

**Submission to the City of Vaughan**

**Vaughan Ratepayer Policy Review Task Force**

**May 19, 2014**

**Co-Chair, Bernie DiVona, Vaughan Ratepayer Policy Review Task Force**

## Message from the Co-Chair--Vaughan Ratepayer Policy Review Task Force

Good evening, my name is Bernie DiVona, *Co-Chair*, Vaughan Ratepayer Policy Review Task Force and represent the Pine Valley Village Community Association.

Gila Martow, served as Co-Chair and President of the Beverly Glen Ratepayer Association, she is unable to attend this evening, but wishes to express her support with the recommendations of the task force.

We wish to express our gratitude with the July 2013 decision of Vaughan Council having approved of the Vaughan Ratepayer Policy Review Task Force.

In doing so, you recognize the opinions and concerns raised by both ratepayer associations and staff of the municipality. We refer to Page 2. *"Registered Ratepayer /Community Association Policy Review"*, June 17, 2013 which reads,

*" ... (Ratepayer) policy has been in effect since 1986 but not undergone a detailed review since 2004. The City has **grown and evolved since the policy was introduced and it is therefore appropriate to revisit the policy to ensure it is still relevant in the current environment.**"*

The Task Force in having completed our work, submitted our final report. We fundamentally understand and support staff comments and amendments, save and except one issue we feel has not been evaluated as we intended and proposed, i.e. ***Ratepayer Review Board-or for peer review.***

*We would like to address the issues and recommendations within the context of the mandate, terms of reference, and identified issues by staff, ratepayer associations and indeed members of council..*

## The Mandate of the Task Force

- **Provide the City of Vaughan Council with recommendations based upon the *knowledge and experience* by community/ratepayer association leadership.**

We owe a debt of gratitude to each participating community association. Special appreciation is owed to Anthony Francescucci, President Weston Downs Ratepayers Association, for his contribution and to all community leaders throughout the City of Vaughan generously contributing their time, care, and expertise to the task force and policy review.

According to the “City of Vaughan Policy Review Report”, produced by the City Clerk, June 2013, Page 5:

*“There are currently 20 associations registered under the City’s policy... Although the City does not formally track non-registered associations, **it is known that there are a number of active associations that are not registered with the City under the current policy**” (emphasis added)*

The Task Force included a total of *no less than 20 “recognized” and “known existing”* associations throughout the City of Vaughan. A detailed list has been submitted and attached to this submission.

## Ratepayer Associations – Participating and Non-participating

### Associations which expressed interest in participating

	NAME OF ASSOCIATIONS	Status	CONTACT PERSON	Position
1	Beverley Glen Ratepayers' Association	R	Gila Martow	President
2	Concord West Ratepayers' Association	R	Silvana Cavaliere-Galloro	Secretary
3	Crestwood Springfarm Yorkhill		Marilyn Richmond	President
4	Glen Shields Ratepayers' Association	R	Pauline Durso	President
5	Islington/Willis area		Franca Porretta	Former President
6	Kleinburg Village Core Ratepayers		Frank Greco	President
7	Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association	R	Ken Schwenger / Claudio	President
8	MacKenzie Ridge Ratepayers' Association	R	Robert A. Kenedy	President
9	Maple-Sherwood Ratepayers' Association	R	Angelo DiNardo	President
10	Maplewood Ravines, Ambassador Hills, Northdale		Antony Niro	President
11	Nashville Area Ratepayers Association (NARA)		Paul Mantella	President
12	Pine Valley Village Community Association		Bernie DiVona / Cesare Teodoro	Founding Chair and President
13	Pinewood Estates Ratepayers' Association	R	Pia Famiglietti	Secretary
14	The Valleys of Thornhill Ratepayers Association	R	Dr. Allen Aptekar	President
15	Vellore Village Residents		Mimi Badali-Robertson	President
16	Vellore Woods Ratepayers' Association	R	Elvira Caria	Chair
17	West Woodbridge Homeowner's Association	R	Nick Pinto / Josie Fedelli	President , V.P.
18	Weston Downs Ratepayers Association		Anthony Francescucci / Nadia Magarelli	President/Former President
19	Woodbridge Core Ratepayers' Association	R	Joanne Mauti	President
20	Wycliffe Ratepayers Association ( withdrew)		Franca Stirpe	Former Director

## Terms of Reference

The Task Force determined it prudent to focus the discussion, within the context of the 'Terms of Reference's provided by the City of Vaughan so as to improve or develop the actual language of the policy and to modify the existing policy language. As you know, the "Term of Reference" included:

- Geographic exclusivity;
- Registration requirements;
- Annual registration;
- Election of officers;
- Benefits of registration.
- City's role

The Task Force adhered to Rules of Order, and our Co-Secretaries were charged with recording minutes of each meeting.

