

# north shore news

## No 'dirty secrets' at district "It was just a river."

Richard Walton / North Shore News

November 9, 2014 12:00 AM

Vancouver - Dear Editor: Recently North Shore News' Trevor Carolan, in a column entitled, "District of North Vancouver's Dirty Little Secret" falsely implied that North Vancouver District was increasingly conducting business in camera which should be held in public. This is not accurate and we wish to put the record straight.

First, the Community Charter is very clear on what items are discussed in camera: when the agenda is prepared by senior staff they follow the guidelines very clearly, even publicly listing which provisions of the Act provide direction for each item proposed for an in-camera discussion. Every member of council has an opportunity to challenge the in-camera status prior to a meeting commencing and the meeting does not proceed until a motion has passed indicating that all members are in agreement. Councillors frequently challenge the rationale and discussion ensues to determine council is in agreement. And contrary to what was stated in the article, legal advisors are rarely present, not "often".

Most discussions held in camera relate to intergovernmental relations, land negotiations which might impact zoning and provide unfair opportunities for profit speculation, and personnel issues. Some examples include: negotiations with Metro Vancouver on sewage cost allocation, the provincial and federal governments on transportation improvements, MMBC on the new recycling regime, First Nations on service agreements, the school district on property acquisition and disposition, and unions on new collective agreements. Contrary to the suggestion in the column, which has now been repeated by some candidates in the election, council has not and does not meet with developers in camera. The rigid rules are adhered to but the number of meetings held in camera varies each year depending on the nature of the business in front of council.

Council meets formally between 140 and 190 hours per year and the percentage of time spent in camera in 2014 will likely be close to 25 per cent, the lowest amount in almost a decade and not too far off the 32 per cent average. By way of comparison, when Mr. Carolan served as a councillor, district council met 281 times over three years, of which 109, or 39 per cent of those meetings, were in camera.

Contrary to Mr. Carolan's column, the district has no "dirty little secret" regarding in camera meetings, and given his experience as a councillor, to suggest otherwise is disrespectful and misleading to the public.

Mayor Richard Walton District of North Vancouver

© North Shore News