

**CITY OF BURNABY**

**COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE**

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*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: ELECTRONIC BINGO AT PROPOSED BINGO HALL  
IN MIDDLEGATE SHOPPING CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** Council approve in principle for the inclusion of electronic bingo at the proposed bingo hall in Highgate Village, on the understanding that a future staff report, which outlines conditions under which electronic bingo would be acceptable, will be submitted in advance of the Public Hearing report on the bingo hall rezoning.
2. **THAT** copies of this report be sent to:
  - a) Mr. Alan Dyck of Burnaby Bingo Country, #302 - 7155 Kingsway, Burnaby, B.C. V5E 2V1.
  - b) Mr. Dale Bosa of Bosa Properties, #1200, 4555 Kingsway, Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4T8
  - c) the Social Issues Committee

**REPORT**

The Community Policing Committee, at its meeting held on 2003 May 08, received and adopted the attached report seeking approval in principle for the inclusion of electronic bingo in the proposed new bingo hall in Highgate Village (Middlegate Shopping Centre redevelopment).

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Doug Evans  
Chair

Councillor Colleen Jordan  
Vice Chair

Councillor Pietro Calendino  
Member

COPY: CITY MANAGER  
DEPUTY CITY MANAGER  
DIRECTOR FINANCE  
OIC, RCMP  
DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**TO:** COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE 2003 MAY 01  
**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING OUR FILE: 17.812  
**SUBJECT: ELECTRONIC BINGO AT PROPOSED BINGO HALL IN MIDDLEGATE SHOPPING CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT**  
**PURPOSE:** To seek approval in principle for the inclusion of electronic bingo in the proposed new bingo hall in Highgate Village (Middlegate Shopping Centre redevelopment).

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to provide approval in principle for the inclusion of electronic bingo at the proposed bingo hall in Highgate Village, on the understanding that a future staff report, which outlines conditions under which electronic bingo would be acceptable, will be submitted in advance of the Public Hearing report on the bingo hall rezoning.
  
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**REPORT**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

Burnaby Bingo Country, located in Middlegate Shopping Centre, has offered a form of electronic bingo since 2000 April, when Burnaby City Council first approved the use of electronic hand-held bingo units. On 2002 December 16, Council granted approval for Burnaby Bingo Country to continue to offer up to 146 hand held bingo units until 2004 December 31. At that time, Burnaby Bingo Country also requested Council approval to expand its electronic capacity with the introduction of Starship Bingo (fixed-base electronic

terminals). At its meeting of 2003 January 20, Council approved this latter request, with conditions which limited the number of Starship terminals which could be offered, and the number of cards and the types of games which could be played on a terminal. Council also imposed a requirement that Starship terminals be programmed to preclude personal play mode. As well, there was support for a requirement that Burnaby Bingo Country seek Council approval should it wish to include Starship terminals at any future Burnaby location. This information was provided to the Committee in a report considered at its meeting of 2003 February 13.

When approval for Starship Bingo was given to Burnaby Bingo Country in 2003 January, the plans for Highgate Village did not include a bingo facility. At that time, it was estimated by the developer that the building in which the bingo hall is currently situated would be demolished within twenty to twenty-four months, at which time Burnaby Bingo Country would cease operations at the present location. However, the developer has recently submitted a new amendment rezoning application which proposes a venue for Burnaby Bingo Country within the Highgate Village development. The subject rezoning is expected to go to Public Hearing on 2003 July 22. The inclusion of the bingo hall in the development would not result in the displacement of any other previously approved uses, as an additional storey would be constructed on one of the buildings. The resulting Floor Area Ratio would remain appropriate for the site.

The management of Burnaby Bingo Country has indicated that it hopes to install both forms of electronic bingo in the proposed new facility, perhaps with an expansion in the number of Starship terminals from 96 to 150. As Burnaby Bingo Country sees Starship Bingo as an integral part of the future of bingo, it would not likely be interested in operating a bingo facility without the electronic terminals.

In order to finalize building plans and other documentation required for advancing the rezoning, the developer is seeking approval in principle for the inclusion of electronic bingo in the proposed new bingo hall. Should such approval be granted, staff would submit a more detailed report, in advance of the Public Hearing report for the bingo hall rezoning, which outlines conditions under which electronic bingo could be supported in the proposed new bingo facility.

## **2.0 IMPLICATIONS OF APPROVING ELECTRONIC BINGO**

### **2.1 Survival of the Bingo Industry**

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The bingo industry has been in decline in recent years, given its relatively passive nature and competition it has faced from other forms of entertainment such as mega-theatres, laser tag, and slot machines. In an attempt to maintain a viable customer base, the industry has

developed new options, such as electronic bingo. Most of the 35 commercial bingo halls in British Columbia offer electronic hand-held units, and 18 of the 35 offer Starship Bingo. With the installation of Starship terminals at Burnaby Bingo Country in mid-March 2003, Starship Bingo is now offered at all of the commercial bingo halls in the Lower Mainland. Staff at the British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC), which is responsible for managing and conducting bingo in commercial bingo halls, advise that bingo halls which do not offer electronic bingo, and particularly Starship Bingo, are at a competitive disadvantage.

