

**CityClerk**

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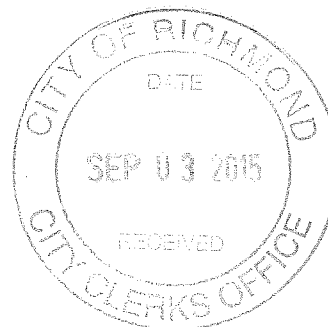
**From:** ncumming [ncumming@telus.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 03 September 2015 2:18 PM  
**To:** CityClerk  
**Cc:** Brodie,Malcolm; Au,Chak; Dang,Derek; Day,Carol; Johnston,Ken; Loo,Alexa; McNulty,Bill; McPhail,Linda; Steves,Harold  
**Subject:** Proposed changes to Zoning Bylaw  
**Attachments:** Richmond City Council Sept 3, 2015.pdf  
**Categories:** 12-8060-20-8500 Richmond Zoning Bylaw 8500

		INT
	DW	
	MJ	
	DB	

In preparation for the upcoming Public Hearing, please see the attached letter.

Thanks you,

Neil Cumming



Neil A. Cumming  
5771 Gannet Court  
Richmond, BC  
V7E 3W7

03 September 2015

City of Richmond  
Richmond, BC  
Attention: Members of Council

Dear Sirs/Mesdammes:

Re: Proposed Amendments to Zoning Bylaw 8500

I wish to provide members of Council with several thoughts for your consideration on the subject of the proposed amendments to the building bylaw.

#### **WHO IS BEING HEARD?**

When I addressed the Planning Committee on June 16 and followed up in writing on June 18, I mentioned that there had been inadequate consultation with the most important stakeholder group, i.e. the residents who have to live with the results of Council's decisions. To your credit, you directed staff to undertake the necessary consultation, and this resulted in the two open houses held on July 8 and 9.

I attended both events. The first was ostensibly for residents, but was attended by many representatives from the building industry. The council chamber was filled to overflowing, and many residents took the opportunity to speak their minds. It is noteworthy that the builders tried to consume much of the available time, even though their designated opportunity was the following evening. On the second evening slightly fewer people attended, but nonetheless, the chamber was almost full. Many residents saw the need to attend again to offset the aggressive lobby being advanced by the builders.

I paid particular attention to which councillors attended these open houses. I give credit to Councillor Au, who attended both sessions, and Councillor Loo, who attended the second one. The remaining councillors were conspicuously absent. I was astonished by news reports that suggested some councillors felt their presence would be improper. This was your best opportunity to inform yourselves as to the wishes of the community, and you passed it up. I have to ask how you can consider yourselves to be adequately informed when most of you failed to engage in the consultation process?

Well, let's examine what happened next. I suggested more consultation was needed. Council directed staff to do so. They did. They subsequently made recommendations to council based on what they heard. Council, most of whom did not attend the open houses, did not attend the Westwind neighbourhood meeting on April 29, 2015, and therefore have not heard from a representative cross section of residents, decided to overrule the recommendations of staff. On what basis was this decision made? Why do we have consultation if the consultees will be ignored?

I submit to you that councillors who have not engaged in the consultation process are not in a position to overrule or second guess the recommendations of staff who did.

## WHAT DID THE PEOPLE SAY?

In the few months of public discourse on this issue we have heard many things. Much of it has come from an aggressive, well-funded and well-organized lobby sponsored by the building industry. They have advanced several arguments as to why the bylaw should not be changed, or why larger, higher, denser buildings should be allowed. One comment we have heard several times, from both the lobbyists and from certain councillors, is that the opposition to large homes comes from a small but overly vocal minority of disaffected residents who do not represent the mainstream. I suggest to you that this is a false characterization. If you had attended the Westwind neighbourhood meeting you would have seen close to 200 people who felt strongly enough to come out. If you had attended the July 8 and 9 open houses you would have seen similar numbers, many of whom spoke passionately about the degradation of our neighbourhoods in the face of uncontrolled development. Add to that the hundreds of letters to the City and to the newspapers, and it is a conclusive fact that a very significant segment of Richmond's population is very concerned about what the City is allowing to happen to the quality of life their neighbourhoods.

I think it is important to recognize certain essential features of the various stakeholder groups. The building industry has been granted stakeholder status by the City, although some of us have questioned the validity of this status. Notwithstanding that uncertainty, it is an undeniable fact that the builders, by and large, may do business and employ people in their pursuits, but they are in most cases not the ones who have to live with the results of their work. They reap their rewards and move on.

Similarly, we have also heard from a number of people who express concern over the notional loss of value of their property. If the intent of these people is indeed to liquidate the value of their property, they are again by definition not the ones who must live with the results of the building bylaw. They also reap their rewards and move on.

Thirdly, we have heard that "the market" wants these larger, denser homes with high ceilings and spacious rooms. Fair enough, but I think we also need to acknowledge that these future buyers are also questionable stakeholders in this debate. They are potential future residents (or are they?), and by definition are not here yet, and therefore have no standing. There is no convincing case that existing residents should be expected to sacrifice their neighbourhood character and livability to satisfy those who are not even here yet and are at liberty to pursue their dreams elsewhere. If future buyers wish to take advantage of what Richmond has to offer, they are welcome. If they expect to achieve their goals by taking away from our livability, they are not. We owe these people nothing.

I would also offer that I have yet to see a convincing argument that allowable building characteristics in Richmond should be any different than the norm prevailing in our neighbouring municipalities.

The most important stakeholder group are we, the people who must live with the results of Council's decisions. We are not opportunists who are out to make a buck. We are the people who have lived in Richmond, raised our families in Richmond, paid our taxes in Richmond, coached our children's sports teams in Richmond, attended the community events in Richmond, and done all the things that make it a desirable community to live in and raise a family in. We are the ones who are here for the long haul and have planned to spend our retirement years here. We need to be heard, and we need you to engage in the consultation process you yourselves initiated.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Right now the City staff and Council are down in the weeds, tinkering with decimals of a meter for building dimensions. We need to raise the level of this debate to look at the big picture.

Council has made solemn commitments to the people of Richmond. They are embodied in the City's Vision Statement, and the Official Community Plan that you yourselves have endorsed:

- The most appealing, livable, well-managed community in Canada;
- Protection of single family neighbourhoods and existing housing stock;
- Assurance that changes to the physical character of single family neighbourhoods occurs in a fair, complementary manner with community consultation.

You need to deliver on those commitments.


Finally, I need to acknowledge that there is a need in any thriving and progressive community for growth, renewal and improvement. It is not my intent to deny that redevelopment is necessary nor desirable. The key is proper planning, reasonable control, and respect for existing residents. While developers and residents should be at liberty to pursue their goals, they should not be achieving them by taking something away from others. The objective here should be healthy, vibrant and attractive development that enhances the appeal and livability of our neighbourhoods, and is done in a planned and coordinated way that adds to our community well-being.

Development that manifests in a way imposes negatively on existing neighbours is the root of the problem we are now facing. That is a decidedly unhealthy road to be following.

Before you vote on the proposed amendments to the building bylaw, I ask that each and every one of you look at yourselves in the mirror and ask if you are doing the right thing for those of us that must live with your decision.

Only then will Council be in a position to declare success.

Respectfully submitted,



Neil A. Cumming