City of Richmond

Minutes

General Purposes Committee

Date: Monday, September 20th, 2004

Place: Anderson Room
Richmond City Hall

Present: Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie, Chair
Councillor Linda Barnes
Councillor Derek Dang
Councillor Evelina Halsey-Brandt
Councillor Sue Halsey-Brandt
Councillor Rob Howard
Councillor Kiichi Kumagai
Councillor Bill McNulty
Councillor Harold Steves

Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m., and advised that the matter of a Council representative to the Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee, would be added to the agenda as an additional item.

MINUTES

1. It was moved and seconded
That the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday, September 7th, 2004, be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

2. **RICHMOND STREETCAR FEASIBILITY STUDY**
(Report: Sept. 14/04, File No.: 6520-02-01) (REDMS No. 1335614)

Mr. Bob Ransford, accompanied by Mr. Ron Schuss, representing the Richmond Heritage Railroad Society, and Mr. Terry Kearns, of URS, addressed Committee on the proposal to incorporate a streetcar system into the RAV project. A copy of Mr. Ransford's submission is attached as Schedule A and forms part of these minutes.

Mr. Kearns then gave a PowerPoint presentation to further explain the "Richmond Streetcar Feasibility Study". A copy of this presentation is on file in the City Clerk's Office.

Chief Administrative Officer George Duncan spoke to the proposal, indicating that while staff had been supportive of the concept and felt that it was worthy of further review, he was concerned about (i) asking RAVCO for a change to the RAV project at this late date which he felt could jeopardize the entire proposal, and (ii) RAVCO's reaction to the request.

Discussion ensued among Committee members and Mr. Duncan on the impact of submitting the proposal to RAV with the request that the two bidding companies review the proposal as part of the BAFO process at this late stage in the process, when the deadline for the submission of the bids was September 27th, 2004.

Also discussed was the cost of the RAV line as compared to the cost of implementing a streetcar system, and the difference in technologies between the Richmond and Vancouver systems. A suggestion was made during the discussion, that a letter be sent to TransLink and the Greater Vancouver Transit Authority (GVTA) asking that the streetcar concept be considered in the event that the two bids were higher in cost than the approved budget.

Mr. Duncan then left the meeting, and the delegation returned to the table.

A lengthy discussion then ensued among Committee members and delegation on:

- how the streetcar concept would compare to the RAV project
- transfer penalties which would result because of the different modes of transportation which could be available
- the cost of purchasing streetcars, and the cost of the streetcar system as it compared to the RAV proposal
- the feasibility of reviving a streetcar system in Richmond
- the pedestrian friendliness and accessibility features of the proposed streetcar system
- the request of the Richmond Heritage Railroad Society that the City convince RAVCO to adopt the proposed streetcar concept
- the feasibility of requesting TransLink and RAVCO to consider the proposal in the event that alternative options were required
- whether the BAFO process could be legally changed to review the streetcar proposal
- the impact of mixing streetcars with motor vehicle traffic
- the construction process required for a streetcar system as compared to the invasiveness of the construction process for the RAV proposal
- ridership figures and the need for a ridership analysis

- the differences between the light rail transit system proposed by RAV and the streetcar concept
- the impact of the vibrations resulting from the streetcars running along the roadway on older buildings
- whether the travel time for streetcars would be slower or faster as compared to the RAV proposal.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair thanked the delegation for their presentation.

Mr. Dana Westermark came forward and spoke further on the proposal. He indicated that Steveston residents and business owners were very excited about the streetcar proposal as it would provide an opportunity to achieve transit to Steveston. He suggested that the streetcar system should link Steveston with the Richmond Centre, Lansdowne and Aberdeen Shopping Centres.

In response to questions, Mr. Westermark advised that implementation of a streetcar system Granville Avenue only rather than to Steveston would still be an improvement over the RAV proposal, as it would be much more affordable to expand the streetcar system to Steveston in the future. As well a streetcar system would encourage more pedestrian traffic along No. 3 Road because of their ability to 'hop on and off'. Mr. Westermark stated that pedestrians would not do this with a bus or a rapid transit system.

The Chair thanked Mr. Westermark for his comments and Mr. Westermark then left the table.

The Acting Director, Transportation, Victor Wei, advised that he had nothing further to add to the report.

