

Mayor's Q3 Update: Speaking Notes

With the first anniversary of our election as a Council in sight, I'm very pleased to give the third quarter progress report on where we are on some of the important work that we committed to do as part of our Strategic Plan.

During Council's August break there's been a lot of work going on in the background to advance Council's Vision.

Earlier this year Council developed a Strategic Plan that identifies multiple pillars, each with detailed actions to reflect the priorities of Council. It is a significant undertaking and the implementation is well underway. Council is fully committed to achieving the goals.

Before speaking to some of the pillars in our Strategic Plan I would like to cover some of the work underway inside the organization:

Our region and our community are growing at among the highest rates in Canada. The projected population estimated for Maple Ridge is more than 130 thousand residents by 2040.

The work that we are doing today lays the foundation for creating a vibrant future for our community and part of that work is ensuring that we have the team in place to deliver excellent service for our citizens and businesses. We also need a team that will work with our Council and future Councils to lay the policy foundations for the future.

A strong team means that you need to invest in human resources.

We started the recruitment of our new CAO before the break that has involved a comprehensive cross-Canada search and all of us on Council are impressed at the excellent candidates that expressed interest in the position.

We are closing in on the final stages with the candidates now, conducting in person interviews to discuss our vision for the community to ensure that the person who leads our organization is the most capable and best choice for our City now and our future.

A tremendous amount of work with considerable diligence has been undertaken by Council and the leadership hiring team to ensure we get this choice right, without doubt the single most important decision this Council will make.

This is a perfect opportunity to once again acknowledge Kelly Swift for her work as interim CAO, stepping up to maintain momentum on our Strategic Plan and work plan. Her leadership, ably supported by General Managers, David Pollock and Christine Carter and Acting General Manager David Boag has helped us navigate through the first year of our term with progress on the Strategic vision for our community..

On behalf of Council, thank you for your continued professionalism and leadership. I am also pleased to announce and give a warm welcome to the core management team Michelle Lewis, Director of Human Resources. She and her team will assist in building the strength and needed

human capital to move our City forward to meet the future needs and demands of a growing city.

I want to transition into some of the key areas of our Council Strategic Plan, the first being that of

Public Safety.

As our residents and businesses know the imposition of modular housing model at Burnett Street has caused Council and the public significant concern. Given the lessons learned from the Royal Crescent site, Council was not interested in further low barrier operations, and strongly advocated on delivery of seniors housing as part of provision of various housing needs put forward in our 'Social Housing Plan'.

Council and staff invested significant amounts of time and resources in an attempt to come to a deliver the made in Maple Ridge solution, however that did not come to fruition as we had hoped.

In a few days the Burnett modular housing project will open and the remaining people at the St. Anne Camp will be provided access to housing, a needed step for the camp to come to an end. The new facility, Garibaldi Heights, will provide a place for those that have been living on the streets an opportunity to move forward in their lives. There is additional mental health programming offered at this location thanks to a CMH private donor.

Given this mental health focus, Council advocated with the province to follow best practices in mental health care and make this a substance free facility. This has been declined due to the assessments of BC Housing clients entering the facility. We understand clients will be under program agreements, and it is our expectation that the operator will enter into a housing and neighbourhood agreement with the city.

Once the housing is underway the City begin work to construct the neighbourhood park that was underway when the site was occupied.

Over the summer we launched the first components of our Community Safety Plan. We have doubled the private security patrols in our town centre to ensure that citizens feel a greater sense of security in the downtown.

These patrols have been highly visible and have been effective in addressing the challenges that local communities are seeing in urban areas. I've heard many positive comments from citizens and the business community about this initiative. In addition we have recruited two new Bylaws officers so we can be more proactive in our response to community safety problems.

Staff have invested in communication technology that ensures our staff and private security are able to respond quickly to service requests in and around our facilities.

Parks staff have pulled together a downtown activation program working with various cultural groups and the DMRBIA to ensure there are activities in the downtown on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

This has filled the park with citizens of all ages and these events have proven popular and have brought people into our downtown for fun and recreation. I'd like to acknowledge the creativity of the team and the partners that helped get these programs running.

Maple Ridge has always enjoyed a strong relationship with our RCMP detachment and we are working collaboratively to look at how we are delivering service to the community to ensure that we are using our resources for the maximum results.

As we continue the work on our Community Safety Plan we have commenced a Police service review and I want to thank Superintendent Hyland and the support team for their openness to this discussion. We believe that our community will benefit from this review, the goal being to ensure that we are responsive to the problems that are facing our community.

We are also considering new Bylaws to address behaviours on our streets that impact the feeling of safety for people shopping or involved in recreation throughout our community. Our team has been looking at legislation and the enforcement in other jurisdictions to ensure that our local Bylaws are practical, focused and enforceable.

