



The Corporation of the City of Stratford Finance and Labour Relations Committee

MINUTES

Date: Monday, December 9, 2024
Time: 4:30 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Committee Present: Councillor Hunter - Chair Presiding, Councillor McCabe - Vice Chair, Mayor Ritsma, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Biehn, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Henderson, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Wordofa

Regrets: Councillor Briscoe

Staff Present: Joan Thomson - Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Taylor Crinklaw - Director of Infrastructure Services, Adam Betteridge - Director of Building and Planning Services, Neil Anderson - Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, Dave Bush - Director of Human Resources, Audrey Pascual - Deputy Clerk, Shannon Archer – Business Integration Manager, Wendy Partridge – Executive Assistant to the Director of Corporate Services, Mike Mousley – Manager of Transit

Also Present: Joani Gerber – CEO of investStratford, Zac Gribble – Executive Director of Destination Stratford, Krista Robinson – CEO of the Stratford Public Library, Members of the Public

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the Meeting to Order.

Councillor Briscoe provided regrets for the meeting.

Land Acknowledgement

Moment of Silent Reflection

Respectful Conduct Statement

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

Councillor McCabe declared a pecuniary interest on Item 6, "Sponsorship Request - Here For Now Theatre." Councillor McCabe's spouse is the artistic director of the theatre company.

Councillor Burbach declared a pecuniary interest on Item 6, "Sponsorship Request - Here For Now Theatre". Councillor Burbach is a Board member of the theatre company.

3. Adoption of Addenda to the Finance and Labour Relations Agenda

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

THAT the Addenda to the Finance and Labour Relations Committee Agenda dated December 9, 2024, be added to the agenda as printed.

Carried

4. Treasurer Update

Committee Discussion: The Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, provided an update on the draft 2025 Budget. Information was provided on the use of reserves and reserve funds. It was also noted that the vehicle required for the additional by-law enforcement officer was not discussed.

Members of Committee and the Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer discussed the draft 2025 Budget. Highlights of the discussion included:

- it being questioned how the expansion requests for an in-house plumber and electrician will translate in the coming years;
- the intent for the above noted positions being that savings will be realized in the contracted services line item which will offset the costs of the new positions in the coming years and contracted service costs to remain low if the positions are approved;
- a request being made for a report to be brought back to the next budget meeting to provide information on the costs of the new positions and their corresponding savings;
- the costing being aggregate costs for the number of hours multiplied by the rate;
- the electrician position being within CUPE at a rate of \$42 per hour;
- it being questioned whether the above noted rate is expensive and it being confirmed the approximate cost for a contracted service is between \$90-100 per hour;
- CUPE 197 containing an electrician for the Water Division;
- it being questioned whether hiring a part time position is possible and it being confirmed there would not be significant gains as the schedule would be limited and it being recommended that the position be full time.

5. Open Forum

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT the rules detailed in sections 14.1 - 14.3 of the Procedure By-law 140-2007, related to delegations be suspended to permit members of the public in the gallery to provide comments on the draft 2025 budget.

Carried

Mike Sullivan spoke to Council regarding the draft 2025 Budget. Comments were provided with respect to:

- the budget for the Grand Trunk Renewal Project and what the money will be used for;
- the water rate increase not being reflected in the budget numbers;
- the subsidy being provided for attainable housing through the community improvement plan and the lack of definition from the Province as to the meaning of attainable;
- the denial of the additional posting being requested for a Community Energy Liaison and the proposal from the Energy and Environment Advisory Committee;
- there being climate considerations for the budget items; and
- the importance of acting now to save costs including in the purchase of electric vehicles for the fleet requests.

Barb Shaughnessy spoke to Council regarding the draft 2025 Budget. Comments were provided with respect to:

- the missed revenue resulting from not implementing licensing fees and the Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS);
- there being unanimous support from the Innkeeper's Collective for the hiring of a By-law Enforcement Supervisor to implement the Administrative Monetary Penalty System;
- the potential revenue that can be generated by implementing the system and the potential uses of the revenue;
- the impacts of short term rentals to the housing crisis; and
- the sponsorship request from the Here For Now Theatre.