Councillor Steves circulated photographs which had been taken of the Tacoma, Washington streetcar system, and he referred to the photographs to comment on the proposal as it related to the Richmond system. A copy of the photographs is on file in the City Clerk's Office.

Discussion continued among Committee members and staff on:

- the likelihood, if any, of changing the RAV proposal for light rapid transit between Richmond, Vancouver and the Airport to a streetcar system which could connect Steveston with Richmond Centre, and the impact which such a request could have on the original project
- whether a streetcar system would be able to meet capacity requirements during morning and afternoon rush hours, and whether it would be possible to increase the number of cars to deal with the additional passenger requirements

- the fact that Richmond City Council was on record as being in favour of an 'at-grade' system, and the feasibility of presenting the streetcar proposal as an alternative in the event that the two bids submitted were outside the approved budget
- the need to ensure that any funds saved in the event that a streetcar system was chosen over the light rapid transit system were spent in Richmond
- the differences between a streetcar system and a light rapid transit system with respect to passenger capacity, the size of the cars and tracks, potential noise and vibration
- ridership for both the RAV project and the streetcar concept.

As a result of the discussion, the following motion was introduced:

It was moved and seconded
WHEREAS Richmond City Council has been advised by members of the Richmond Heritage Railroad Society that the two proponents of the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Project are prepared to consider the Streetcar Feasibility Study.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

(1) That the Streetcar Feasibility Study be forwarded to TransLink and RAVCO and that they be requested to ask the two proponents to consider the Study in the context of the BAFO process, but only:

(a) if there was no time delay involved;

(b) if it is possible to legally consider the streetcar proposal;

(c) if the streetcar route extends from the Bridgepoint station to Steveston, if that option was possible; and

(d) if any cost savings identified as a result of the implementation of the streetcar proposal are expended in Richmond; and

(2) That TransLink and RAVCO be requested to examine the ridership issue in the context of the Streetcar Feasibility Study.

The question on the motion was not called, as the following **amendment** was introduced:

It was moved and seconded
That Part (1)(c) of the main motion be amended by deleting the words "to Steveston, if that option was possible", and by substituting the following, "to at least Richmond Centre, and preferably to Steveston".

CARRIED

OPPOSED: Mayor Brodie
Cllr. Dang
Howard

The question on the main motion, as amended, was not called, as discussion continued on the impact of submitting the new proposal at such a late stage in the process. Concern was expressed that the submission of the streetcar proposal could jeopardize the original project, and the suggestion was made that the proposal should only be considered if it was determined that the RAV project could not be constructed within the approved budget.

As a result of the discussion, a further **amendment** was introduced:

It was moved and seconded
That Part (1)(a) of the main motion be amended by deleting the words "if there was no time delay involved", and by substituting the following, "if cost savings are required".

CARRIED

OPPOSED: Cllr. Sue Halsey-Brandt
Howard
McNulty
Steves

The question on the main motion, as amended was then called, and it was **CARRIED** with Cllrs. Howard and McNulty opposed.

(Cllr. Howard left the meeting – 6:07 p.m.

FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES DIVISION

3. **AMENDMENT TO COUNCIL POLICY 3561**
(Report: Sept. 13/04, File No.: 03-0925-00) (REDMS No. 1332960, 1333208)

It was moved and seconded
That Policy 3561 regarding Property Tax Exemptions be amended to:

(1) reflect the new legislative references in the Community Charter; and

(2) include the appropriate language from the repealed sections of the Local Government Act in order to continue to provide tax exemptions for non-profit organizations that lease municipally owned property.

The question on the motion was not called, as a brief discussion ensued on the feasibility of permitting privately owned properties owned by non-profit organizations, to be tax exempt.

(Cllr. Howard returned to the meeting – 6:10 p.m.)

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

4. **2005 PERMISSIVE EXEMPTION – BYLAW 7803**
(Report: Sept. 9/04, File No.: 12-8060-20-7803) (REDMS No. 1332172, 1329038, 1328566, 1328717)

The Director of Finance, Andrew Nazareth, advised that he nothing further to add.

Reference was made by the Chair to correspondence received from Mr. Bill Alexander, Trustee, Richmond Rod & Gun Club, which requested that the organization be granted a property tax exemption under the *Community Charter*. Mr. Albert Wood, President, accompanied by Mr. Bill Alexander and Mr. Paul Alexander, then came forward to speak further to the request.