I want to transition to the area of **Community Engagement**.

One of the big components of our Community Safety Plan revolves around housing solutions. I want to make sure that we emphasize that this is more than a discussion about housing for people that are dealing with addiction and mental health challenges. I will speak more about this topic later.

We are talking about some of the broad housing challenges in this market faced by seniors, people dealing with financial challenges, single parents and people with disabilities. Council is looking at partnerships to increase the supply of housing for people that are in these categories. In the coming weeks we are breaking ground on the new Community Services building that will bring 94 units of new affordable housing on stream in Maple Ridge.

In the coming months we will be looking at implementing a policy framework to do our part as local government to facilitate partnerships to bring more affordable units online to help those who need housing. We will be looking for engagement from the community in this area.

As we continue to roll out the Community Safety Plan in stages we will be engaging the business community and public to benchmark some of the current feelings around these topics and get feedback on the components of the operational plan as we move forward. This needs to be something that we all embrace as a community.

Council has started getting out into the community to conduct a series of formal 'business walks' so that we can have some face-to-face time meeting with the entrepreneurs in our community. These visits will help us identify employment opportunities, meet the innovators who are the industry leaders and determine how we, around this policy table, can create the strongest environment for success. We are strongly committed to ensure we do everything possible to provide an investment ready City.

I've heard a lot from people concerned about the closure of the Interfor Mill in Hammond. I want to acknowledge that this represents a significant impact on roughly 150 workers at the Mill and many other outside trades that have worked at the facility.

The Mill has been a fixture in our community for over 120 years. The City has spoken to the Mill leadership team and they have assured us that they have a transition plan for the staff members impacted by the closure.

What is the future of that site? Maple Ridge is lucky to be in a metropolitan area where the demand for commercial and industrial property is high. All of us around the table are confident that this valuable piece of land on the Fraser River and close to the Golden Ears Bridge will attract new owners.

I want to make sure that we reiterate something that we said at the beginning of our term, *"the creation of jobs and new economic opportunities is a priority for this council and any plan for this site needs to provide opportunities for employment, jobs that allow people to support their families and achieve their dreams."*

I want to talk about some of the work we are doing in the field of **Intergovernmental Relations**.

As I noted previously Council laid out five Strategic Priorities at the beginning of our term and this report is part of the commitment to be transparent and accountable on our progress in this work.

In the coming weeks we will be at the Union of BC Municipalities conference to champion the resolutions that we have submitted and to lend our support to communities around BC who are dealing with some of the same problems that we are and to see what the best practices are in BC and from other jurisdictions. Resolutions put forward by Maple Ridge champion local government autonomy and the banning of Tier 1 non-road diesel engines.

There is an upcoming federal election, and we will be watching closely as the various parties lay out their priorities and agendas and we look forward to working with the person our citizens send to Ottawa and the Government that we all elect to champion the important issues in our community.

This is also a time when we have the opportunity to hear from the Provincial leadership and for local government to lobby for changes to policies and funding to better address the challenges that we face on a day-to-day basis.

Regardless of who you support, Lower Mainland councils are looking for commitments on investment in affordable housing, wastewater and sewage treatment infrastructure, a permanent transportation fund, and commitments on sound environmental policy initiatives such as climate change.

Whomever will be ruling in Ottawa, Maple Ridge will be there in the late fall to advocate for our various needs with senior government representatives. As well we will be presenting at conference

a case for best practices in the Maple Ridge context with a desire to be an innovator on local social safety net development.

One thing that we have all learned in our first year of service is that relationships with senior government matter. We have strong local leaders and we have seen that when there is an alignment of purpose, we can achieve great things. We will continue to advocate with both the Province and the Federal government for the betterment of our community.

I want to finish on the topic of our **Community Vision and Future**.

I want to start with a rundown of some of the work that is part of the \$50 million investment in community facilities.

In the coming weeks the new synthetic turf fields at Thomas Haney will be opened bringing the number of synthetic all weather fields in our community up to six, from the two we started with a couple of years back. The work to complete the reorientation of the baseball diamond and the construction of the new field house, with washrooms, change rooms and a concession, will be completed in the coming months and we will send out invitation to the community for the formal grand opening.

The work to resurface the track at Maple Ridge Secondary is complete. This will be a key venue for the 2020 BC Summer Games and is a valuable facility for our local athletics organizations.

Before the summer break Council held a sod turning ceremony for the Albion Community centre and the Phase One work is underway. The land has been cleared and the sheet piles are being installed prior to the opening of the neighbouring elementary school. Council will be getting an update on the Phase Two portion of this project by the end of the year. We are awaiting news on grant applications for the project.

