



The Corporation of the City of Stratford
Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee
MINUTES

Date: August 29, 2024

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Committee Members: Dan Mathieson - Chair Presiding, Mayor Martin Ritsma, Barb Cottle, Melanie Hare, Nic Flanagan, Ron Dodson, Stephen Mitchell

Absent: Andy Bicanic, Franklin Famme, Mark Vandembosch, Paul Parlee, Trudy Jonkman

Staff: Joan Thomson - Chief Administrative Officer, Adam Betteridge - Director of Building and Planning Services, Emily Robson - Corporate Initiatives Lead, Joani Gerber - CEO of investStratford, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Victoria Trotter - Recording Secretary

Also Present: Andrew Hilton, John Kastner, Ray Harsant, Herb Klassen, Karen Haslam, Media, Members of the Public

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the Meeting to Order.

Land Acknowledgement.

Moment of Silent Reflection.

2. **Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof**

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

None declared at the August 29, 2024 Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee meeting.

3. **Adoption of Previous Minutes:**

Motion by Nic Flanagan

Seconded by Mayor Ritmsa

THAT the Minutes of the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee of The Corporation of the City of Stratford dated July 15, 2024 be adopted as printed. Carried

4. **Delegation Requests**

None were scheduled.

5. **Business Arising from Previous Minutes**

5.1 Indigenous Engagement Strategy Considerations for the Grand Trunk Renewal Project

Kevin Bonnell, Manager of Inclusion, Equity and Indigenous Initiatives & Oonagh Vaucrosson, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator, Human Resources, City of Stratford presented on Indigenous engagement as part of the Grand Trunk renewal project. Highlights of the presentation included:

- engagement is building trust and meaningful relationships whereas consultation is a legal obligation managed by governments;
- important to understand the historical and social contexts which led to current inequities;
- need to remove structural barriers;

- current barriers include lack of formal protocols, historical injustices and negative relationships and diversity within Indigenous communities;
- engagement should include research and understand, early and consistent engagement, acknowledgment historical context, transparency and building relationships;
- recommend formalizing Indigenous engagement protocols, continuous evaluation and adaptation, incorporating Indigenous perspectives in design and space use and acknowledge imperfections in engagement and learn from mistakes.

Melanie Hare stated the Committee has been engaging the community and noted it is important to engage the First Nations communities as soon as possible. Ms. Hare questioned how to create protocols.

Mr. Bonnell stated the Inclusion, Equity and Indigenous Initiatives Department can work with the Committee to determine next steps.

5.2 City of Stratford Official Plan Review: General Overview and Alignment with GTR Site

Adam Betteridge, Director of Building and Planning Services provided a general overview of municipal official plans and their impact on the Grand Trunk Renewal project. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Municipal Official Plans guide long-term growth, land use, and development in municipalities, ensuring sustainable and strategic planning;
- key elements include land use designations, housing strategies/targets, transportation planning, environmental protection, and community services;
- role and importance of municipal official plans includes guiding long-term development, ensuring sustainable growth, setting policy for land use, supporting public and private investment and supporting municipal decisions;
- Grand Trunk development guided by the 2018 Master Plan, addressing land use, urban design and heritage conservation;

- need to encourage public and institutional uses to restore vibrancy and purpose, anchoring activity in the Downtown Core's southern area;
- commemorate the historical role of the Grand Trunk Anchor District, ensuring conservation or adaptive reuse of the Grand Trunk building;
- the Official Plan is currently under review;
- new Provincial Planning Statement recently announced;
- additional resources and focused attention are necessary to finalize a strong and visionary Official Plan by 2025;
- challenges for the site include community expectations, policy constraints and resource limitations;
- opportunities for the site include incentivizing great development, downtown attractiveness and policy innovation.

Nic Flanagan questioned if the Official Plan is a constraint or holding back any activities on this project.

Mr. Betteridge responded he does not believe the Official Plan will hinder the progress of the site as the previous Council placed a bold and ambitious plan design on the site which speaks to increased density and heights.

Mr. Flanagan noted the key points from the 2018 Master Plan align with the project.

Stephen Mitchell questioned if there is a variance of the Official Plan proposed, who determines whether the community benefits justify the changes.

Mr. Betteridge stated this would be an official plan amendment which would require going through the Planning Act process and depending on the amendment it would potentially require a review, consultation to take place and studies to be procured along with justification put forward by professionals.

Melanie Hare stated it is important to align the work of the committee and the Official Plan and questioned how do we work together.

Mr. Betteridge noted the consultants and the Planning team are aware this committee has been established and is putting focus on the Grand Trunk site. We can collaborate while ensuring we are not taking focus away from each other.

5.3 Draft 2025 Budget for the Grand Trunk Renewal Project

Joan Thomson, CAO presented the draft 2025 budget for the Grand Trunk Renewal Project noting the following:

- allocations are from the Grand Trunk Reserve Fund;
- Grand Trunk Reserve Fund was funded through the disposition of municipal land;
- Fund has been used to support past work on the site such as removal of the roof and site remediation;
- costs related to this project are funded from this reserve and not through the tax levy;
- integrates previous allocations with current workplan and anticipated needs;
- \$50,000 to support temporary activations on the site;
- \$30,000 to develop recommendations for procurement processes;
- \$100,000 for the development of financial and real estate models and market sounding;
- \$100,000 for preliminary designs for the community amenity space;
- to be considered by Council during the 2025 budget process.

