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To:	GA List; SMH-GLOBAL@googlegroups.com
Cc:	Ken McRae; Rebecca Dufton; Faith Blacquiere
Subject:	[GA List] a post-Summit report of sorts
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There were 250 people, spread over about 20 tables. You were assigned to your morning and afternoon table. The day started out with Mayor Watson and Planning Committee Chair Peter Hume holding their speech (lasting 10 and 15 minutes respectively), followed by a half-hour window to put some questions. Then Pamela Blais made an economist's speech, saying setting the right price for things helps. Tiny window to ask questions. First Roundtable, 45 minutes. After good sandwiches, highly entertaining Jeffrey Tumlin, with a talk about transportation planners and all the things they don't know. Second Roundtable. An extremely summary sum-up by Peter Hume. For more detail, read the report to Planning Committee in May, when staff also will table a timetable/workplan for the Official Plan review. Or watch the 3-hour web cast at <http://ottawa.ca/online_services/council_live/index_planning_en.html> if you can get it to work (I couldn't, and it's not indexed). Or read on.

Who was there? David Reevely asked a city staffer. Here is the breakdown of the "guest list":

- Community associations and organizations 85-95
- Development industry professionals 35-45
- BIAs 5-7
- Advisory Committees 8
- Public at large 30-35
- Councillors, staff, etc. (not including facilitators and volunteers) 35

Right at the start, Watson explained that we're not only dealing with the OP and the Transportation and Infrastructure Master Plans, but also with the (obligatory) Development Charges by-law review.

He saw six things as key:

1- contain urban expansion

2- promote transit

3- develop suburbs into complete communities

4- make rural villages more complete

5- have a strong engine of economic growth

6- achieve greater predictability.

He further announced:

- the new Official Plan will include a focus on tall buildings

- selected Community Design Plans and Secondary Plans will be reviewed within one year

- the City's web site is going to be revamped

- there'll be a SWAT team that works with neighbours and developers to work out problems.

Peter Hume, in his remarks, stressed the absence of certainty, asserting that the lack of clarity was at the root of battles about development proposals. He predicted the city will soon see very tall buildings, but only at certain locations. He set out that the following policy discussions would take place in the next 18 months:

1- a tall buildings study

2- streets in transition (e.g., Meadowlands)

3- a small to medium-sized buildings study

4- how suburbs can become complete communities

5- sustainable rural villages

6- certain CDPs and SPs are to be reviewed immediately and confirmed in Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments (Greenbank, Colonel By Drive, Woodroffe -- I may well have missed some).

He repeated his master's references to a SWAT team that would aim for expedited decisions on specifically targeted zoning issues. He also promised new neighbourhood planning projects and a guaranteed time line for specific applications -- if staff misses the deadline the next application will be for free. Finally, he promised that Committees and Council would stick to the rules and not allow exceptions, i.e., there'd be certainty. At the end (I believe in respnse to a question), he talked about a new "neighbourhood connections office" -- presumably the urban equivalent of the Rural Affairs Office. He referred to "summit@ottawa.ca" but there's nothing up under that name that I could find.

In the brief question period I managed to get in:

<- Very pleased to hear the emphasis on clarity - - something that will benefit all parties.

- a public participation policy is on the books since 2003. Nice words. Where's the beef? For heavens sake, the Cityu is now worse than the NCC. It, in the last few years has finally stepped down from the open House model as a way to consult the public.

- a sign of hope: the City's web site that provides information about development applications -- as big improvement. However, it does not include a timeline for comments. When a planner was asked about that, his response was:
I don't control what information gets on there." Silos!

- Committees of Adjustment applications should be included and that process should be made far more transparent. Also, Council should give Committees of Adjustment guidelines on what constitute a minor variance.>

The Mayor, in response, took great exception to the City being worse than the NCC. He promised that Committees of Adjustment would be included in future.

(I left out the nasty bits of my script -- decided not to spoil the party early on:

- 11,000 tweets does not a communications policy make

- we know your love for photo ops and this won't change. But when it's reported that you scolded Councillors for asking too many questions, I really worry about the state of democracy in this City.)

Development Charges were very much the focus of Pamela Blais' talk. At one point she even showed a graph straight from a 2004 background study for the earlier DC review, showing very significant differences in the cost of providing infrastructure in the various suburbs. Amy Kempster and I (who were part of the Stakeholders Group on the by-law -- it has to be reviewed every five years) pleaded at the time to charge DCs in accord with what growing in that particular part of the city will cost. However, developer solidarity prevailed and the decision was to charge everybody in the suburbs the same -- a huge subsidy to development in Kanata West, among other "incorrect" pricing. Ms. Blais' argument would have fully supported our preference for differential pricing.