## **2.2 Revenue for Charitable Organizations**

In recent years, charitable organizations have become increasingly dependent on gaming revenues for sustaining their services in the community. The Province guarantees charitable organizations a minimum of \$125 million annually from gaming revenues, with that amount indexed annually at the rate of the Consumer Price Index for Vancouver. For 2003-04, the Province-wide charitable guarantee is \$136.5 million, of which approximately \$71.5 million will be made available through bingo hall affiliation. In 2002, twenty-six Burnaby-based charities received a total of \$4,130,413 through bingo hall affiliation; sixteen of those organizations were affiliated with Burnaby Bingo Country. Were electronic bingo not offered at Burnaby Bingo Country in the future, the management anticipates that the customer base and, thus, revenues would decline<sup>1</sup>. This, in turn, would prompt a decrease in the amount of revenue distributed to affiliated charitable organizations. Although critics of gaming may find the growing dependence of charitable organizations on the proceeds of gambling distasteful, gaming revenues have become the lifeblood of many organizations which have lost or will lose funding due to Provincial cutbacks or changes in programs and contracts.

## **2.3 Impacts on Community**

The City's License Office has no records of complaints from the public about Burnaby Bingo Country since the introduction of the electronic hand-held units in 2000, and the installation of the Starship terminals in March 2003. Similarly, the Burnaby RCMP are not aware of any problems associated with the electronic aspects of the bingo facility operation. Staff have also spoken with colleagues from the City of Surrey and the City of Vancouver, which are host municipalities for Starship Bingo. Neither of the contacts were aware of neighbourhood issues generated by electronic bingo. Based on the foregoing, it is not anticipated that community nuisance problems would emerge should electronic bingo be installed in any future bingo facility in the Middlegate Shopping Centre redevelopment.

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<sup>1</sup> BCLC staff advise that generally electronic bingo adds an increment of 18 to 20% to sales.

As is standard with rezoning applications, plans for the proposed new bingo facility will be reviewed by the City's Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Review Committee in order to identify and address any possible design-related opportunities for crime.

#### **2.4 Addictive Nature of Gambling**

A possible negative implication of offering electronic bingo is a potential increase in the incidence of gambling addiction. The Province currently commits \$4 million annually to support gambling addiction programs in B.C. While it is difficult to attribute an addiction to any one form of bingo, gambling addiction counsellors consulted by staff in the past have expressed concerns about the introduction of electronic bingo, maintaining that any device which renders it easier to play multiple cards is likely to encourage play and the expenditure of more money. While the seriousness of gambling addictions should not be understated, it is important to note that other substances and activities which can be addictive, and which are regulated - such as liquor and slot machines - are readily available in our community. Given this situation, on balance it is staff's view that as long as regulations pertaining to electronic bingo are maintained and enforced, and gambling addiction programs continue to be funded, there would be merit in continuing to allow electronic bingo at Burnaby Bingo Country should development of the new bingo hall be approved.

### **3.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Burnaby Bingo Country was given Council approval to offer electronic hand-held bingo units for a further two year period in 2002 December. Approval for the installation of 96 electronic fixed-based (Starship) terminals at Burnaby Bingo Country was given by Council in 2003 January. A number of conditions were placed on the latter approval, including the requirement for Burnaby Bingo Country to obtain Council approval for transfer of the terminals to any future location of its operations.

The Planning Department recently received an amendment rezoning application from the developer of Highgate Village for a commercial bingo hall to be operated by Burnaby Bingo Country in the Middlegate Shopping Centre redevelopment. Burnaby Bingo Country has indicated its desire to offer both hand-held bingo units and fixed-based Starship terminals in the proposed new location, with a high priority having been placed on the Starship option. In order to proceed with the rezoning, the developer must submit design drawings and other documentation to the City, some of the elements of which are dependent on whether Starship Bingo will be available in the proposed new facility. The rezoning application will place an emphasis on a number of physical elements such as floor area, general layout, location, building design, access, and parking. To facilitate timely submission of the required

documents, the developer is seeking approval in principle for Burnaby Bingo Country to include electronic bingo in the proposed new facility. Should such approval in principle be provided, a staff report outlining conditions under which electronic bingo could be supported would be submitted in advance of the Public Hearing report for the rezoning.

Staff believe that it is reasonable for Council to provide approval in principle at this time given that:

- a large number of community service agencies, both in Burnaby and elsewhere, are dependent on bingo revenues for sustaining services in the community
- electronic bingo is viewed as the wave of the future in the bingo industry, and any commercial bingo hall without it - and the community service agencies affiliated with that bingo hall - are at a competitive disadvantage
- electronic bingo has not generated complaints to either the RCMP or the City's Licence Office since its introduction to Burnaby Bingo Country, an experience which is shared by other local municipalities
- other potentially addictive substances/activities - some of which generate more severe impacts than electronic bingo - are available in the community
- conditions governing various aspects of electronic bingo operations can be imposed by the City before the rezoning for the proposed bingo hall is completed (e.g., limits on the number of electronic hand-held units and fixed-base Starship terminals to be allowed, limits on the number of cards which can be played at any one time on either type of device, limits on the number of Starship terminals any one player can play during a game, limits on the types of games which can be played on the electronic devices, withholding of approval for personal play mode.)

It is recommended that the Committee request Council to provide approval in principle for the inclusion of electronic bingo at the proposed bingo hall in Highgate Village, on the understanding that a future staff report, which outlines conditions under which electronic bingo would be acceptable, will be submitted in advance of the Public Hearing report for the rezoning.



J.S. Belhouse, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JS/sa

cc: City Manager  
Deputy City Manager  
Director Finance  
52 OIC - Burnaby RCMP