Ron Dodson questioned the if the design and installations of servicing and roads and sewers is finalized or is still in flux.

Ms. Thomson confirmed it is not finalized. The funds do allow for work to advance to a certain degree should a proposal brought forward. She also noted the funds being budget for these purposes allows the City to apply for grants when possible.

Mr. Dodson noted at previous Committee meetings the permanence of the placement of roads, the need for as much green space as possible and

determine how we can minimize the coverage of spaces which do not need to be covered has been discussed. It also been noted there is a need for connections to residential areas to the south and east. Mr. Dodson stated it is good to have the funds available, however the Committee needs to ensure we continue to be flexible and not cover up spaces which do not need to be covered.

Ms. Thomson noted underground services are needed at the middle of the site where the structure is and flexibility is important as this will be a multi-phase and multi-year project. She stated there are no specific plans at this time and the funds are included in the draft budget to ensure the project can proceed once marketing starts and proposals are received. She also noted the need to allow the neighbourhoods access to the site.

Melanie Hare questioned if the funds for installation of services and roads will be used in 2025.

Ms. Thomson responded the design work is not finalized, this is an envelope of funds identified for specific need. If there are opportunities there is a place holder in the budget.

Ms. Hare stated the funds for installation of roads and services seems premature. She also noted she was excited to see funds for activation. Ms. Hare noted there is no additional capacity within City staff included in the budget.

Joani Geber noted the benefit to having a funding line in the budget when working with different levels of government in regards to funding, it show the municipality is willing to come forward with money for this project. Additionally, it saves steps in having to come back and figure out where to find the funds should an opportunity present.

Ms. Gerber responded to the capacity of staff noting investStratford has requested an expansion in their 2025 budget.

A discussion took place regarding the Record of Site Condition (RSC) for the site and the need to start this process as it can take significant time and funds. Ms. Gerber noted how to move forward in a timely manner while maintaining process has been discussed at the working group level. She noted it is very rare to complete an RSC on the entire site as the remediation will apply to the entire site, even if a large portion of it is already clean. A better option is to complete an RSC is to segment the

property by type of use, being careful to ensure we are looking at RSC where contamination is similar. There are different levels of remediation, for example, a parking area could be expedited more quickly.

Ray Harsant questioned if there are funds earmarked for the Lakeside Active Adults Association separate from the reserve funds.

Dan Mathieson noted all of the funds have been placed in a single reserve.

Andrew Hilton stated it would be helpful for the committee and down the road for public to have a more detailed description of what being done and what is being built including details regarding sewage and servicing, the current site and potential future uses including more specifics on where money is being spent.

6. New Business

6.1 Grand Trunk Site Activation & Animation

Andrew Hilton spoke to the Communications, Advocacy and Civic Engagement report noted it is important to look at possible uses and what can be done on the site to bring people to the site. He noted the list of discussion points in report range from art installations to tours, sports and a temporary park. The Working Group is asking for the list of potential activations to be reviewed and for the Committee to make a recommendation to Council.

Ron Dodson expressed excitement at the range and diversity and recommended a plan for short, medium and long term public art.

Melanie Hare noted the important of finding opportunities for the community to get to the site and questioned if a timeline has been placed on activation of the site.

Emily Robson stated over the next month staff can review the possible activations and determine what type of infrastructure would be required to use the site, which items can be completed quickly and safely. At that time the Committee can discuss how they wish to proceed forward with creating a venue where people can complete activations without a lot of additional expenses.

Mr. Hilton expressed the importance of people understanding how long it is going to take to get this project going.

Mayor Ritsma stated his greatest takeaway from the public events held in April was around this particular piece of how do we envision the site and the opportunity to build the base level of safety and infrastructure.

7. Reports of the Working Groups & Staff Update

7.1 Partnership

Herb Klassen presented on behalf of the Partnership Working Group noting they met with the YMCA who confirmed they are looking to include a community room and are looking for active partners to use the community space. The Working Group will continue to meet with community groups to confirm if they are interested in being users of the community room.

Emily Robson noted Mr. Klassen and Karen Haslam have been reaching out to community groups to determine what need there is in the community for a space of this kind and how it can meet the needs of various groups.

7.2 Vision, Planning & Architecture

Melanie Hare thanked the working group members and the Committee for their feedback on the Vision and Guiding Principles. She noted the group would like to review the documents following the finalization of the work plan.

7.3 Real Estate, Legal & Finance

7.4 Communications, Advocacy & Civic Engagement

This item was reported on under Item 6.1.

7.5 Infrastructure & Environment

Stephen Cooper, Chair of the Infrastructure and Environment Working Group stated Ian Reynolds of Feltz Design Build, Brent Powers of Artas Engineering and Jeffrey Atchison of SRM Architects have joined the working group to provide additional expertise. They are working to gather reports and documents related to the site conditions and met with an environmental engineer to gather further knowledge of the reports.

*Mayor Ritsma is now absent from the meeting at 5:52 p.m.

7.6 Staff Update

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee Meeting is September 16, 2024 in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Nic Flanagan

Seconded by Stephen Mitchell

THAT the August 29, 2024 Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee meeting adjourn. Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:01 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 5:58 P.M.