November 21, 2018

To His Worship Mayor Fougere and Members of City Council:

I'm writing to express my support of the retention of the Community Advisory Committees.

At their best, Community Advisory Committees provide opportunities for informed individuals with real expertise to advise the City on a variety of issues, and they're a vital part of the democratic mechanism. These people have expertise in areas where Regina needs guidance and assistance: like environmental sustainability, crime prevention, youth and community engagement, the arts, and the preservation of heritage architecture to name a few – and they volunteer their time in order to serve our city.

According the City Administration's own recommendations (under Option #2 in the Council Committee Recommendations presented at the November 14th Executive Committee meeting), the cost to maintain these committees is minimal, so why wouldn't we want to keep them around?

I'm left with the impression that these committees may not have been taken very seriously by the time they were suspended in April 2015. In the time since this recommendation was made, I've heard from several people who suggested that these committees were not provided with clear objectives or expectations from City administration, and when recommendations were made, they often fell on deaf ears, and rarely made it to council. City Administration, meanwhile, has suggested that it was difficult for these committees to achieve quorum. But if interest in these committees waned because of apathy at the City level, it's hardly surprising that they ran out of steam. No one likes to waste their time.

I'm also in favour of retaining these committees simply because other cities have them, including Saskatoon, which is re-envisioning their community advisory committees, and recently put out a call for new members. Saskatoon takes these committees seriously. So do a lot of other cities, including Edmonton, Calgary, Montreal, Vancouver, Halifax, and Toronto to name a few.

The City's Administration assures us that their new website (to be launched at a yet-to-be-confirmed date) will provide opportunities for public feedback, but who does the City expect to hear from through this portal? Personally, I'm not interested in feedback from random people who may or may not know what they're talking about. I might provide feedback myself, but I

don’t know the first thing about crime prevention, or renewable energy, or the lived experiences of contemporary young people, or people of colour, or anyone living below the poverty line, so what am I going to tell you about that on an online survey? The value of community advisory committees is that they *can* tell you what the issues are from the ground level.

The City of Regina needs to recognize the value of receiving good advice from smart people with no motives other than making life better for the people who live here. And these recommendations need to be taken into consideration before the planning stage of any policy, program, or development – not after. We already have smart and dedicated staff working at the City of Regina doing this in response to issues as they arise – getting a diversity of advice from informed people who live and work in Regina is the best complement to that.

Thanks for your consideration,
Wanda Schmöckel
Resident, Ward 3