Tim Forster spoke to Council regarding the draft 2025 Budget. Comments were provided with respect to:

- being in support of the request for a By-law Enforcement Supervisor to focus on the implementation of the Administrative Monetary Penalty System and the enforcement of the Short-Term Accommodation By-law and the Municipal Accommodation Tax By-law; and
- the lost revenue from accommodation rentals that are not in compliance with the by-laws and are not registered.

In response to a member's enquiry, the Director of Building and Planning Services noted that the numbers of short term rentals identified are anecdotal. The Director added that the business case provided for the expansion request identified the need for additional staffing for the enforcement of by-laws passed by Council.

Jane Marie Mitchell spoke to Council regarding the draft 2025 Budget. Comments were provided with respect to:

- the request for Lights On funding and the reported number of participants;
- the need for accurate reporting to support the funding request;
- a suggestion to create a display of works by local artists;
- redirecting funds for the Lights On project to housing; and
- support for the Community Energy Liaison funding request and the importance of the role to the climate goals of the City.

Anita Kropf spoke to Council regarding the draft 2025 Budget. Comments were provided with respect to:

- the importance of housing and how landlords who are providing housing can be supported; and
- concerns regarding legal fees incurred by the City and paid for by taxpayers.

6. Sponsorship Request - Here For Now Theatre

Committee Discussion: It was noted that the Here For Now Theatre has requested the City of Stratford become a Super Star Sponsor. The Super Star

sponsor is a new sponsorship series requiring a gift to be made in the amount of \$10,000-15,000. Super Star sponsors are limited to ten donors and are recognized with wall-mounted gold stars.

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Seconded by Councillor Henderson

Committee Decision: THAT the request from the Here for Now Theatre for the City of Stratford to become a Super Star Sponsor be deferred to the Community Grants Evaluation Committee.

Carried

Councillor Burbach and Councillor McCabe did not participate in the discussion or vote on this item as they declared a pecuniary interest on this matter.

The meeting moved to Item 7.2.1. (Added) "Management Report – DEI Staffing(FIN24-037)

7. Draft 2025 Budget Deliberations

7.1 Expansion Initiatives

Committee Discussion: Members discussed the Community Energy Liaison position noting the motion from the Energy and Environment Advisory Committee.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

THAT the expansion request for a full-time Communication Coordinator be split between the Communication Coordinator and the Community Energy Liaison to help advance community wide outreach and programming stemming from the Community Climate Action Plan.

Members discussed the motion. A request was made to refer the matter to staff to review the grant parameters.

Motion by Mayor Ritsma

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

Committee Decision: THAT the inclusion of one full time position split 50% between a Communication Coordinator and a Community Energy Liaison be referred to staff to investigate whether the proposed position aligns with the grant parameters.

Carried

A request was made to add the Supervisor of By-law expansion request to the draft 2025 budget.

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Seconded by Councillor Henderson

Committee Decision: THAT the expansion request for the Supervisor of By-Law be included in the 2025 Budget.

Members discussed the motion and the need for vehicles included as an additional expansion request.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

Members discussed the expansion request related to additional vehicles and whether the Backflow Prevention Officer requires a vehicle. It was confirmed the Backflow Prevention Officer does not require a vehicle as one is already included in the City's fleet.

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

THAT the expansion request for the Backflow Prevention Officer be added to the 2025 Budget.

Members of Committee and staff discussed the motion and anticipated revenue to be generated.

Motion by Mayor Ritsma

Seconded by Councillor Henderson

Committee Decision: THAT the Backflow Prevention Officer expansion request be referred to staff to provide an overview of the backflow prevention program.

Carried

Members of Committee discussed the Supervisor, Financial Services expansion request.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

Committee Decision: THAT the expansion request for the Supervisor, Financial Services be added to the 2025 Budget.

Members of Committee continued to discuss the position. Discussion included whether the position could be combined with the Supervisor, Enterprise and GIS, implications to the 2025 and future budgets, services to be provided by the City and staff capacity.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

Members of Committee and staff discussed the Supervisor, Enterprise and GIS expansion request.

