

THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: January 29, 2024

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Jim Gordon, P.Eng., Director of Engineering and Municipal Operations

SUBJECT: Temporary Office and Council Chamber Options

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council:

1. Approve Option A "Relocate Council Chambers to Annex and Construct Offices in Vacated Space"; and
 2. Authorize staff to proceed with the renovations once the Financial Plan is approved.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the review of the draft Asset Improvement Financial Plan on December 11, 2023, Council sought additional information regarding the budget for relocating the Council Chambers to the Annex and for constructing new office spaces at City Hall. This need arose from the recognition of inadequate and expanding operational space requirements. Council requested a detailed report from staff in January covering these project aspects.

This report addresses the project specifics and evaluates various options. The preferred option, Option "A", proposes the relocation of the Council Chambers to the Annex and the utilization of the vacated space for new offices. This approach requires a modest additional investment of \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually over two other options (including the revenue loss for Option C). It is recommended because it minimizes disruption to customer services and potential decline in the quality of Council meetings, while also providing sufficient space for staff needs in the coming years.

The following three (3) options are discussed in this report:

- A. Relocate Council Chambers to the Annex and Construct Offices in Vacated Space (\$430K - \$480K) - recommended.**
- B. Construct Offices in Annex and Leave Council Chambers in Place (\$350K).
- C. Relocate Council to White Rock Community Centre (WRCC) and Construct Offices in Vacated Space (\$270K plus revenue loss of \$100K totals \$370K).

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Council provided direction to staff following recent Financial Plan discussions to hire new staff to improve service delivery to the community. Examples include new staff in the Buildings division and the filling of vacant positions in other areas. The limited space in City Hall can no longer adequately accommodate these staff. In addition, storage space and meeting rooms do not adequately meet current operational needs.

As the Community Hub project moves forward, it will include additional office space for civic operations; however, as we are in the early stages of this project, it will optimistically take approximately four years to complete. In the interim, there is a growing shortage of space for staff, meeting rooms and storage.

Following is an estimate of the new staff complement that will need to be accommodated over the next few years – always subject to operational needs and Council's desire for further services:

- 2024 – Building Official 1
Project Manager, Community Hub
Junior HR Advisor, Training & Development
Web Editor
- 2025- Grant Writer
Auxiliary Plumbing Official
Indigenous Relations Officer

It is anticipated that over the next few years, additional staff in Planning and Development Services will be needed to implement and support the new provincial housing legislation. This includes an Interim In-House Project Manager to oversee temporary staffing and consultants, a Community Planner to manage service delivery under the new housing policies, and additional bylaw enforcement and parking services staff.

OPTIONS

A. Relocate Council Chambers to the Annex and Construct Offices in Vacated Space (\$430K - \$480K)

This option will provide centralized office space, will enable the best service to building permit customers and to the general public. The new Council Chambers will be convenient for Council, Committees and general-purpose meetings. In addition, this would prevent an estimated \$20,000-\$30,000 in lost annual revenue to the Recreation and Culture Department if the Council Chambers were to move to the WRCC (Option C).

- **Scope of Work:** The relocation involves modifications in multiple areas, including the conversion of the central space in the Annex into a Council Chamber and the addition of workstations and open-plan office in the vacated space (existing Council Chamber). The scope encompasses architectural, technological, interior design, and project management services, necessitating a budget to meet the project's objectives.
- **Quality Standards and Compliance:** All work will need to comply with building codes and regulations.
- **Mechanical and Electrical Upgrades:** The addition of a cooling system to the new Council Chamber requires dedicated equipment, and the scope includes upgrades to electrical infrastructure, lighting, and access control systems. Approximately \$50K can be saved by foregoing the cooling system and utilizing portable air conditioning to supplement the existing systems during Council meetings.

- **Acoustic Considerations:** Acoustic design services are included to address reverberation control, ambient noise, and sound insulation. Given the unique architectural features, such as the 'domed' ceiling, specialized recommendations and considerations might be needed to create an optimal environment for Council Chamber activities.
- **Engineering Services:** Structural engineering services may be needed to ensure the feasibility of structural changes, while mechanical and electrical engineering services address the specific needs of both the Annex and City Hall spaces. These services contribute to the overall project cost, ensuring that the construction aligns with engineering best practices.

B. Construct Offices in Annex and Leave Council Chambers in Place (\$350K)

This option will entail many of the same construction details as outlined in the option above; however, there will be cost savings by leaving the Council Chambers in place.

Concerns include:

- The disconnect between City Hall and the Annex requiring residents to shuttle between both locations while doing business.
- Even with major upgrades, the older Annex with its domed ceiling is not a suitable office environment for day to day operational work and could present health and safety issues.
- Poor and less than optimal office environment could affect hiring and retention of staff.
- Considerable costs in AC installation, drop ceiling installation, blinds, lighting.
- Does not address the need for storage space and meeting rooms.