Circulated to the Committee were copies of an artist's rendering of the proposed facility to be constructed by the Rod & Gun Club on its new property at 1020 Eburne Place on Mitchell Island. Mr. Wood spoke at length on the history of the club and provided information on their new sports complex.

Discussion then ensued among Committee members, the delegation and staff on the Club's request for an exemption of property taxes, and the precedent which would be set if the request was approved. During the discussion, Mr. Wood questioned whether the City would consider the possibility of the Rod & Gun Club donating its property to the City.

(Cllr. Dang left the meeting at 6:21 p.m., during the above discussion.)

As a result of the discussion, the following **referral** motion was introduced:

It was moved and seconded
That the request from the Richmond Rod & Gun Club for a property tax exemption on their property at 1020 Eburne Place on Mitchell Island be referred to staff for further investigation, including the feasibility of (i) the Rod & Gun Club donating the property to the City, or (ii) entering into a long term lease.

CARRIED

It was moved and seconded
That Property Tax Exemption Bylaw No. 7803 be introduced and given first, second and third readings.

CARRIED

5. **COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON THE LOWER MAINLAND TREATY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Steves circulated to the Committee, a copy of his letter of resignation, effective immediately, as the City's representative on the Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee.

(Cllr. Dang re-entered the meeting – 6:28 p.m.)

A brief discussion ensued, during which the Chair noted that Councillor Barnes had been appointed as the alternate to Councillor Steves and would now assume his responsibilities.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded
That the meeting adjourn (6:29 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, September 20th, 2004.

Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie
Chair

Fran J. Ashton
Executive Assistant, City Clerk's Office

We are here today presenting to you a study prepared by well-qualified transit planning and engineering professionals that proves the viability of a local-trip-friendly transit system as part of the RAV project—a logical substitute for the intermediate capacity RAV line planned for Number 3 Road—that line which is purely a feeder line in Richmond for a regional commuter system.

We believe our study demonstrates that a split-system configuration for the RAV project, with a local streetcar line in Richmond, will meet the established performance standards RAV bidders are requested to achieve.

The streetcar system advanced in this report is:

- Compatible with the City of Richmond's preference for an at-grade system of rail transit along Number 3 Road.

- It provides a good urban fit within the existing Number 3 Road corridor, including the existing dedicated bus corridor and the surrounding environment.

- It requires less capital cost to construct and, in fact, the costs savings attributable to this split system configuration equate to an amount of money that is greater than the cost of extending the streetcar system from the planned Richmond Centre terminus all the way to Steveston—the line that was once served by regional rail transit.

- It allows better provisions for future expansion, not only to Steveston, but throughout Richmond.

- Finally, it is in keeping with the historic connection Richmond has always had to interurban rail transit, linking appropriately with our proposed Steveston heritage tram project, enabling the City to serve local residents while at the same time attracting more visitors and tourists.

Let me leave you with one comment about the irony of me appearing before you today on this subject. Forty seven years ago, my grandfather, sitting at this table as a Councillor, fought long and hard to challenge the popular thinking of the day when the trend was to adopt a new regional transit system that he believed would not best serve Richmond. He tried to influence the opinion of the day to reject the trendy notion that abandoning the interurban tram system in favour of a regional bus system was best for the region and therefore best for Richmond. He went so far as launching a BC Supreme Court challenge to save the rail based transit system that once served Richmond well. He argued that Richmond's interests were more important than some contrived notion of what was best for the region. He was unsuccessful at the time and now we are here.

I would argue that your job here is not to simply accept the RAV project, no questions asked. Your job is to support a system of transit that best serves Richmond.

Finally, I would point out that your colleagues on Vancouver Council had no difficulty in ensuring that their support for the RAV project was conditional on a long list of requirements for the system, in the interests of best serving the citizens of Vancouver. Is your job not the same?

These conditions added hundreds of millions of dollars in costs to the project. We are asking you to set conditions that actually save costs.

The recommendation before you is simply not strong enough. You need to adopt a resolution that clearly demands RAVCO allow the two proponents to include the tram option in their BAFO next Monday.

Let me leave you with one question each of your should be asking:

If you are presented with a transit system option that best serves this community and the people of Richmond, why wouldn't you strongly demand that regional transit authorities adopt this system as the best transit system for Richmond?