommendations contained in the Task Force Report, and in response to questions, the following comments were made:

- with respect to agricultural land - the Task Force was of the view that the control which the Agricultural Land Commission had over agricultural land in Richmond should be reviewed and changes made to the Provincial regulations, because Richmond had a better understanding of what should be happening with its land;
- the Task Force was not asking that all agricultural property be removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve, however, there were pieces of 'unusable' agricultural land which could be used for industrial developments;
- with respect to a statement made in the report about there being unusable agricultural land, it was noted that there were agricultural areas which were not being used for farming; an additional comment was made that 'usable' was dependent on the intended use for a particular piece of land and on whether this use was economical; certain types of farming, such as cranberry and blueberry farms, did very well, while other types did not;
- with regard to whether the Task Force had been given sufficient time to complete its review, the comment was made that because of the complexity of the issues being examined, the study could have taken much longer to complete if time and finances had been available;
- with reference to the recommendations on the 'cost of doing business', and to the lack of recommendations on how to combat crime as it related to business, advice was given that with the time frame faced by the Task Force, this matter was too specific an issue to deal with; the intention of the Task Force was to make general statements in response to the information received from the survey;
- the intention of the words 'support and encourage' as they related to the development and construction of a trade and exhibition centre was to ensure that the City continued to offer its support for this venture; this was intended to be an 'awareness' recommendation;
- with regard to the statement that "Council support development of new industrial lands", advice was given that this statement was not connected to the Task Force's suggestions for properties in the Agricultural Land Reserve, and that the Task Force was stating that small sized industrial lands should be amalgamated to accommodate larger businesses; the Task Force was of the view that existing industrial sites should be reviewed and converted to the best possible use for those sites; and
- with regard to reasons why people and businesses were leaving Richmond for other areas, advice was given that there were a number of reasons, including (i) the impact of big businesses on smaller businesses, (ii) the desire to relocate further east to the Fraser Valley, and (iii) transportation issues; the opinion was expressed that much could be done to attract more businesses to Richmond; discussion also took place on incentives which were being offered by other Lower Mainland municipalities to attract businesses to their areas.

The suggestion was made during the discussion that if the Task Force continued, that it should examine the capital tax which the Provincial Government charged businesses, as well as the mill rates which have been established.

Discussion also took place on the problems which businesses faced which were beyond the scope of the City, and the comment was made that the City had been working hard to address many of the concerns which had been highlighted in the report. It was noted during the discussion that part of the problem were the regulations imposed by the Provincial Government, and it was agreed that this area should be reviewed.

Also addressed during the discussion was the review currently being undertaken by the City on the viability of agricultural land, and the impact which this property had on the City.

In closing, the belief was expressed by the delegation that there were many things which could be done to encourage not only the development of new businesses in, but also existing businesses to relocate to, Richmond.

The delegation was then thanked for their presentation.

It was moved and seconded

That staff be directed to review the recommendations contained in the Richmond Business Task Force Report (attached to the report dated April 13th, 2000, from the Manager, Business Liaison & Development), and report back to the General Purposes Committee.

Prior to the question being called, discussion ensued among Committee members on the statements made in the report about the viability of agricultural land, and whether this land should be used for industrial development. The suggestion was made that the report to the Committee should include a review of the highest and best possible uses for agricultural land, rather than the more traditional uses which might not be as viable.

Reference was made to Recommendation No. 4, and the suggestion was made that any action should be delayed until the City's agricultural review had been completed. Reference was also made to Recommendation No. 8, and concern was expressed that any action could give the wrong impression to Richmond taxpayers. The suggestion was made that staff should be instructed to find ways to reduce corporate taxes.

Staff were also cautioned by the Chair to be very careful to ensure that a draft staff position on each recommendation was presented to the Committee for a full discussion. The Chief Administrative Officer George Duncan confirmed that staff would analyze each of the recommendations and provide a further report on the recommendations.

The request was also made that positive solutions be put forward for each of the recommendations, and that the Committee be provided with the 'working notes' as well as the final draft. The suggestion was also made that staff be given a reasonable amount of time to prepare the report.

The question on the motion was then called, and it was **CARRIED**.

3. **5 YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN FOR 2000 TO 2004 AND ANNUAL PROPERTY TAX RATES**

(Report: Apr. 12/00, File No.: 8060-20-7128/7129) (REDMS No. 148006, 148089, 148218)

The Director of Finance, Danley Yip, reviewed the report with Committee members.

In response to questions, information was provided on such issues as:

- the adjustments which were made to the fiscal balances;
- the request of the Gateway Theatre for an additional \$50,000 to address salary increases associated with an organizational restructuring and to fund a software maintenance contract, and whether a business plan would be submitted; confirmation was given that the Gateway would not receive any funds until their business plan had been submitted to the City for approval;
- the shortfall in property tax revenue; whether any action was taken by staff to address the shortfall and whether this would result in an operating deficit;
- the identification of the Terra Nova Referendum debt repayment amount on the annual property tax notice, and why the 2000 notice would be the final year for displaying this amount in the notice;
- whether funds were available for emergency repairs, etc., which might arise, which were not contained within the proposed budget;
- the type of reserve and trust accounts which the City maintained; and
- the process followed to prepare this year's budget and the 5 year plan.

It was moved and seconded

That each of the following bylaws be introduced and given first, second and third readings:

(1) 2000 to 2004 - 5 Year Financial Plan Bylaw No. 7128; and

(2) Annual Property Tax Rates Bylaw No. 7129.

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

It was MOVED and SECONDED

That the meeting adjourn (5:25 p.m.).

CARRIED

Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee of the Council of the City of Richmond held on Monday, April 17th, 2000.

Mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt
Chair

Fran J. Ashton
Executive Assistant