

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Engagement Pilot Program kicks off November 23

The Public Engagement Pilot Program is set to kick off with its first engagement session on Thursday, November 23. The Community Engagement Task Force has been busy planning the session which runs from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm, in the Vancouver Island Conference Centre. Residents will have the opportunity to discuss a number of topics with members of City Council, the task force as well as other residents during this session facilitated by Vancouver Island University's Director of Master of Community Planning program, Pam Shaw and students of the program.

The theme for the evening, "Building Nanaimo for the Future: What are your priorities?", will centre around what the public thinks are priorities for the community. "We want to hear what really matters to the community," said Councillor Sheryl Armstrong, "What can we, as Council, do better to serve Nanaimo?"

Topics that fall under the theme will be submitted by the public ahead of the session via the City's Facebook page, email, phone call or a form in the November 9 and 16 editions of the Nanaimo News Bulletin which can be mailed to or dropped off at City Hall by November 17.

Community Engagement Task Force member, Bill Manners said, "After a series of Community Engagement meetings and surveys with the residents of our city, the group of volunteers who make up the task force have selected "Open Space Technology" as the format for the first of four engagement meetings." An open space meeting revolves around the concept of people-driven conversations and solutions to complex issues. Participants decide what they want to talk about and the agenda is determined democratically. Bill added, "The Task Force will also be looking at possibly using a different format at a future engagement in 2018, as well as using any topics not chosen for the first session."

Those wishing to attend are encouraged to RSVP via the City's Facebook page, by emailing PublicEngagement@nanaimo.ca, calling 250-755-4460 ext 4265 or filling out a form in the November 9 and 16 editions of the Nanaimo News Bulletin and dropping it off at City Hall (455 Wallace Street).

The Community Engagement Task Force is a result of a Council motion made to set up an "ad-hoc committee" to develop a pilot program consisting of open-topic engagement sessions held in an informal setting. Their next meeting will take place on Friday, November 10 at 4:30 pm in the Service and Resource Centre boardroom (411 Dunsmuir Street) and is open to the public. A "Notes" section on the City's Facebook page has also been set up to act as a tool for gathering sentiment from the public on the program.

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