

Karen Elrick, Manager Corporate Services: Statement Regarding In-person Council Meetings

July 6, 2021 Regular Council Meeting (At start of meeting)

During the COVID pandemic, the Village has been following the advice and recommendations from Provincial Public Health and Ministry of Municipal Affairs regarding in person and electronic Council meetings.

While there are no legislative requirements to accommodate all persons who wish to attend an open Council meeting, we have taken the following additional measures to ensure accessibility to open Council meetings and enable members of the public to provide input:

- In June 2020, while in person attendance was still permitted under Public Health Orders (as well as the provision to allow for fully electronic meetings), the Village pivoted quickly to move to a hybrid model where meetings were held in person with limited capacity and live streamed through our newly established YouTube channel. Questions or Comments could be posed in person or submitted by email for those who were unable to attend in person. This process continued through to December 1, 2020, after which a Public Health Order was put in place prohibiting members of the public to attend Council meetings.
- Following the December 2, 2020 Public Health Order which prohibited members of the public from attending in person Council meetings, the Village again pivoted to meet the requirements and enable the public to participate by moving meetings to the Zoom platform (which the Province made a temporary allowance to use this platform as it does not comply with FOI requirements of having data stored within Canada). Under this format, question or comments were still permitted by email and the additional provision was made to allow the opportunity for members of the public to ask questions or provide comments during the zoom meeting.
- As of June 30, 2021, the Public Health Order was updated to include the provision for inside events that “no more than 50 persons, or 50% of the seated operating capacity of the place, excluding event staff, whichever number is greater.” As our Council Chambers has a capacity of 100 the capacity is set at maximum of 50 persons.
- Following recommendations from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and in order to comply with the Ministerial Order M192 under the Emergency Program Act which states “A council... must use best efforts to allow members of the public to attend an open meeting of the council or body in a manner that is

consistent with any applicable requirements or recommendations made under the *Public Health Act*.” We are moving back to the same hybrid model that was followed by the Village from June 2020 to December 2020 which includes live streaming through the Village’s YouTube channel, allowing in person attendance in compliance with Public Health Orders, allowing for submission of questions or comments via email and we have added the additional measure this evening of providing an outdoor space where speakers amplify the meeting. We do not have the technical capabilities to live stream the meeting via zoom and hold an in-person meeting at the same time.

We will continue to follow Public Health recommendations and orders as we move through the four-step restart plan introduced by the Province.

Juli Halliwell, Chief Administrative Officer: Statement Regarding Bella Terra Rezoning and Inaccurate Information

July 6, 2021 Regular Council Meeting (Approximately 32 minutes into meeting)

As a result of recent social media posts regarding the Bella Terra rezoning, the Village has obtained some legal advice which has informed the following statement:

Much of the exchange is either misleading or overtly untrue, in part because of a lack of clarity as between subdivision and zoning issues and an unclear understanding of the current project status.

To be clear, what is presently before Council is a re-zoning application that was initiated by Village staff, not the developer.

If that succeeds, then there will in all likelihood be a new subdivision application made to the Approving Officer and the Approving Officer will at the time deal with Bylaw compliance, lot layout, roads and creek crossing issues. These considerations are not part of the re-zoning application. The Approving Officer in his role has an obligation to ensure that all requirements of the bylaw are met, including not land locking adjacent property owners.

As you of course know, the background to this property is that the lands were lawfully rezoned in 2015 and the first of two “phases” was subsequently lawfully subdivided.

As is pointed out in the exchange – zoning is a Council decision and subdivision is a decision of the Approving Officer, which is an independent statutory authority, but that is somewhat overly simplified.

An Approving Officer has the statutory right to consult with others as part of their review of a proposed subdivision application, including Municipal Council. This is what occurred last December when the developer was seeking to pursue an application to amend the PLR and the Approving Officer consulted with Council in order to determine if Council would support a roadway through a park. This was done in a lawfully conducted closed meeting to allow for receipt of legal advice and to discuss land issues, as is authorized under the Community Charter. The outcome of the meeting was then immediately released.

The first phase of the subdivision included dedication of an area as park some time ago. Our understanding is that there is no intention to dispose of or exchange park and so the portions of the posts referencing those provisions in the Community Charter are completely irrelevant. Just to be crystal clear, there is no proposal to remove park land. There is no prohibition against a park containing a portion of a road – indeed, many

parks have roads within their boundaries that in some cases are essential to allow for the most expedient use of the park itself.

Subsequent to the Approving Officer seeking input from both Council and the adjacent property owner, it was determined by the Approving Officer that the subdivision as proposed could not be approved because of an inadvertent inconsistency on the number of permitted lots within the zoning bylaw, which is why the rezoning is before Council at this time.

Underlying these posts is of course some opposition to this project and all of those who deem their interest in property to be affected have a clear legal entitlement to make Council aware of their views on point at the public hearing. However, it is inaccurate to suggest that unlawful "secret" meetings took place in some improper way, nor is it correct to say that there is a lawful impediment to Council approving the re-zoning application if that is what they choose, in their sole discretion, to do.

Mayor John McEwen: Statement Regarding Anmore Conversations

July 6, 2021 Regular Council Meeting (approximately 1 hour 30 minutes into meeting)

Over the past few months, all of us on Council have observed an alarming trend in our community involving comments on social media and at our virtual Council meetings that reflect an extreme “NIMBY” – not in my backyard – attitude that seems to be based on elitism.

We understand that there are residents who are critical of Council decisions and disagree with us. You should know that members of Council don’t always agree with one another either.

But we respectfully listen when you share your opinions and when you explain why you don’t like our position on something. That’s all part of the process in local government.

