

Final Report on the Review of the City of White Rock Advisory Committee Structure and Related Processes

**Presentation to City Council on
March 15, 2021**

Schedule

- MDD Consultant Services retained to undertake the Review in late January/21
- The Review commenced in early February/21

Current Advisory Committee Structure:

- **Arts and Culture AC (ACAC)**
- **COVID-19 Recovery Task Force (CRTF)**
- **Economic AC (EcAC)**
- **Environmental AC (EnvAC)**
- **History and Heritage AC (HHAC)**
- **Housing AC (HAC)**
- **Public Art AC (PAC)**
- **Seniors AC (SAC)**
- **Tour de White Rock Committee (TWRC)**
- **White Rock Sea Festival Committee (SFC)**
- **Water Community Advisory Panel (WCAP)**

Review Objective:

“To assess the organizational impact and efficiencies of the City of White Rock Advisory Committees and their processes relative to meeting City Council’s needs and objectives including, among other things, transparency and the adopted 2021-2022 Council Strategic Priorities”

Review Process:

Three (3) basic phases of the review:

- Information gathering
- Organizing and analyzing information
- Compiling a set of recommendations

Information Gathering Phase:

- Background information on the current AC structure (i.e., previous reports, minutes, bylaws, policies, etc.);
- Interviewed:
 - each member of City Council;
 - The Chair of each AC; and
 - Senior CoWR staff who provide direct support to ACs;
- Survey questionnaire sent to every volunteer member of ACs
- Online information on the AC structures in a sample of lower mainland municipalities

Matters for which feedback was solicited as part of the interview and survey process:

- **Number of ACs**
- **Value of each current AC**
- **Alignment of ACs with the 2021/22 Council Priorities**
- **Potential for reducing/restructuring the current ACs**
- **Councillors role on ACs**
- **Development and monitoring of the annual work plan for each AC**
- **Process of Council and staff referrals to ACs**
- **Process of AC recommendations to Council**
- **Volunteer member recruitment/application process for ACs**
- **AC volunteer member orientation process**
- **AC size and composition**
- **AC meeting frequency**
- **Staff role in support of ACs**
- **Potential for outside entities to provide advice to Council in lieu of ACs**
- **Potential for AC Subcommittees**
- **AC agenda preparation and distribution**

Number of ACs

- Recognition that the number of ACs could be reduced while still providing reasonable opportunities for community engagement on Council Priorities

Value of ACs

- Generally recognized that ACs provide value to the City
- Volunteer members are very committed to assisting in enhancing the quality of life, the vibrancy of the economy and the efficacy of decision-making in the governance of the City
- Concern with the amount of staff and volunteer time that was spent on some ACs in comparison to the output
- Concern with the inability of some ACs to develop an effective work plan and the need for more Council involvement

Alignment of ACs with Council Priorities

- In general, it is recognized that the mandate of some of the current ACs align with the current 2021/22 Council priorities while the mandate of others are less connected

Potential to Reduce the No. of ACs

- Several observations in this regard were made:
 - Blend the mandate of PAAC with ACAC
 - Blend the mandate of HHAC with PAAC
 - Eliminate HHAC and include heritage expertise on the Advisory Design Panel, make referrals to the MAS and to the SFN, where appropriate and use a Task Force if a significant matter emerges
 - WCAP is not a typical AC in other lower mainland municipalities and emanated from water quality/reliability concerns. These concerns have been addressed with water treatment and City control of the water system.

Potential to Reduce the No. of ACs

- The TWRC and the SFC are primarily working groups that collaborate with City staff in staging these annual events – not really Advisory Committees
- The SAC is in many respects a duplication of other bodies representing seniors in the community:
 - Semiahmoo Seniors Planning Table
 - Kent Street Activity Centre Executive Committee
- The need for the COVID-19 RTF will ebb with the roll-out of the vaccination program across BC in the next few months

Councillor Role on each AC

- Recognition that having a strong connection with Council is important for ensuring that the work of the AC is relevant to and valued by Council
- Other lower mainland local governments appoint Councillors as chairpersons of ACs
- Some concern that if Councillors chair the ACs the ACs could become too directed by Council and lose the value of the independent perspective on issues facing the City

AC Annual Work Plan

- Some ACs experience difficulty in developing a work plan in a timely manner
- Recognition that Council could be more proactive in assisting ACs in developing a work plan to better align with Council interests and needs
- AC work plans should continue to allow room for matters initiated independently by the AC
- AC work plans should be monitored and outputs measured

Council and Staff Referrals to ACs

- Few matters are referred by Council to ACs
- When a referral occurs it should include a timeframe for a response
- Council input to the annual AC work planning process could obviate the need for referrals in many cases
- Staff presentation materials should be distributed in advance of meetings to AC members to allow time for review and preparation of well-considered comments/input by AC members

AC Recommendations to Council

- Having a Councillor on the AC assists in ensuring that any AC recommendation to Council is clearly presented at the Council table
- Some noted that some ACs have difficulty in structuring recommendations to Council
- Support for the idea of a standard template(s) being developed for ACs to use in formulating recommendations to Council
- Chairperson should be responsible for presenting any AC recommendation to Council

Number of AC members

- A wide range of views on desirable number from 5 up to 20 members
- Many suggested between 6 and 8 members to provide sufficient breadth of perspective while keeping meetings manageable for the chairperson
- Volunteer membership on ACs should be shared between those having expertise/experience in the area of the mandate of the AC and citizens-at-large

Frequency and Length of AC Mtgs

- AC meetings should be held when there is a substantive agenda to justify a meeting – Chairperson responsibility with staff to monitor the need for meetings
- Monthly meetings are the norm but should not be mandatory (may at times need less frequent meetings)
- 2-hour meetings were viewed as generally reasonable
- The use of “Zoom” or similar technology to allow virtual attendance at AC meetings after the pandemic should be considered

Staff Support of ACs

- Significant staff time is spent in coordinating, attending, preparing for, presenting at, recording minutes for and following up on AC meetings
- Resources spent on AC work not available for other City priorities
- The need for detailed minutes should be reviewed in light of AC meetings being video-recorded

Volunteer Recruitment/Application Process

- Enhance marketing to include social media and directed invitations to professional assocs.
- Ensure that community-based orgs are represented on relevant ACs (e.g., BIA, CofC, Tourism WR on the EcAC, etc.) to harness local expertise and to ensure alignment of purpose
- Diversity important on ACs – age, gender, ethnicity, etc
- Semiahmoo First Nation involvement on relevant ACs is important
- Brief position description for volunteer candidates for each AC would be helpful and the expected time commitment
- Mid-year appointments should be kept to a minimum.

Orientation of New AC members

- A wide range of views on the effectiveness of the current orientation process
- Orientation materials should be standardized and generally include:
 - Mandate of the AC
 - Overview of the current work plan of AC
 - Recent successes of the AC
 - How the AC fits in the broader organization of the City
 - Overview of relevant City policies related to the work of the AC
 - Summary of current Council priorities related to the AC
 - Rules of order of meetings
 - Code of conduct
 - Among other things
- Orientation session for new AC members prior to or at first meeting

Use of Subcommittees by ACs

- Some interest in Subcommittees to undertake research and background work on behalf of ACs
- Subcommittees absorb similar resources as ACs due to legislative requirements and are therefore discouraged
- Small 2 or 3 person “working groups” may be a possibility and should be explored

Recommendations

- Based on an analysis of the gathered information the report includes 16 recommendations for Council consideration.
- There are other matters that are referenced in the report for staff consideration.

Implementation

Council should direct that the necessary implementation steps and a related schedule be developed by the City staff such that those recommendations that are approved by Council are fully operationalized.

Questions?