
Subject: FW: Planning Committee, March 6, 2018.

----- Original message -----

From: "John Roston, Mr" <john.roston@mcgill.ca>
Date: 2018-03-06 12:28 PM (GMT-08:00)
To: "McPhail,Linda" <LMcPhail@richmond.ca>
Subject: Planning Committee, March 6, 2018.

Dear Councillor McPhail,

I will be attending the Planning Committee meeting today and with your permission would like to speak briefly on both the Affordable Housing Strategy and the Agricultural Advisory Committee annual report. I will read out the comments below.

John

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Re: Affordable Housing Strategy

A major component of the affordable housing strategy should be increasing the total number of family friendly units available for rent, not just the LEMR units, so that increased supply will lead to lower rents. There has to be a change from building what investors want to building what Richmond families need. We also have to change investors who buy units and leave them empty from part of the problem to part of the solution.

More Multi-Bedroom Units

Condo developers currently have no incentive to build mostly multi-bedroom units needed by young families when they can make a lot more money faster by selling the smaller units that are most attractive to investors. The developer could be given fast track permit approvals for buildings where at least 50% of the units are a decent size with two bedrooms and at least an additional 25% of the units have three bedrooms or more.

New Type of Condo Building Structure

Many condo units remain empty because the owners, especially foreign ones, see renting as too much of a hassle. A new type of condo building could be created with bylaws specifying that the condo owner must agree when purchasing a unit that the condo building manager is responsible for renting out, at market rates, all units not occupied by the owner, or a close relative of the owner. The city could also make use of the same building manager to rent out the affordable housing units at lower cost than finding a separate affordable housing manager.

This condo building structure can be made attractive to condo investors by having all rent revenue in the building go into a common fund, from which all expenses are deducted, and the investors then share in the profits according to the size of their unit. No owner gets preferential treatment. It doesn't matter to an owner if his or her unit is temporarily vacant, or the unit next door has a higher rent, because all revenue and expense is shared by all the owners.

Re: Agricultural Advisory Committee 2017 AAC Annual Report
Attachment 1, Page PLN-188, second item "City Policy Initiatives"

“Received information on the proposed changes to the City's AG1 (Agriculture) zone on establishing limits to residential development. This included a special stakeholders meeting with members of the AAC, RFI and the Richmond Farmland Owners Association.”

I note that the stakeholders meeting did not include members of Richmond FarmWatch or other group representing the interests of Richmond citizens who certainly have a stake in the preservation of Richmond farmland for future generations. There are Richmond FarmWatch members who are owners of ALR properties and whose views do not coincide with those of the Richmond Farmland Owners Association.

There is also the question as to whether any of the members of the AAC were in a conflict of interest due to their ownership of farmland and the maximum house size influence on the value of that farmland. If yes, then the Committee had the option of saying that due to conflicts of interest, it was not able to provide a recommendation as to maximum house size.

There is no question that the AAC does valuable work, but it's important that its work schedule for 2018 include a review of its policies on consulting widely and conflicts of interest to ensure that it continues to be an independent advisory group and doesn't morph into a lobby group for special interests.

