

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 11, 2018
TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Tim Schauer and Tim Leavitt, Co-Chairs, Vancouver Strong Executive Sponsors Council
RE: **Executive Sponsors Council Workplan Update and Recommendation for Replacement Revenue Sources for VPD funding**

The Vancouver Strong Executive Sponsors Council (ESC) continues to make progress on its work to develop for your review and consideration a long term, sustainable funding strategy that will ensure the future health and prosperity of our city by maintaining quality City services, improving our economy and creating opportunities for all residents.

The purpose of this memo is to request a timeline extension for presenting our final funding strategy recommendation, to deliver a recommendation for replacement revenue sources for Vancouver Police Department funding, and to provide a brief review of the Vancouver Strong initiative, our progress to date and the path forward.

TIMELINE EXTENSION

In February 2018, when the Vancouver Strong Mid-Point Report was provided to City Council, our goal was to present a proposed funding package for City services and capital improvements to City Council by May 2018. Since then, we have determined that additional time is needed to allow for a broad-based community engagement process and to place any elements in the package that would require voter approval on a future election ballot.

We appreciate the Council's concurrence with an extended timeline to deliver our comprehensive funding package recommendation for City service enhancements, capital investments, and policy adjustments to December 2018.

REPLACEMENT REVENUE FOR POLICE FUNDING

There is one aspect of the funding strategy that requires attention well before the end of the year: A recommendation to replace \$6.1 million for police services from a new indoor space license fee surcharge, currently set to go into effect on January 1, 2019.

For Council's review and consideration, our recommendation for replacement sources of revenue is outlined below.

RECOMMENDATION FOR POLICE FUNDING REPLACEMENT REVENUE

During our discussions, we have gained an appreciation of the complexity of the City as a service organization as well as a corporate entity. We have also come to appreciate the extreme difficulty of crafting a funding approach that balances a wide spectrum of competing interests in the community.

The police revenue package adopted in February 2017, provided a multi-year staffing strategy for VPD and included revenue from several sources, including a new indoor space license fee surcharge on retail/commercial/ industrial spaces and multi-family units. This new surcharge is set to become effective as of January 1, 2019, but the police funding revenue package included a contingent clause that would repeal the indoor space surcharge if an equivalent and more preferable method of funding is developed and enacted by the end of 2018 as part of the larger, more comprehensive funding discussion.

The new indoor space surcharge is complex to administer and would require the City to hire additional staff in order to implement. We recommend the new indoor space surcharge be repealed and the \$6.1 million in funding for police services be replaced with the below revenue sources:

Revenue Sources	Dollars generated (\$ millions)	Tax rate increase
Savings due to ease of implementation and revenue collection	\$0.25	
Utility tax increase 2019	\$2.39	2.2%
Utility tax increase 2020	\$2.00	1.8%
Business license surcharge (remove cap on companies with more than 400 FTEs)	\$0.56	
Business license surcharge (apply to not-for-profit companies with four or more employees or with revenue greater than \$12,000 per year)	\$0.90	
TOTAL	\$6.10	

The ESC utilized the following rationale in developing this recommendation:

- **More effectively applies the current business license surcharge to capture the existing base without raising rates.** The current \$90 per employee per year business license surcharge (BLS) is dedicated exclusively to funding improvements to the City's street system and paying off transportation bonds (generating \$2.6 million annually) and increasing capacity in the City's police department (generating \$0.8 million annually). These two services are used – either directly or indirectly - by every citizen, employee and business in the city. Further, the ESC recognizes that the business license surcharge is currently the only broadly applied tax exclusive to business activity in the city.

By eliminating the current cap of 400 employees on large employers, the base to which the business license surcharge applies is expanded in a way that more accurately captures the footprint of larger employers, dedicating this revenue to City services that all employers use.

Approximately 11 employers are anticipated to be impacted by this change. These companies employ an estimated total of 9,685 FTEs, and removing the cap is anticipated to result in the surcharge applying to 1.3 percent of total employment within the city. The adjustment also captures revenue from a measurable segment of employment within the city – the nonprofit sector. There are approximately 10,186 full time equivalent jobs in the city associated with a total of 186 individual nonprofits. Of these, 123 have four or more employees. Notably, the largest of these, PeaceHealth, employs approximately 4,500 FTEs. The ESC recognizes that the nonprofit sector by its very nature endeavors to meet community needs that otherwise may not be met at all. However, as noted above, nonprofit entities contribute to demand for essential services that the BLS is designed to fund. Given recent feedback from stakeholders, Council may want to consider phasing in the new requirement for non-profits and large businesses.