C. Relocate Council to White Rock Community Centre (WRCC) and Construct Offices in Vacated Space (\$270K plus revenue loss of \$100K totals \$370K)

While there are some savings in not constructing a dedicated Council Chamber, there are significant estimated costs in providing a suitable interim audio-visual system and for ongoing chambers set up and take down. These costs are estimated at approximately \$100K based on a four year window in addition to approximately \$170K for office construction. An additional cost is the estimated loss of approximately \$100K in revenue. Concerns include:

- The WRCC is the City's flagship recreation facility that serves thousands of residents each year. Relocating Council meetings and Committee meetings to WRCC would be a significant disruption to recreation programs, fitness classes, community rentals, arts, programs, etc. This could create negative reactions from the public as it may be seen as council meetings are the direct result of their programs being cancelled or moved to a different location.
- Halls A, B and C would be required for Council and Committee meetings and the Gallery would be used for Closed Council meetings. Staff estimate that the use of the WRCC would impact over 1100-1500 resident visits each year with a corresponding loss of \$20,000-\$30,000 in revenue earned by the City's Recreation and Culture department.
- Storing and securing expensive audio-visual equipment in an environment open to the public.

- Having meetings off site will involve more staff time for both the IT and Corporate Administration Departments on meeting days. It will need to be assured that there is one staff person available in Corporate Administration during the day as meeting items arise. Last minute copies etc. will not be available. Meeting days for both departments due to additional set up, testing and back and forth between the sites will result in staff time lost for other duties each day a meeting is held.

DISCUSSION

The Annex is an older building that is not conducive to an office environment and requires maintenance work regardless of future plans. The proposed budgets in the draft Asset Improvement Financial Plan include \$175K for window and building membrane replacements and a drop ceiling in the areas adjoining the central auditorium. The auditorium that was previously used by a church should provide a good Council Chamber, subject to the mechanical, electrical, technological and other upgrades noted above.

Although more expensive, the option of relocating Council Chambers to the Annex and constructing offices in the vacated space provides the most seamless in service delivery for residents and developers. A dedicated Council Chambers provides the best atmosphere for Council meetings. The new offices, adjacent to other City services such as development, finance and administration, provide a modern, professional work environment that would better assist with recruitment and retention of staff.

Option A is the recommended option to provide best value for residents. The annualized incremental cost over the two other options is approximately \$20K to \$30K.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The \$480K cost of the relocation of the Council Chambers to the Annex and construction of offices in the vacated space is included in the draft Asset Improvement Financial Plan. It may be possible to save \$20K to \$30K per year with other options but these are offset by reduced level in service delivery with increased inconvenience to the public and staff as well as potential decreases in staff productivity and retention.

As there is no design work on the three options, the costs are for comparison purposes and very approximate at this stage.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Extensive community consultation will be needed before a concept for a Community Hub is finalized. The interim arrangements discussed in this report are required regardless and should be started early this year with communication on the City website.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

This project will involve every City department, either by addressing department needs or by facilitating construction.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This project aligns with the Council Strategic Priority of **Organization and Governance**, objective **to improve permit process to reduce wait times** as this objective will require offices for new staff.

OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES

Three options along with pros and cons are discussed above. A fourth option is to remain status quo, however, concerns with this approach include:

- Poor service as staff will be further squeezed into inadequate offices space and some staff potentially being accommodated in offsite rental office space, thereby causing a spatial disconnect between staff and residents.
- Difficulty in hiring and retaining staff.
- Inefficiency in locating and storing documents.
- Reduced quality of service to the public.

CONCLUSION

Council provided direction through recent Financial Plans to hire new staff to improve service delivery to White Rock residents. This initiative is also an action listed in Council's Strategic Plan. The limited space in City Hall cannot adequately accommodate these staff. Also, storage space and meeting rooms do not adequately meet current needs.

Four options, including the option to do nothing, are considered in this report. The option of relocating Council Chambers to the Annex and constructing offices in the vacated space is considered the option to provide the best interim (4-5 years) value to the City.

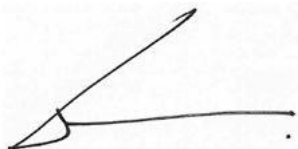
Respectfully submitted,



Jim Gordon, P.Eng.,
Director of Engineering and Municipal Operations

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

Council is strongly encouraged to give serious consideration to staff's recommendation, Option "A" outlined in this report. The proposed additional annual investment of \$20,000 to \$30,000, which will be sourced from Capital Reserves or Accumulated Surplus funds, is both justifiable and beneficial, with no impact on taxation levels. Neglecting this investment could result in significant disruptions in customer service and a decline in the quality of Council meetings. This investment is, therefore, crucial for maintaining high standards of Council operations and services.



Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer