

Linda Henriksen
5811 Oliver Drive
Richmond, B.C.
V6V 2P1

Mayor and Councillors for the
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, B.C.
V6Y 2C1

Re: Abandonment of the Old Firehall Daycare Project in Hamilton

April 23, 2008

Honorable Mayor and Councillors,

In light of the recent public attention surrounding the abandonment of the Old Firehall Daycare project in Hamilton, you have likely been expecting some communication concerning this issue. Our community's sense of frustration and disappointment is due not only to the cancellation of the project but to the lack of communication thereof. Since our sentiments have been put forth in various forms of the media, I feel you must have received this message already, loud and clear. The purpose of my letter is not to continue to lament that which was to be, but in anticipation of what is yet to come.

We have been informed that the Society of Richmond Children's Centres now feel they can successfully move their project to another area (and we certainly wish them the best in this endeavor), but this will not address or alleviate the need for available childcare spaces in Hamilton. My hope is that our Community Association, together with the City of Richmond, can strategize a new plan to address this very critical issue.

I respectfully offer suggestions that have been casually brought forward by various members of our Board of Directors and other residents of the Hamilton community as having the potential to work out, with the help and support of our City Council:

1. New development permits for multi-family complexes be granted only with the provision for community space made available for childcare.
2. Purchase land from a developer/land owner to build new facility for daycare space.
3. Consider leasing space from existing developments, including, but not limited to Bridgeview Centre.
4. Reconsider use of land currently owned by the City of Richmond which may be more widely and effectively used in providing childcare space.

While I realize that the costs involved in pursuing most of these options would be significant, I feel that Hamilton should be given some fiscal priority. In terms of services and capital funding and expenditures, we have long since lobbied our City Council to bring Hamilton up to the standards of other Richmond communities, but Hamilton remains significantly behind by comparison.

It has recently come to my attention that plans are being made to include a library in the new speed skating oval. I fail to see the priority in this project, since this is only a few short blocks away from the existing Minoru/Brighthouse library. As yet, not concrete plans exist for a full service, permanent library in the Hamilton community. In addition, I have recently been made aware of a plan that will see the City spend approximately \$474,000.00 to renovate a 10 year old City Hall building. To justify this expenditure, Councillor Evalina Halsey-Brandt was quoted (by Nelson Bennett of the Richmond News, Tuesday, April 15, 2008) as saying,

“As the city has grown, population has grown and more and more people are interested in attending...”

in addition, City Hall spokesman, Ted Townsend had this to say in the same article,

“You’ve got to recognize that we’ve gone through significant growth as a community since then, and that has been reflected in growth in the staff...”

I have lived in Hamilton for 15 years and you may not be aware, but Hamilton has also *“gone through significant growth as a community, and that has been reflected in growth”* of the population and need for services. Since I have lived here, most of the new development in the area has been in residential housing and commercial space. With the exception of the combined Hamilton School and Community Centre, there have been shamefully few improvements, modifications or expansions of our community space and services to reflect or address this growth. Coincidentally, our facilities were also built 10 years ago, and we have long since outgrown them in size. I take the liberty of paraphrasing Councillor Halsey-Brandt, *“as our community has grown, population has grown and more and more people...”* are in need of City sponsored programs and spaces within our own community, such as available childcare, a library, community gathering spaces and health and fitness services.

As Mayor and Council for *our* City of Richmond, I implore you to give consideration to the residents and the needs of the Hamilton community. It would be remiss to continue this pattern of neglect and abandonment. In an attempt to address the issue of childcare spaces in particular, we look forward to an opportunity to sit down with you in the near future to establish a new plan of action. We look forward even more to seeing this new plan come to fruition.

Yours truly,

Linda Henriksen
Chairperson, Childcare Committee for Hamilton Community Association
Member, Hamilton Community Association Board of Directors