



## Johnston tackles Richmond's bureaucracy

**Councillor wants external accountants to look at City of Richmond's services**

[Graeme Wood](#) / Richmond News

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2014-2018 Richmond City Council councillor Ken Johnston

Coun. Ken Johnston wants the City of Richmond to open the books so external accountants can take a hard look at how municipal money is spent.

But some on council think a service level review can be done internally.

Johnston's referral to staff at a finance committee meeting on Monday will mean staff will, first, look at the "potential" for an operational service level review and, second, investigate the "desirability" of an external review.

At issue for Johnston is getting value for money out of city services by finding potential expenses that are duplicated amongst departments or services that are outdated.

[On Monday, Johnston was one of three councillors to vote against a 2.89 per cent property tax hike.](#)

[\(http://www.richmond-news.com/news/richmond-property-taxes-hiked-another-three-per-cent-1.1751538\)](http://www.richmond-news.com/news/richmond-property-taxes-hiked-another-three-per-cent-1.1751538)

Mayor Malcolm Brodie agreed with the review's basic premise but thinks it can be done internally.

"We can do the analysis," he said.

"I'm suggesting there's different eyes on it," Johnston retorted.

"If I could be convinced that this was being done, I wouldn't have put the motion on the floor," he added.

Johnston's initial referral was for staff to flat-out inquire about the feasibility of an external review, but Brodie convinced the committee to look at both internal and external options.

Coun. Bill McNulty agreed with an internal review.

"I don't think we need to hire anybody. ...I don't think we have to waste taxpayers' money for this kind of thing," he said.

Johnston noted it wasn't a full audit.

"I don't think it would cost a fortune but that's what I'm asking staff to look at," said Johnston.

Coun. Harold Steves suggested much of the review could be done at committee levels and within departments.

Coun. Chak Au, Johnston's running mate from the Richmond Community Coalition, sided with Johnston.

"I think we need a third eye," said Au.

Councillors Linda McPhail, Derek Dang and Alexa Loo were quiet during the debate.

Coun. Carol Day sided with Au and Johnston.

"I think this review is an excellent idea. We should never be afraid of opening the books," she said.

Johnston said if staff were given the option to conduct an internal or external review the answer coming back to the finance committee would be obvious.

"If staff says the city doesn't need this, it doesn't go anywhere," said Johnston.

The referral may take several months and, if implemented, any findings would apply to the 2016 budget.

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