All matters were voted upon, and in fact, it was decided a two-thirds majority of participating parties present at any meetings of the taskforce was needed. The purpose was to work towards a policy representative of the majority of communities throughout Vaughan wishing to have their individual community interests heard.

While the vast majority of all recommendations did receive unanimous consent, some recommendations did not. It is our submission, while dissent is expected on policy matters, it must be weighed to consider what has been proposed – is it fair, does it provide access and a lowering barriers of entry, and independence and transparency?



## Issues

Council Minutes of June 25, 2013, identified issues both by ratepayer groups and staff included the. Need for:

***“A streamlined registration process; Removal of geographic exclusivity; Broadening of the definition of ratepayer/community association” and minimum of membership of 10 households.***

The proposed changes include recommendations to address the lower of barriers of entry or “streamlined registration”.

For example, representation to be based upon ***“addresses”*** and not ***“individuals”*** in a household. It is recommended that the minimum membership requirements should be based on the size of the geography or identifiable area represented. If a group is seeking a large geographic boundary, then their minimum membership requirements should be larger than smaller geographic boundaries.

The Task Force has introduced the principle of ***“identifiable communities”***, as this a means to solicit and recognize a ratepayer association and the residents’ interests within their community. We ask you, who knows or has a greater interest than those living within an identifiable community?

In our view, long established associations ***“known to exist”*** should be ***“recognized”***.

The existing policy creates a paradox, as on the one hand, the city has confirmed they ***“know they exist”***, and indeed have existed for decades, but *don’t exist per the policy*.

This evening you will hear from associations each of possess the highest authority of association, become incorporated or registered within the Province of Ontario and do exist and have existed, but not within the City of Vaughan per the existing policy.

Why is this important? When there is an issue with an “identifiable community”, and the City of Vaughan ‘knows they exist”, but doesn’t exist per policy, the resident/taxpayers will not necessarily be notified or provided equal access to their elected council.

In our view, both long established and newly formed associations should demonstrate if they truly represent a community by the “minimum threshold’ requirement AND a ***process*** needs to be in place in which by peer review and not the City of Vaughan the determination should be made. .

The Task Force is recommending that a self-governing body of registered ratepayer associations, called the Vaughan Ratepayer Review Board (RRB), be created to manage oversight and ***compliance with the revised RRCA policy***.

The peer review process is for the City of Vaughan staff NOT to serve as police to the policy or ratepayer groups.

There appears to be confusion as to our intent and purpose with the peer review process. Briefly it deals solely with COMPLIANCE to the policy and not with any other matter. For example, we know different associations have different

constitutions dealing differently with officers and membership. Some do not allow out-of-territory officers or members while others do; some do not allow businesses while others do.

The task force is of the opinion, each association have a constitution of their own choice, and the peer review will not deal with issues internal to any association. To do otherwise would reduce the independence of the association, and have the City of Vaughan police an association. This is not what we want.

## Conclusion

The Task Force members have a long and distinguished history of community participation and involvement, recommend the need and importance to amend the current ratepayer policy to provide “streamlining” of the registration process; amendments to ensure independence, transparency and accountability; and a framework of peer review to address community association related issues, especially so, to include and not limited to recognizing ‘new’ and long “existing” associations.

There exists a ground swell of interest and concerns by ratepayer associations to advance civic engagement, independence and transparency through an updated policy.

The existing policy was and is unenforceable and puts a heavy “duty of care” with the City Clerk’s Department as long established and “existing” associations acknowledged by the City Clerk having failed to file on time, had their status discontinued.

The existing policy fails to recognize major record growth and implication with future growth of Vaughan. Some ratepayer associations have been established with minimal representation.

By giving direction, to adopt the final report recommendations, the city of Vaughan respectfully acknowledges ratepayer associations, representing “identifiable communities” want and expect to be both “heard” and “belong”.