

City of North Vancouver triggers Lower Lonsdale BIA process

Business owners would have 30 days to oppose plan

[Jeremy Shepherd](#) / North Shore News

July 19, 2016 03:52 PM



file photo Cindy Goodman, North Shore News

Lower Lonsdale may be 30 days from a business improvement area, following a split council vote Monday night.

Council voted 4-3 to trigger a counter petition, meaning it would take opposition from 50 per cent of the waterfront district's property owners – representing at least half the area's land value – to defeat the BIA.

Owners will have 30 days to respond to a petition set to be mailed out later this summer.

The petition process shouldn't begin until after Labour Day, according to Coun. Don Bell.

Despite some qualms about the BIA's branding conflicting with the city's, Bell said he would support the BIA only if the petition was mailed out after Labour Day.

"I want (property owners) to have a fair chance ... if they wish to oppose it," he said.

Bell's push to delay the petition was defeated.

All businesses in Lower Lonsdale, bordered by Forbes and St. Georges avenues to the east and west respectively and East Fourth Street to the north, should be enriched by the BIA, according to Coun. Holly Back.

"I find that people who don't agree with the BIA have probably never been in small business," she said.

The BIA's functions range from organizing festivals to cleaning up graffiti to promoting the waterfront district's 496 businesses.

"No matter what your business is, you need advertising," Back said.

The BIA would collect between \$1 and \$1.10 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For a business with an assessed value of \$430,000 – the median in the Lower Lonsdale – that amounts to an annual levy of \$440.

"If you can't afford (the levy), you probably shouldn't be in business," she said.

Landlords generally pass the levies to their tenants through triple-net leases, noted Stephen Mikicich, West Vancouver's manager of community planning, who spoke to council in May.

Businesses with larger assessments, such as the Pinnacle Hotel and the Lonsdale Quay Market and Hotel, would pay between 50 and 55 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

The levy is too high for cash-strapped businesses, argued Coun. Pam Bookham.

"Every year at budget time we have representatives from the business community come forward bemoaning the fact that they pay an exorbitant amount in taxes," she said.

While Bookham judged that dentists and lawyers working on the second storey would see negligible benefits, Coun. Craig Keating described the BIA as a "tide that raises all boats."

Mayor Darrell Mussatto agreed. "I think it will benefit all (businesses) in the area, whether they're first floor, second floor, or penthouse."

Besides benefiting businesses, the BIA will be a boon to employees, who will be able to work and run errands in a more vibrant community, according to Coun. Linda Buchanan.

In what was at times a contentious debate, Coun. Rod Clark bashed the negative petition as "taxation without representation."

While he credited the BIA supporters for their good intentions, he later described them as "people who have blown \$120,000 of our taxpayer money so far and have nothing to show for it."

Previous attempts to form a Lower Lonsdale BIA were frustrated in 2010 and 2013. The fact that the issue keeps resurfacing shows the dogged determination of the volunteers, according to Keating.

If successful, the BIA will begin operating Jan. 1, 2017. They have requested an initial operating budget of \$500,000.

The board of the BIA will be elected from property owners and businesses in Lower Lonsdale.