

## Delegation on Advisory Committee Review (Item 4.5, CL-17-20)

Jim Young, September 17, 2020

I delegate today on the Advisory Committee Review process, to express my disappointment with the recommendations being made by the City Clerk and ask committee to recommend to council that staff move on with the recommendations of the citizens working group on Citizen Advisory Committees.

Henry Kissinger said that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat "Never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity." I am beginning to feel the same about improving Burlington Advisory Committees

We have missed opportunity after opportunity to improve engagement since: "Community-Based Government", 1997. "Inclusive Cities Canada", 2005. "Shape Burlington" in 2011, now we are about to miss another opportunity in 2020. I would remind you that of all the advice Council has received over the years about advisories; it has been universally agreed that the status quo was and remains the worst possible option.

Yet, reading the proposal offered by staff to committee today, it seems to be proposing one further internal review of the external review of the internal staff direction from 2018, with no possible conclusion before 2021/22. Missing yet another opportunity.

By 2022 we will elect a new council, who may well have different feelings about advisories and so another missed opportunity leads to another missed opportunity ... Ad Infinitum.

I can understand a reluctance on the part of a very professional staff to blend their professional guidance, of which they are rightly proud and eminently well qualified to provide, with advice from mere citizens, who despite our lack of qualification or expertise, have an honest and well-intended desire to provide the lived experience of Burlington residents that can deliver balance to that sometimes distant professional decision making process.

But I don't understand reluctance from council members. This council was elected largely on a mandate to improve engagement with citizens. That mandate came from citizens, from your taxpayers, from your electorate. Not from staff.

Now at the first bloom of serious citizen engagement, citizens advice that is cohesive, well researched and presented in a well-documented fashion, you are being advised by staff to ignore your citizen's mandate in favour of the status quo. Is this the council we elected?

Accepting this recommendation will probably bury the excellent work done by this citizens review team for years. If not forever.

So I have to ask, does council really seek improvement in the advisory process?

If so, please invest the time to re-read the team report, let the members of the review team come back again, as a team, albeit via zoom to discuss with council, to clarify and flesh out our 10 recommendations. And please let us do that, without the extraneous diversion that was the March

Workshop; without the consultants three ring circus. A diversion from our work the Review Team did not want and which did not serve council well.

Just 7 council members and the 5 people who devoted hundreds of hours of their time trying to help you.

Their commitment and their work has earned this and we believe council deserves this too.

Let me leave this committee and the city clerk with this challenge: Which, if any, of our 10 recommendations would lessen the effectiveness of advisories, which of them would limit the breadth and inclusivity we so urgently need in City Advisories, which of them would render council less informed, which of them is so intractable they require a further two years of investigation?

If you cannot answer these questions you must vote against this recommendation.

Council needs to take this initiative out of the City Clerk's "parking lot", put it in drive and put Citizen Advisories on the road to the kind of success mandated by you and so heartily endorsed by your electorate, the people of Burlington.

Further hesitation and delay will simply erode the confidence of existing advisories and insult all the hundreds of citizens who gave their time and effort to action labs, surveys and online input just to be ignored by one more city council, one more time. Is this the council we elected?

Thank You.

Jim Young

September 17. 2020.