

Schedule 1 to the Minutes of the meeting of Richmond City Council held on Monday, January 11, 2021.

To: Mayor & Each Councillor
From: City Clerk's Office

Materials Relating to an Agenda Item

Meeting: Council

Date: Jan. 11/2020 Item#: 11

City Council Meeting January 11th, 2021

Applicant Remarks to City Council in Support of Choice School Non-Farm Use Application (for 20451 Westminster Highway, Richmond)

My name is Philip Gray and for the past 6 years I have been a volunteer Director and board chair of the Choice School for Gifted Children Society. I retired from the board last November but am continuing to support the school with this application.

I'd like to provide some background about the school and some context for this Non-Farm Use Application:

Choice is a small independent school providing an education for gifted students from Kindergarten to Grade 9. We are constituted as a not-for-profit society, are a registered charity and governed by a volunteer board of 7 Directors - mostly parents of our students.

Many of our students, in addition to being gifted, have an additional special need such as ADHD, Autism or Anxiety, etc. These students are known as twice exceptional. The school excels in educating such students by providing the necessary social and emotional support via a specialist teaching and support staff.

In recognition of this specialty, in 2016, the Ministry of Education designated Choice as a Special Education School. This is one of only 15 such designated special education schools in the Province and the only special education school in the Province designated for gifted students.

Approximately two years ago the school recognised that enrollment growth would soon max out the capacity of our existing buildings. We ended the last school year in September with 68 students - and the maximum capacity of our existing buildings is approximately 80 students.

Consequently, our non-farm use application contemplates adding a small, new building annex to accommodate two classrooms and two washrooms - increasing our capacity by 30 students. At the outset of our small project, we had communications with both the Agricultural Land Commission and the City and eventually discovered that a historical zoning and agricultural restriction anomaly existed on the subject property. Historically, the property was zoned ASSEMBLY by the City yet WAS subject to Agricultural use restrictions. How ASSEMBLY zoning was originally established when the property was subject to agricultural restrictions, remains a mystery to us.

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As a result of this situation, both the City and the ALC recommended that we prepare a non farm use application which we subsequently submitted to the ALC and the City just over a year ago in December 2019.

Our main objective for this application is to bring both of our adjacent properties into full Zoning and ALC compliance via the commitments we have made to the City in our application. The commitments we have made were requested by the City as part of the application process and late last week, we further confirmed our commitment to the City in writing to implementing these items.

An approval of this application and consequent implementation of the commitments will pave the way for a subsequent building permit application for our proposed classroom annex.

As a small organization with limited resources and a volunteer board, whatever the outcome of this application, we would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by City staff in helping us understand and navigate our way through the process.

In closing, and recognizing that the ALC has the ultimate approval authority for this application, we are sincerely hoping for a positive response from the City. This will move us a step forward in being able to offer more enrollment capacity for gifted and twice exceptional students at Choice School, the only Ministry designated special education school for gifted children in the Province.

Philip Gray
Special Advisor to the Board
Choice School for Gifted Children Society