Members of Committee and staff discussed the Vehicles expansion request.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT the expansion request for an additional vehicle for existing staff be added to the 2025 Budget.

A member expressed support for two vehicles being added to the 2025 Budget and to allow staff to determine their allocation.

A request was made to amend the motion to include the purchase of two vehicles.

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

Committee Decision: THAT the expansion request for the Addition of two (2) Vehicles for By-Law be added to the 2025 Budget.

Members of Committee discussed the motion.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

A member requested that the purchase of a tractor under the draft Capital Budget be deferred.

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT the purchase of the tractor be deferred to the 2026 Budget;

AND THAT a quarter of the cost for the tractor be contributed to the reserve over four years.

Members of Committee discussed the motion.

The motion was withdrawn.

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT the purchase of the tractor be deferred to the 2026 Budget.

Members of Committee discussed the motion.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Defeated

Members discussed the vehicles for the electrician and plumber position.

A request was made to use \$750,000 from the Trax Stabilization Fund to offset the levy impact to the 2025 budget.

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT \$750,000 be used from Tax Stabilization Fund to offset the levy impact of the 2025 Budget.

Members of Committee and staff discussed the motion.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Defeated

7.2 Budget Deliberations Continued

Councillor McCabe assumed the role of Chair at 5:28 p.m.

Committee Discussion: Councillor Hunter recommended that the Community Grants program be eliminated with the exception of the grant to the Art Gallery and Hospital.

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT the Community Grants Program items in the amount of \$250,000 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28) be eliminated with the exception of the support to the Art Gallery and the Stratford General Hospital.

The motion and the Community Grants program were discussed by the members.

The Clerk left the meeting at 5:46 p.m. and returned at 5:47 p.m.

A request was made for a recorded vote to be taken.

The motion on the elimination of the community grants program, excluding the grant to the Art Gallery and Hospital, was withdrawn.

The Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting recessed at 5:50 p.m. and reconvened at 6:25 p.m.

Councillor Hunter resumed the role of Chair at 6:25 p.m.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

THAT the Community Grants Program funding be reduced by \$325,000, bringing the total amount available for the program to \$871,870.00 with the following proposed reductions:

- reduction of \$500,000 to \$250,000 for the Hospital, and
- reduction of remaining amount by \$75,000 to be determined by the Community Grants Committee.

Members of Committee discussed the motion. A request was made for a recorded vote to be taken.

A recorded vote was undertaken:

In Support (5): Councillor Biehn, Councillor McCabe, Councillor Wordofa, Councillor Hunter, and Councillor Burbach

Opposed (5): Councillor Sebben, Mayor Ritsma, Councillor Henderson, Councillor Beatty, and Councillor Nijjar

Defeated

The meeting moved to Item 7.2.2 (Added) "Management Report – Late Night Extended Transit services and Cost Per Rider Additional Information" (FIN24-038) on the agenda.

The Director of Human Resources provided an update on the HRIS project. Members discussed the HRIS Update.

The meeting moved to Item 7.1 on the agenda.

7.2.1 ADDED - Management Report - DEI Staffing (FIN24-037)

Committee Discussion: Members of Committee discussed the 2025 draft budget. The report on DEI staffing was discussed.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

THAT the City of Stratford retain two FTE positions and maintain the current operating budget to effectively implement and sustain these strategic initiatives.

It was questioned whether a motion to maintain the status quo was required. The City Clerk confirmed that a motion to maintain the status quo was not required.

Members discussed the report and the positions within the Human Resources department.

The motion was withdrawn.

The meeting moved to Item 7.2.2

7.2.2 ADDED - Management Report - Late Night Extended Transit Service and Cost Per Rider Additional Information (FIN24-038)

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

Committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Late Night Extended Transit Service and Cost Per Rider Additional Information" (FIN24-038), be received for information.

Carried

Committee Discussion: Members of Committee discussed the report and options to amend the transit routes.

The meeting moved back to Item 7.2 on the agenda.

8. Upcoming Budget Meeting

9. Adjournment

Motion by Mayor Ritsma

Seconded by Councillor Beatty

Committee Decision: THAT the Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting adjourn.

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 8:48 P.M.