- **Preserves exemptions for the smallest non-profits:** The recommendation preserves the exemption to obtain a business licenses for any business that earns less than \$12,000 per year and for nonprofits with less than four employees.
- **Maintains engagement with the business community in a constructive manner.** The ultimate success of the Vancouver Strong effort will depend in part on the support of the business community. Consequently, there is measurable value in listening to concerns raised by the business community with respect to the new indoor space surcharge.
- **Ease of implementation and administration.** As we looked to replace the adopted, but not yet implemented, ordinance for indoor space and multi-family unit business surcharges, we learned of its complexity for those who would pay it as well as for the City, who would administer and account for it. Because the BLS and the utility tax are currently administered by the City, the recommended adjustments to these will not increase administrative burden for either the payer or the City, minimizing administrative complexity and costs.
- **Avoids new fees/taxes on new construction and multi-family housing.** The recommendation acknowledges the near-term shortage in affordable housing and endeavors not to aggravate this situation in the context of this recommendation for replacement revenue. (However, the ESC notes that the comprehensive service package may contemplate revenue sources that impact the cost of housing in Vancouver.)
- **Preserves flexibility for future adjustments to this revenue.** As we develop a comprehensive service and revenue package, further adjustments and refinements to this revenue may be needed. Consequently, replacement revenue should preserve the maximum flexibility for

refinement in the context of future phases of the Vancouver Strong recommendation while continuing to maintain ease of administration.

VANCOUVER STRONG INITIATIVE

In early 2017, the City, working with a Community Resource Team completed a focused effort to identify service gaps at the Vancouver Police Department and develop a funding package to address them. This effort resulted in the City Council adopting a package of fees and taxes to address the gaps in police service. In response, business and community leaders issued a call for the City to commit to a broad-based community engagement process to develop a structural funding solution that will provide stability and predictability for businesses, residents and for City services.

As a result of that call for action, in March 2017, the City convened a group of business and community leaders to play a key role in developing this structural solution. This group is referred to as the Executive Sponsors Council (ESC) and the initiative as Vancouver Strong.

The ESC has been meeting since May 2017, and through a series of meetings we have gained a thorough understanding of the scope of City services, funding challenges and opportunities, and financial tools. The ESC has come to understand how limited and shallow the revenue tool box is for the City to address growing service needs.

We began our work with an understanding of the City's Strategic Plan and a collective vision for a strong Vancouver. Our challenge is to improve our city by taking action to prevent a state of decline and to make viable the community's aspirations for Vancouver. We believe that through a strategic approach to investing in City services, we can maintain safety and improve livability, vibrancy, and economic vitality for all.

The goal of Vancouver Strong is to develop a long-term, comprehensive, streamlined and sustainable funding package that will enable the City to invest in the capital improvements and services identified in the Strategic Plan and other adopted City plans to serve the Vancouver community. The ESC will be conducting a community engagement process to inform development of a funding package before presenting a proposed funding package to City Council by the end of 2018.

FUTURE GROWTH AND REVENUE CONSTRAINTS

Vancouver is currently experiencing population and economic growth which has increased demand for City resources and services. Since the end of the recession, Vancouver's population has increased by over 3,200 new residents per year and is urbanizing at the fastest pace in a generation. In response, the City has made great strides to address some of our most critical service needs through a disciplined approach to managing resources, including cost containment, efficiency improvements and service reductions as well as a series of focused efforts around core service areas such as fire and emergency

medical services, affordable housing, streets and police. The City provides services to nearly 25,000 more citizens and 3,000 new businesses than it did just 10 years ago – with 110 fewer City employees.

Despite incremental adjustments to the City's revenue structure and an ongoing focus on efficiencies and fiscal discipline, gaps persist in key areas of City services. These gaps are forecast to continue to widen each year due to ongoing demand from a growing population paired with the constraints in the basic revenue structure that funds general City services.

The intricacies of the revenue system in Washington State and the compounded impacts of the City's repeal of the business and occupation tax in the early 1990s, the statewide tax reform initiatives passed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and the economic impacts of the great recession, have all resulted in the City's general revenues lagging behind inflation and not keeping pace with the growth in demand for services.

The largest three revenues for the City's general fund – property tax, sales tax and utility tax on city owned utilities – make up 73 percent of the total revenues. The City's largest and most stable general revenue – property taxes – is the most constrained, with the revenue base limited to the lower of 1 percent annual growth or inflationary index regardless of how strong or weak the economy is. Sales tax is highly volatile and susceptible to economic swings.

While the near-term forecast for the City indicates financial stability, the impact of the structural imbalance in how core City services are funded will become challenging, and if not proactively addressed now, we will start experiencing declining service levels across all general City services in the very near future.

THE PATH FORWARD

The ESC will continue to meet through November 2018 and has developed a work plan (attached) to develop a final recommendation. This summer City staff, in partnership with ESC members, will implement a public engagement effort to gain broader input on a draft recommendation.