In the next couple of months Council will be seeing the recommendations to proceed with the updates at the Ridge Canoe & Kayak Club at Whonnock Lake. This facility and the dedicated volunteers with the club have helped launch a number of national caliber athletes into paddling.

We're also looking forward to approving the tenders for the Whonnock Community centre updates. This facility has been the social hub of Hammond since the 60s and the updates will make sure that it continues to be a community gathering place for the next 40 years.

Council continues to get updates on the work to move forward with the Silver Valley community gathering places and we are continuing the discussions on the addition of a new ice sheet for the community.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge that we have heard from the community about their desire for these projects to move forward, and I ask for the patience of the community as we seek to balance the desire to move quickly with a strong business and financial plan to ensure that we are balancing the priorities of the community.

Finally, the Aquatic centre upgrades are progressing on the opening schedule for early 2020. Council will be touring the facility again soon to look at the progress and we all have a chance to peek behind the construction fencing through the Pool Talk videos.

Moving from the parks projects, I just wanted to acknowledge that it's taken a year, but the train whistles have finally fallen silent. This has been a long journey, and I wish to remind the public that those train engineers will still be laying on the whistles when they see people or wildlife on or near the tracks. They've been blowing since 1874, when our City was founded.

In terms of growth, we have a record number of applications in our Planning department right now. One of the key aspects of our overall Official Community Plan was that 50% of the growth in our community would happen in our town centre. As you may have noted in the local newspaper, we have a development application at the old Mussallem Motors site, at the entrance to the downtown. This project is one of close to 3000 units that are either in process or in negotiation for our community.

In the coming months the formal Business Planning process will be unfolding and Council and the community will get full updates on the activity in each department. This is the time that we will formally review our Council Strategic Vision and make sure that we adjust that plan based on the data, and strongly align the 2020 to 2024 Financial Plan to delivering on the vision.

As we look at the financial plan we will also be mindful of the tax implications of our work to find the balance of affordability for our citizens and ensuring that we can deliver the services that you demand. It is always a tough conversation, but we're committed to doing the due diligence with the team to ensure that we are efficient and effective.

One final piece of our vision is the work to ensure that our Council Committees are strongly aligned with the Strategic vision for our community. That work is underway and the evaluations will be complete in conjunction with the new Financial Plan.

Our committees allow us to tap the passion and expertise of local citizens and entrepreneurs to help us make better decisions and to advance key components of our business plan. From tourism, economic development, historical preservation, agriculture, environment through to the essential work in our social sector, these committees are a valuable resource for Council and the community as a whole. All of us around the table are committed to making Maple Ridge a safe community. We want our friends and neighbours to not only be safe, but to feel safe. We want people to live healthy lifestyles and to help out by offering activities and facilities that allow people to live their best lives and to flourish.

We want to create an environment where people can come up with a business idea and get their doors open and live their dream as soon as possible. **We are all committed to the protecting the natural environment of our community.**

You will find no shortage of caring around this table. Each one of us have a story, some told, some untold, of hardship and challenges. That shapes our lens on issues. Our community is not so big that we are not one or two people away from a family that's impacted by the mill closure or the death of a person due to addiction. As we finish this update I want to remind people that

we as individuals and as a Council will always seek to make decisions that will make this place we live and love better.

We are listening. We may not respond to your post on social media, but we read them and we read the emails that come in. We all have to digest a lot of points of view in this job, and I can tell you that every person here has, at some point, changed their mind on an issue based on the feedback from the public. That's why community engagement is important to us.

One year in, the great lesson we have all embraced is that any issue that comes before us is seldom black and white. There are issues that have no easy answer, and there will be times where we will dig in to try to see if there's a better way to do things. We ask for your patience as we explore ways to innovate, and we hope that you will support us when we try new things.

These updates are intended to remind you that we have a plan, and that we are all, council, staff and our committees, focused on working hard on that plan, together.

Before I conclude, I want to talk about something that's coming up in less than a year, something that will demonstrate what we can achieve when we work together.

One of the fun things that we've worked on over the summer is bringing the team together for the 2020 BC Summer Games. This is a group of people that bring a broad base of community and business expertise to the table from all parts of the political spectrum. It is reminder that the best things we do in our community come from the times that we celebrate the shared values that we have, and work shoulder to shoulder with a common purpose. We will host over 3500 youth athletes next July and we will show the province how amazing Maple Ridge is.

Maple Ridge is a great place to live. It's a great place to do business, and we are proud to serve this community. All of us around this table, all of our staff and all of us who live here aspire to make this place even greater, and we are well on the way.

That concludes my update. Thank you taking the time to listen and you can reach out to us at mayorandcouncil@mapleridge.ca if you have comments or questions.