

City closes Onni deal with \$1M land sale

Clark snipes at Bell before 4-3 vote in favour

BY BRENT RICHTER, NORTH SHORE NEWS APRIL 10, 2013

THE long and, at times, rough public process for the Onni Safeway site development has come to a definitive end.

The Onni towers got their fourth and final reading from council before just a handful of council watchers in the City of North Vancouver gallery Monday night, a stark contrast to the overflow crowds that came out to the two public hearings held in March and November last year.

Onni has been on track for approval since a second public hearing was held in March for the 344 units of housing in 24-storey and 18-storey towers, along with an eight-storey office tower and 40,000 square feet of commercial space. Council narrowly voted in favour of the development at the end of the hearing.

In keeping with the contentious public process that dogged the project, the final approval came with one last political provocation at the council table.

"1308 Lonsdale keeps getting curiouser and curiouser. First we had a hijacked public meeting, then we had a hijacked public hearing and now, one of the members of council has taken it upon themselves to negotiate with the developer. In my 15 years on council, I have never seen such a thing," said Coun. Rod Clark, referring to Coun. Don Bell.

In November, Bell was one of the councillors who voted to force Onni into a second public hearing. Between the public hearings, Onni altered the design to incorporate a number of changes suggested by Bell that were meant to address some of the most frequent criticisms of the project. Among the changes: increasing the setbacks from 14th Street, Stella Jo Dean Plaza and the Grande condo building, opening a laneway through the building, shifting storefronts to 13th Street as well as moving all the traffic ingress and egress to 13th Street.

"I would suggest the council member who negotiated with the developer leaves all of us, by some area of association, open to charges of collusion," Clark continued. "All of the flip-flopping is a sight to behold. The only sweet irony left is the developer can name the project the Bell Centre."

But, Bell said, there was nothing inconsistent in his voting record and talking with developers as well as residents is "all in a day's work" for a good councillor trying to do right by his community.

"I'm not surprised. That's the sort of confrontive or aggressive attitude (Clark) has displayed in the past on different things. What I was doing was what I considered to be the work of a councillor," Bell told the North Shore News Tuesday. "I was doing what I think a responsible councillor should be doing and that is listening to the people and trying to address the issues I've heard raised."

The vote split council along the same lines as the original approval after the second public hearing, with Couns. Guy Heywood, Pam Bookham and Clark voting against.

The vote was followed by one last piece of housekeeping so that the developer can begin finalizing its

designs and apply for building permits: the sale of two strips of city-owned laneway land on the site to Onni. Council agreed to sell the land in January 2011, pending a successful rezoning of the property.

Onni will pay the city \$1,040,000 for 2,500 square feet of laneway needed to complete the project, which a city staff report notes is a good value for the land.

Unsustainable case of selling land to pay for amenities !

The money will go to the city's civic amenity fund, which council can use to fund future amenities including the Harry Jerome Recreation Centre, Lot 5 in Shipbuilders' Square, the North Vancouver Museum and Archives, or Presentation House Gallery.

In exchange for allowing Onni to build the residential towers above its official community plan limit and at almost double the density called for in the area, the developer is including 10,000 square feet of non-profit housing (approximately 12 units), childcare space, a separate \$1-million contribution to the city's amenity fund, a connection to the Lonsdale Energy Corporation, infrastructure upgrades to the surrounding streets and utilities, \$250,000 in public art, and green building standards.

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