We have identified the following decision-making considerations to use in developing our comprehensive recommendations for City services, capital investments and policy changes:

- Helps retain and/or attract talent to the local community and economy
- Serves as a catalyst to lead and promote private investment
- Prevents problems or proactively addresses cause
- Provides a tangible benefit to residents, especially those who are the most vulnerable or underserved
- Enhances relationships and connections among Vancouver residents
- Promotes social and geographic equity of service delivery and social benefits
- Focuses on services or responsibilities that rest solely or primarily with the City
- Provides opportunities for positive financial or community return on investment
- Reflects stewardship of what we already have
- Has potential to increase city revenue base

- Focused toward the long-term (sustainability and prevention)

Considerations for development of a revenue package to fund new or enhanced services include:

- Fair and holistic: Distributes revenue generation across sectors, users and customers
- Sustainable: Keeps pace with inflation over time to help Vancouver achieve its vision
- Simple: Helps simplify the taxing structure
- Scalable: Can grow with Vancouver
- Stable: Generates reliable and predictable revenue
- Equitable: Results in no disproportionate impacts on certain groups or populations.

Thank you for considering our recommendation for replacement revenue for Vancouver Police Department funding. We believe this recommendation provides a more streamlined and equitable approach to raising the revenues needed for police services.

We look forward to continuing our work on developing a comprehensive funding package for your consideration later this year. We also look forward to engaging with a broad group of community leaders and Vancouver residents to seek feedback as we develop this plan.

We are committed to helping make our community a better place. By developing a comprehensive funding strategy for city services today we can maintain the safety and improve the livability in our city for the future. We believe this work will help to ensure a strong future for Vancouver, a place people are proud to call home.

ATTACHMENT:

- Work plan

VANCOUVER STRONG
Executive Sponsors Council
Work Plan
DRAFT – May 13, 2018

	Meeting	Description	Public outreach
10	March 8	<p>Topics: ESC workplan, revenue decision criteria, phase 1 recommendation</p> <p>Purpose: To move ahead with longer time frame and advance phase 1 recommendations</p> <p>Materials: Draft workplan, draft revenue criteria, revenue scenarios for phase one, calculator</p>	<p>Briefings with stakeholders</p> <p>Website</p>
11	April 12	<p>Topics: Phase 1 recommendation, revenue criteria, outreach plan</p> <p>Purpose: To finalize phase 1 recommendation and revenue criteria, to provide input on outreach and engagement plan</p> <p>Materials: Memo, revised phase 1 scenarios, draft revenue criteria, draft outreach and engagement plan</p>	Website
12	May 24 (Operations center)	<p>Topics: Formalize final initial phase recommendation, capital investments, decision-making framework for long-term investments</p> <p>Purpose: Consider scenarios for capital investments and how recommendations will be made</p> <p>Materials: Capital investment scenarios</p>	<p>Website</p> <p>Email update/social media</p>
13	June 21 Note: 9am – 3pm (Tour of waterfront park)	<p>Topics: Service package scenarios for operating investments, revenue scenarios</p> <p>Purpose: To advance package of investments and revenue package to present for broader public and stakeholder review</p> <p>Materials: Scenarios for operating investments</p>	<p>ESC led briefings with community groups and organizations (City staff provides tool kit of templates and materials)</p> <p>Enhance information sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newsletter/email - Factsheet Website
14	July Date TBD (Added meeting)	<p>Topics: Service package scenarios, revenue package scenarios and potential policy changes</p> <p>Purpose: To agree on public review package: operations, capital investments, revenue package and policy changes</p> <p>Materials: Scenarios for revenue enhancements and service enhancements</p>	<p>Information pop-ups and community awareness activities at farmer's market, park events, shopping center</p> <p>ESC led briefings with community groups and organizations (City staff provides tool kit of templates and materials)</p>

	Meeting	Description	Public outreach
	July - Aug	Community Leaders Roundtable / Summit	<p>Online feedback</p> <p>Information pop-ups and community awareness activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmer's Market - Park events - Shopping center booth - <p>information sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newsletter/email - Factsheet - Website, social media
14	Sept. 13	<p>Topics: Public engagement results, refine recommendations for service package, revenue package and policy changes</p> <p>Purpose: To hear results of public engagement on capital investment package and operating package and refine for final consideration and recommendation to City Council</p> <p>Materials: Public comment report, preferred scenario, report outline</p>	<p>Information sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newsletter/email - Factsheet - Website, social media
15	Oct. 25	<p>Topics: Recommendation to City Council</p> <p>Purpose: To advance the recommendation(s) and report to City Council</p> <p>Materials: Draft report with recommendations</p>	<p>Email update/social media</p> <p>Website</p>
16	Nov. 7	<p>Topics: Final recommendation to City Council</p> <p>Purpose: To adopt the final recommendation(s) and report to City Council and close out the ESC process</p> <p>Materials: Revised draft report with recommendations</p>	<p>Email update/social media</p> <p>Website</p>
	December	n/a	
	January	ESC recommendations presented to City Council	