

CITY OF BURNABY

TO: BURNABY CITY COUNCIL May 3, 2001
FROM: MAYOR DOUGLAS P. DRUMMOND
SUBJECT: FREEDOM OF THE MUNICIPALITY -
WILLIAM JOHN COPELAND

Recommendation:

1. THAT Council confer the Freedom of the City of Burnaby upon **WILLIAM JOHN COPELAND** and that the title be conferred at a ceremony to take place during the Municipal Appreciation Dinner to be held on Friday, May 11, 2001 at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts.

REPORT

Introduction

Section 243 of the Local Government Act of B.C. permits the Council of a municipality to honour a distinguished person by conferring upon that person the title of "Freeman of the Municipality". From time to time, past Councils have recognized the outstanding contribution individuals have made to the community and have recognized those persons by honoring them as a Freeman of the Municipality. I would therefore recommend that it is an appropriate time to once again honour an individual who has made significant contributions to the community and submit the name of William John Copeland for your consideration.

Copy: City Manager

Background

Bill Copeland was born and raised in Vancouver. During the Second World War he served in the Merchant Marines and in the Royal Canadian Navy. He married Ruth DeCenzo and together they raised their three children; Doug, Emily and Dan and now have 5 grandchildren.

In 1955, Bill joined the Burnaby Fire Department and retired in 1987 as an Assistant Fire Chief. During his tenure as a firefighter, Bill held a leadership role in the Burnaby Firefighters' Union Local 323 and served as Vice President of the 6th District of The International Association of Firefighters.

Bill Copeland has always had a strong sense of community. Over the years he has been involved in many diverse and worthwhile causes; namely:

- Former President of the Burnaby Red Cross
- Former Director of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Honorary Chairman of the Burnaby Association for the Mentally Handicapped
- Past Chairman of St. John Ambulance
- Honorary Life Member of the South Burnaby Metro Club
- Honorary Member of Volunteer Grandparents
- Life Member of the Burnaby North Lions Club
- Member of the Deer Lake Chapter of the Rotary Club

Immediately upon his retirement, Bill was approached to put his name forward as a candidate for Mayor of Burnaby. He was able to "sell" the concept of Mayor to his wife, Ruth by telling her "there wasn't a shadow of hope he would be successful". When the votes were tallied and he was elected, Bill jokingly demanded a recount.

As Mayor of Burnaby, Bill Copeland earned the respect of Council and the citizens of Burnaby for his outstanding work and dedication to the community.

Background (Continued)

Bill was a strong advocate of public participation and viewed the process as being an extremely valuable and effective way of shifting from centralized policies to community-based direction and leadership.

This shift in philosophy provided the citizens of Burnaby with a more active role in local government. In 1989, Bill introduced the concept of "Area Advisory Committees" with the appointment of the Hastings Street Advisory Committee. The success of this process led to numerous other appointments of area advisory committees throughout the City. These committees were composed of local residents and businesses who came together and tackled a mandate to design revised community plans which harmonized neighbourhoods with the business community. To this day, Council continues to work with the residents of Burnaby to develop policies and guidelines that directly affect the future of the neighbourhoods in which they live.

During his term in office, Mayor Bill and his wife, Ruth paid a visit to El Zapotal in El Salvador. A welcome banner was hung in the village and it appeared that every resident of the small village had come out to meet the Mayor of Burnaby. Bill found this to be a very moving experience and, in return for their kindness, bought out the entire stock of candy from a small store in town and offered caramels and chocolate bars to all the children of the village. This social visit to El Zapotal culminated in a two-year sister city twinning relationship with Burnaby. Not only did the ties open official channels of communication for the 150 families in the farming community, but it also offered a ray of hope that one day things would improve. As a result of a number of fundraising events organized by Mayor Bill, including the annual El Zapotal Cup Hockey Tournament between the Burnaby Firefighters and Burnaby R.C.M.P., over \$30,000 was sent to El Zapotal. A farm truck was purchased and medical and educational assistance was provided to the village.

A few other significant examples of Bill's extraordinary humanitarian contributions to society, particularly during his term in office include the coordination of rescue efforts following the collapse of the roof at Save-On Foods

Background (Continued)

in Metrotown, the rescue of a gentleman who was seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident on Cumberland Street, and a fundraiser which saw \$5,000 donated to Kincolith, a small native village in Northern B.C. for much needed medical equipment. Bill even went so far as to rescue a tree fort which was constructed by neighbourhood children and subsequently slated for demolition by city works crews as the result of a complaint from disgruntled neighbours. Bill admitted that his defense of tree forts was contrary to the rules but felt that kids should have the right to be kids.

In 1997 February, Burnaby City council unanimously adopted a report from the Parks and Recreation Commission naming the new ice arena at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex the "Bill Copeland Sports Centre" in recognition of Bill's notable contributions to the community both as a Burnaby Firefighter for 33 years and as Mayor of the City for 9 years.

In the fall of 1996, William John Copeland retired from civic politics after completing three consecutive terms as Mayor of Burnaby.

Conclusion

Bill Copeland is admired and respected by this community, his colleagues and his family for his compassion, leadership, dedication and fairness.

It gives me great pleasure to recommend that William John Copeland be honoured as this City's 15th Freeman.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas P. Drummond.

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