In the brief question period, Amy got in the proposal to do away with the 10% "discount" for transit (discount meaning here an amount that is deducted from the capital costs which lead to the DCs). The Greenspace Alliance made this plea as far back as 2008 to then-Minister of Municipal Affairs Jim Watson. It recently repeated the plea in letters to Mayor Watson and Premier McGuinty. (The discount is embedded in the *Development Charges Act*.) Ms. Blais' response was a simple "I agree."

Councillor Marianne Wilkinson put a very silly question about the waste that is the Greenbelt, apparently having swallowed wholesale the discredited paper by Ian Cross (rumoured to have been written at the behest of former Mayor Larry O'Brien -- see http://www.greenbeltcoalition.ca/2009/01/response-to-citys-white-paper-on-development-in-the-greenbelt/ for a critique).

Gary Sealy put a question about big boxes and how the highway system in effect subsidizes their existence.

Pamela's book is " Perverse Cities: Hidden Subsidies, Wonky Policy, and Urban Sprawl" (ref. http://www.amazon.ca/Perverse-Cities-Hidden-Subsidies-Policy/dp/0774818956). There are three copies in the OPL.

My first Roundtable was on "Growth in rural areas." There was a good mix around the table: rural residents, developers, Bob Brocklebank (FCA/Glebe), Councillor Moffat and Amy and I. There was an informative and civil exchange of views -- about the struggling village centres and about country lot estates.

Jeffrey Tumlin's book is "Sustainable Transportation Planning: Tools for Creating Vibrant, Healthy, and Resilient Communities" (ref. http://ca.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470540931.html). He had excellent slides, presenting seven points to keep in mind when doing transportation planning. The man has worked all over the world and has seen it all. I cannot possibly do justice to his highly entertaining yet hard hitting remarks, except to say that sex and even orgasm was mentioned more than once. Hume, in his sum-up said he'll be walking home as that seemed to come with certain advantages... Let's hope the City makes at least his slides available soon.

My second Roundtable was on Community Design Plans. Participants included Ted Fobert (servant of the development

industry), Lorne Cutler, someone from the Canadian Green Building Council and John Smit, second-in-command to John Moser, who dominated the discussion. He distinguished greenfield CDPs and CDPs in established areas, expressing his view that CDPs for the latter are going out of fashion because they just take too long and create false expectations. He said that the way to go was to create greater clarity in the OP (city-wide policy). Some examples were cited of CDPs that were unrealistic because their development had not included all stakeholders (such as major landowners).

Then it was over. Anna Hercz, who led the Choosing Our Future exercise for Ottawa and is about to retire, commented to me afterwards that major aspects of planning were not discussed -- including energy, food, resilience, pollution, GHG reductions... Indeed, in line with my response to Lorne Peterson on the day before the summit, the talk was all about buildings, roads and other infrastructure. The number of times that the word environment was mentioned could be counted on one hand.

In a post-mortem on Sunday afternoon called by Bob Brocklebank, the comment was made that clarity may mean it'll be made really clear how neighbourhoods will be screwed. It was noted that all this planning was very much top-down and that it is not at all clear what these various initiatives mean and how they would work out.

There were a few media reports:

24 Hours: CITY SPRAWL 'UNSUSTAINABLE' http://eedition.ottawa.24hrs.ca/epaper/viewer.aspx

Ottawa Citizen:

http://www.ottawacitizen.com/Watson+promises+zoning+SWAT+team+toughest+planning+problems/6522765/story.html

http://www.ottawacitizen.com/business/Ottawa+tall+buildings+underachieve+planning+summit+hears/6523879/story.html and several entries on the Ottawa Citizen's City blog, with contributions by Gray, Chianello and Reevely. If you start here and then go to "next" you probably catch them all: http://blogs.ottawacitizen.com/2012/04/26/some-very-low-hopes-for-the-planning-summit/

Others who attended may wish to add their perspective or correct my biases and inaccuracies.

Erwin

P.S.: Question: Do you think putting the 7-page, 39-point "Speaking Points" (posted here on 22 April) on the web site worthwhile or opportune? Replies to me only, please, so as not to overload the List. Thanks.