But the **extreme NIMBY and elitist attitudes, accusations of corruption** and even **racism** we are seeing are **not** part of that process — and they’re not even remotely acceptable.

So tonight —at our first in-person meeting since late 2020 — we are speaking out to clearly lay out our concerns about the toxic discourse created online by a small number of citizens and to talk about how we, as a Village Council, are responding.

I personally first became concerned during the community engagement process regarding Anmore South when I heard negative comments about the “type of people” who would come to our community if we allowed more affordable housing options such as townhomes.

These are some of the actual comments shared by your neighbours:

- “We don’t want those types of people in our community.” ... Those types of people.
- “If people want other housing options, they can go live somewhere else.”
- “The community will no longer be safe.”
- This “safety” concern was also expressed in joint letter signed by 16 people that was sent to Council and, in referencing a so-called “crime upsurge,” stated:

“[An] influx of population without our own Police Station and crime prevention force puts Anmore and Belcarra residents at much higher risk; Anmore and Belcarra are already becoming targets for burglaries and robberies. **Bringing in thousands of new residents from all walks of life puts an even more noticeable mark on all our homes, another very dangerous and high-risk consideration.**”

Yes, you heard correctly: People from “**all walks of life**” would bring danger to Anmore, according to the letter writers.

- More recently, posters have been put up in the Anmore area and neighbouring communities saying “**Crisis! Lakes at Risk!**” — as though new residents in Anmore would somehow damage the lakes and put public access at risk.
- Finally, at the June 15 virtual Council meeting, a resident expressed his objection to the mere potential for an Urban designation for the Anmore South lands by saying:

“My question is whether the Council believes this is fair to the long-standing residents of Anmore, to see their population multiply by at least three times, and solely to come from spot-zoning of Anmore South. Just to be clear, this means that once this development is fully built out and occupied, the existing Anmore residents will be in the minority.”

Those comments are just part of the reason I am speaking out today.

The discussion around Anmore South has also led to personal attacks on Council – and I don’t mean the usual criticisms that come with the territory of being on Council. I’m talking about comments attacking Council members’ integrity by strongly insinuating that we are corrupt.

I’m going to read a few of the particularly egregious comments:

- “Council is all buddy-buddy and can be coerced and cajoled through friendly insiders on their payrolls.”
- “Is it just me or is the fact that a prior Council member is on the loco Lands Developers TEAM paid by the developer to be LOBBYING (read that as coercing with monetary incentives) by ‘advising’ the current Council members.”
- “Even the best of us are blinded by the opportunity for monetary gain... There is also the new Council advisory group comprised of real estate agents and developers who are at play behind closed doors. The process is fraught with the potential of severe corruption, dereliction of duty and lack of transparency.”
- “I left out corrupt government and brown envelopes under tables, not because it isn’t possible (buying out politicians is always a possibility anywhere in politics in the world), but there’s not obvious proof of that going on.”
- “Has there been (palm greasing)... looks like YES!!!” — and that YES came with three exclamation marks.

This continued stream of innuendo and insinuations led to a question at a virtual Council meeting where a resident said, based on the “apparent partiality of your process to some of us,” he had to ask each member of Council to publicly disclose if they have any relationship with Gilic – the former Anmore South property owner. Council members then responded individually that they are not in any way associated with the property owner or developer – past or current. Even so, comments online have continued to suggest otherwise.

These types of insinuations have been extremely disturbing for us individually and for our families, and our thanks go to the residents who have reached out and supported us.

The attacks have recently extended to include identifiable members of staff, with a resident this past week calling for the “termination” of a staff member saying he “allowed such tree destruction” and made “tragic mistakes” when in fact this staff person did his job correctly. And in the same post, the resident went after other identifiable members of staff, accusing them of being “tragic, pathetic and unaccountable” – again, for doing their jobs correctly. In fact,

eventually, the resident himself acknowledged that nothing untoward had been done, but his comments were already posted and seen by multiple people.

And now, the latest, most disturbing commentary we are seeing involves anti-Asian racism that has left us shocked.

- After a resident posted a link to a blog called “theBreaker”, a resident made a racist comment about the owners of the property who are Chinese referencing the “Claws of the Panda.”
- This then led to a resident at the June 18 virtual Council meeting commenting about the developer of the loco Lands having “close ties to the communist party of China” and asking whether this caused concerns to any members of Council. When a Councillor asked what he was basing his “facts” on, he cited only the blog.

Just as side note – “theBreaker” is a blog – not a mainstream media site with layers of oversight, editing and fact checking– yet this resident and others have used it as a means to advance their NIMBY agenda.

These posts, that can lead to further anti-Asian racism, did serve one purpose, though: They were the final impetus for this Council to take a stand — here, tonight — to say we do not support these types of comments. And we don’t want to be associated with conversations that are the antithesis of what makes Anmore a wonderful place to live.

Most of the conversations that have crossed these lines are taking place on the Anmore Conversations Facebook Group.

To be clear, we are not saying everyone who disagrees with an Urban designation in Anmore South is part of this – not at all. But there have been enough people involved that it has significantly shifted the tone and dynamics of the Anmore Conversations Facebook page.

With that said, we want to let our residents know that the Village will no longer be sharing and posting content on Anmore Conversations. We do not want to be seen as endorsing these types of comments and conversations, even if only by association.

We will continue to provide updates to our community via the Village Facebook page and website, notification emails — make sure you sign up at Anmore.com — and through other means. In fact, we will be posting this statement at Anmore.com tonight.

If you have questions about Village activities and services, or what Council is doing – please contact us directly and we will be happy to connect with you.

While I’ve been speaking on behalf of all of Council here tonight, I also want to provide an opportunity for my fellow Council members to share their own perspectives on this issue.