



Statement on City staff's involvement with the proposed events centre: referendum, open house events and feedback

As staff at the City of Nanaimo prepare to initiate a referendum on whether or not residents support borrowing up to \$80 million dollars, repayable over a period of no more than 20 years, for the development and construction of an events centre that will include an ice arena and other related entertainment, cultural and recreation facilities, it is critically important that the public record is accurate with respect to the role played by City staff during:

- the lead up to the referendum
- the six scheduled open house events
- efforts to obtain feedback

Referendum

At the direction of Council, starting in the fall of 2016, members of City staff were tasked with preparing reports and studies providing a range of information and recommendations on a proposed events centre in Nanaimo. Much of this work was undertaken in close consultation with contracted resources possessing direct experience and knowledge pertaining to the design, financing, construction and operation of events centres. Throughout this work, City staff has pursued a fact oriented, non-biased approach to gathering information and providing it to Council and the public.

Disappointingly, statements circulated within the public sphere of local community discussion, along with statements made during Council meetings, have called into question the integrity and professionalism of City staff. Such statements are misleading and inappropriate. In the spirit of providing a respectful workplace while carrying out the direction of Council, the City is requesting that a new tone within the current discussion and debate be adopted.

Open House Events

During the month of February through early March, City staff will host six open house events as an opportunity to share with the public, information on the proposed events centre. For those City staff members attending these events, their sole role is to answer questions from the public. If answers cannot be provided, staff will direct the public to sources of additional information. Under no circumstances will staff lobby or attempt to steer members of the public towards a particular position in support of, or against, the proposed events centre.

Obtaining Feedback

As part of the engagement process conducted during the fall of 2016, Council directed City staff to seek feedback from the community on whether or not there was support for the proposed events centre. Input and comments were sought from a wide range of sources, including members of the public and local organizations who may have held a position on a project of this scale and purpose. This feedback was critical to staff when establishing a business case that could assist the City in determining how other facilities and venues could work in collaboration and not at cross purposes. Throughout the engagement process, staff undertook - and will continue to undertake - the work of compiling feedback without bias.

To learn more about the proposed events centre, the City encourages the public to participate at the upcoming open houses, visit the City's website or attend a future Council meeting where the events centre appears as an agenda item.

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