

Council Member Motion

Notice given on: Wednesday, May 1, 2024

Meeting Date Wednesday, May 15, 2024
From Councillor Caljouw
Subject Establishment of a Public Variance Approval System

Background

I am asking for support for my proposed motion to send minor variances to be vetted and decided by staff of our municipality. This approach offers several benefits:

- (1) By empowering staff to review and decide on minor variances, we can significantly reduce staff time and cost.
- (2) Applicants will receive timely decisions, fostering confidence in our local government.
- (3) Staff members can apply predefined criteria consistently when evaluating minor variance requests.
- (4) Transparency will be maintained throughout the process, ensuring fairness.

This would leave Council to Concentrate on more complex cases that genuinely impact our neighbourhoods.

These minor variances could include items such as setback reductions, slight variations in building height, minor deviations from parking requirements, and signage adjustments. Staff will develop clear guidelines outlining the types of minor variances eligible for delegation and ensure adherence to all zoning regulations. Some examples are:

- (1) Setbacks: Reducing the distance a structure needs to be from a property line (side yard, front yard, rear yard). This might be requested to accommodate a specific deck design or an existing odd-shaped lot.
- (2) Building Height: Building a shed or garage slightly higher than the bylaw allows to accommodate additional storage needs.
- (3) Parking: Requesting permission for one less parking space than the bylaw requires due to limited space or alternative parking arrangements.
- (4) Signs: Installing a slightly larger sign than allowed for a business due to specific visibility needs.

Establishing a streamlined process where minor variance applications are reviewed directly by municipal staff would allow staff to assess applications against predefined criteria for minor variances, ensuring consistency and transparency.

By allowing staff to handle minor variances, we can significantly reduce processing times and applicants will receive prompt decisions, fostering confidence in our local government.

Recommendation

THAT during the Development Approval Process Service Review, staff be directed to look at ways to streamline the Development Variance Permit application approval process by delegating minor variances to staff.