



## Member Motion

### City Council

#### Notice of Motion

MM31.10	ACTION			Ward: All
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#### **Improving Virtual Community Consultation Meetings for Development Applications - by Councillor Jaye Robinson, seconded by Councillor James Pasternak**

*\* Notice of this Motion has been given.*

*\* This Motion is subject to referral to the Planning and Housing Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

#### **Recommendations**

Councillor Jaye Robinson, seconded by Councillor James Pasternak, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to review virtual planning consultation meetings, in consultation with members of the public, and report back to Planning and Housing Committee in the second quarter of 2021 with recommendations for improvement, including:

- a. guidelines and practices to ensure that virtual community consultation meetings are consistent and effective;
- b. strategies to improve opportunities for members of the public to participate in virtual community consultation meetings;
- c. best practices related to virtual consultation in other jurisdictions; and
- d. opportunities to improve accessibility for members of the public and, in particular, members of the public participating by phone.

#### **Summary**

Community consultation remains one of the most critical elements of the City Planning process. Public consultation meetings provide an important opportunity for local residents to voice their opinions and seek answers to questions about how major development proposals will impact their neighbourhoods.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, City Planning has been holding virtual community consultation meetings in accordance with public health protocols. While these virtual meetings continue to provide an important forum for community engagement, there are opportunities to improve the experience for members of the public. For example, the lack of a consistent,

standardized meeting agenda can allow the applicant to dominate the meeting with a lengthy presentation that limits the time available for the public question and answer period. Technical issues can impede public participation and many residents find it difficult to navigate the meeting platform. It is particularly difficult for members of the public phoning into the meeting to follow the presentations and participate in the ensuing discussion.

Typically, the applicant team is promoted to "panelist" status, while members of the public join the meetings as "participants." Meeting participants are muted by the organizer until called upon, which can allow the applicant to dominate the discussion. As participants, members of the public often do not have an opportunity to follow up on their questions once the applicant has provided a response—meaning the developer usually has the last word on the topic.

While gathering restrictions remain in place, it is important for the City to periodically review the virtual community consultation meeting format and update policies and procedures accordingly. Public consultation is an important part of the development review process and the City should continue to identify areas for improvement and incorporate best practices, in consultation with stakeholders and members of the public.

### **Background Information (City Council)**

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