

From: [Valleyanna Residents](#)
To: [councilmeeting](#)
Cc: [Councillor Jaye Robinson](#); [Rachel Van Fraassen](#)
Subject: City Council April 7 2021 MM31.10 - Improving Virtual Public Engagements for Development Applications
Date: April 6, 2021 11:45:18 PM

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of City Council:

Re: City Council April 7 2021 MM31.10 - Improving Virtual Public Engagements for Development Applications

This correspondence serves to express The Valleyanna Residents' Association's ("VRA") strong support for Councillor Robinson's Motion to be considered by City Council at its meeting to be held on April 7, 2021.

We share Councillor Robinson's concerns regarding the importance of effective public participation in development Applications, as well as her specific concerns raised regarding the virtual consultation process.

The VRA strongly supports Councillor Robinson's motion in asking that a review be done of the virtual public engagements that are held by various departments within the City of Toronto, in consultation with members of the public.

The VRA has firsthand experience with the use of virtual public engagement since they were initiated by the City following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public consultations are an important and integral part of the development review process. While virtual meetings can make attendance more convenient, they have also resulted in new barriers to public participation. The manner in which public engagements are being conducted now may not ensure a 'fair' forum for members of the public to participate. Developers are "panelists" and are able to dominate discussions, with residents in the affected areas being relegated to participants who may not have an opportunity to fully participate, given the structure, the software utilized, and the timing constraints. With the panelists controlling the dialogue and the clock, time can run out before affected community members are able to fully have their say.

The VRA residents have experienced these issues. While the online forum does allow greater participation for those unable to travel to meetings, and should continue post Covid, a review of the best practices should occur to ensure that the affected members of the public have a true opportunity to be heard.

The VRA fully supports Councillor Robinson's Motion for a review of and reporting on improvements for virtual public engagements, in consultation with stakeholders and members of the public. Our Association looks forward to participating in this improvement process.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important Motion.

Warm regards,

The Valleyanna Residents' Association