

# north shore news

## North Vancouver school board to allow cameras

### Trustees ease off on banning videos of board meetings

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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The North Vancouver school district office Photo file, North Shore News

The North Vancouver school board is easing back on its ban on recording and livestreaming board meetings - sort of.

In recent months, the board has been telling residents they aren't allowed to record or broadcast meetings because there isn't an established policy on recording in the boardroom.

Former school board candidate Shane Nelson charged that he has a right to record in a public space guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Addressing the controversy was one of the first orders of business after the newly elected trustees were sworn in and **Barry Forward and Megan Higgins were elected chairman and vice-chairwoman respectively on Dec. 9.**

Initially, the trustees were only expected to vote on a motion that would see the matter discussed at various committees and subcommittees over the next three months, with some possible resolution in February or March. Though virtually everyone at the table agreed with developing a new policy, Susan

**Skinner pushed the board to go another step forward and allow recording devices in meetings in the meantime, as long as the board chairman approves it first.**

The decision would bring the North Vancouver school district in line with the West Vancouver school board, where Skinner said she "plagiarized" the policy from.

"To be walking the walk with respect to engagement and a welcoming atmosphere, increasing. .. transparency and accountability to the public, I don't know why we would shy away from it from this meeting onward," she said, "Still, there were concerns from a faction at the table that unregulated cameras could result in invasions of privacy, especially if children are present."

Franci Stratton noted she was approached by one member of the public who was uncomfortable with being recorded without consent. Cindy Gerlach argued trustees should get their "ducks in a row" rather than make policy willy-nilly.

"I have concerns we are moving too fast. I'm not opposed to the videoing, I just like to make sure we do it in a respectful, reflective way," she said. Rookie member Jessica Stanley countered that, given the ambiguity of the policy, it would be better to err on the side of transparency. In her first foray into debate at the table, Higgins, who is also a lawyer, put forward another amendment that would require anyone with a camera refrain from recording members of the gallery and children as well as ensure their camera setup does not block anyone's view or disrupt the meeting.

After some procedural wrangling, the entire motion passed 4-3 with Stratton, Gerlach and Christine Sacré opposed.

Forward questioned whether the board even had the authority to tell residents they couldn't record.

"I just don't know if we're in a position, as a public body, to restrict people from recording what we do as a board. That's just my interpretation of that. I haven't heard any arguments or case law that we can deny it, especially according to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms," he said. District staff did seek out a legal opinion, according to secretary treasurer Georgia Allison, and it vindicated the board's previous position. "The legal opinion included all factors, including the Charter of Rights, whether there was any infringement of the individual's charter rights versus the board's rights to set procedure," she said.

Following the meeting, Nelson praised the board for finding a balanced approach. "Now they've reversed course and (gone) back towards transparency and I think that's a good idea," he said.

*Editor's note: An earlier version of this story incorrectly referred to trustee Skinner as Lisa, not Susan.*

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