



## **The Corporation of the City of Stratford Finance and Labour Relations Committee MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, January 9, 2025  
Time: 4:00 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 Nijjar, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Wordofa

Regrets: Councillor Briscoe, Councillor Henderson

Staff Present: Joan Thomson - Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Audrey Pascual - Deputy 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, Shannon Archer - Business Integration Manager, Kevin Bonnell - Manager of Inclusion, Equity and Indigenous Initiative, Wendy Partridge - Administrative Assistant to the Director of Corporate Services, Oonagh Vaucrosson - Human Resources Coordinator

Also Present: Krista Robinson - Chief Executive Officer, Stratford Public Library, Zac Gribble - Executive Director, Destination Stratford, and Members of the Media and Public

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the Meeting to Order

Councillor Briscoe and Councillor Henderson 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

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest made by a member at the January 9, 2025 Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting.

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

**Motion by** Councillor Burbach

**Seconded by** Mayor Ritsma

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

**Carried**

**4. Treasurer Update**

The Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer provided an update on the draft 2025 Budget. The Director reviewed and summarized the status of the draft budget and outlined the impact of the budget to the tax rate increase.

**5. Hearing of Deputations and Presentations**

**5.1 ADDED - Hosting a Home Care Services Symposium - Paul Brown**

**Motion by** Councillor Biehn

**Seconded by** Councillor Burbach

**Committee Decision: THAT Paul Brown be heard.**

**Carried**

Paul Brown, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, spoke to Committee about the holding of a Home Care Services Symposium. Highlights of the presentation included:

- an overview of the proposal for Stratford to host a Home Care Services Symposium to be funded with the proceeds from the Vivian Line land sale;
- an overview of the Primary Care Model as envisioned by Dr. Jane Philpott and a background of Dr. Philpott's work and connection to Stratford;
- a request for Council to endorse the proposal for a symposium;
- an overview of the proposed budget for the symposium; and
- a request for Council to strike a committee to assist with the hosting of the symposium.

**Committee Discussion:** Members of the Committee and staff held a discussion regarding the following:

- the structure needed to facilitate the proposal;
- the timeline with respect to the execution of the proposed structure;
- the Chief Administrative Officer noting that if the proposal is approved, there is a need to move fairly quickly on the matter to meet the proposed April date; and
- the Chief Administrative Officer noting concerns about the ability of staff to facilitate the proposal without direction from Council as to what project can be to deferred to a later date.

**5.2 ADDED - Community Grants Policy - Eileen Smith**

**Motion by** Councillor Burbach

**Seconded by** Councillor Nijjar

**Committee Decision: THAT Eileen Smith be heard.**

**Carried**

Eileen Smith spoke to Council about the Community Grants Program. Highlights of the presentation included:

- an overview of statistics related to the public benefits associated with the performing arts;
- an overview of the different community groups providing free programming to residents and the City investing in these programs through the community grants;
- an overview of various community programs supported by the community grants and the critical role that the grants play in the execution of the programs;
- an overview of the challenges experienced by community groups with respect to raising funds for their programs; and
- a request for continued support from the Committee for the community grants program.

Councillor Wordofa entered the meeting at 4:31 p.m.

**5.3 ADDED - Revenue, Percentage Target and Community Grants - Jane Marie Mitchell**

**Motion by** Mayor Ritsma  
**Seconded by** Councillor Burbach  
**THAT Jane Marie Mitchell be heard.**

**Carried**

Jane Marie Mitchell spoke to Committee about revenue, a percentage target and community grants. Highlights of the presentation included:

- there being more ways to make more revenue than cutting services;
- a proposal to introduce a vacant residential land tax to encourage development to happen faster and to increase the housing stock;
- a proposal to encourage homeowners to add additional dwelling units to their properties;

- there being concerns about lost revenue as a result of short-term rental accommodations not currently contributing to the Municipal Accommodation Tax fund;
- a proposal for paid parking to be implemented at the Cooper Parking Lot at the Grand Trunk Site;
- a proposal to eliminate benefits for employees who no longer work for the corporation;
- a proposal for Council to direct staff to work to find efficiencies towards a particular percentage increase for the 2026 budget cycle; and
- there being concerns with the implementation and application of the Community Grants Policy.

## **6. Reports**

### **6.1 United Way Request to Waive Facility Fees (FIN25-001)**

**Motion by** Councillor McCabe

**Seconded by** Councillor Biehn

**Committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, “United Way Request to Waive Facility Fees” (FIN25-001), be received;**

**AND THAT the facility rental fee waiver request in the amount of \$875 for use of the Agriplex fieldhouse on March 15, 2025 be approved and funded from the 2024 Community Grants Reserve fund.**

In response to an enquiry from the Mayor, the Director of Corporate Services noted that there are enough funds in the Community Grants Reserve to fund the request.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

**Carried**

**6.2 Infrastructure Services Supporting Information for 2025 Draft Budget Deliberations (FIN25-002)**

**Motion by** Councillor Burbach

**Seconded by** Councillor McCabe

**Committee Decision: THAT the report titled, "Infrastructure Services Supporting Information for 2025 Draft Budget Deliberations" (FIN25-002), be received for information.**

**Carried**

**6.3 Building and Planning Services Backflow Prevention Additional Information (FIN25-003)**

**Motion by** Councillor Beatty

**Seconded by** Councillor Nijjar

**Committee Decision: THAT the report titled, "Building and Planning Services Backflow Prevention Additional Information" (FIN25-003), be received for information.**

**Carried**

**6.4 ADDED - Hosting a Home Care Services Symposium (FIN25-004)**

**Motion by** Councillor Burbach

**Seconded by** Councillor Biehn

**Committee Decision: THAT the report titled, "Hosting a Home Care Services Symposium" (FIN25-004), be received by Council.**

**Carried**

**Committee Discussion:** Members of the Committee held a discussion regarding the following:

- the City to support the symposium by offering free use of City facilities;
- a suggestion for the proposed symposium to be funded through the Community Grants Program; and
- a request for the delegate to provide a report outlining the next steps for hosting the proposed symposium.

**Motion by** Mayor Ritsma

**Seconded by** Councillor Sebben

**Committee Decision: THAT staff be directed to reach out to Mr. Brown to inquire about next steps for hosting a Home Care Services Symposium.**

**Carried**

## **7. Draft 2025 Budget Deliberations**

**Motion by** Councillor Burbach

**Seconded by** Councillor McCabe

THAT the joint Community Energy Liaison and the Communications Coordinator position be added to the 2025 Budget.

**Committee Discussion:** Members of the Committee and staff held a discussion regarding the motion as follows:

- there being an application submitted by the City under the Green Municipal Fund for funding for the role and an overview of the eligibility requirements;
- the grant requiring that at least 30% of the time in the position be directed to the grant program objectives;
- consulting services and the hiring of a full-time position not being comparable in terms of the desired outcomes as outlined in the grant requirements; and
- the full-time position being contingent on the grant approval.

**Motion by** Councillor Sebben

**Seconded by** Councillor Burbach

THAT the motion be amended that the Joint Community Energy Liaison and Communications Coordinator position be hired on a two-year contract.

Members of the Committee and staff held a discussion regarding the amendment as follows:

- the possibility of hiring the split position for a two-year contract;
- the benefits to the community of having the position filled;

- how the two-year contract term may affect the type of candidates applying for the job;
- there being a potential for significant interest for a part-time role since there is a strong arts community in the City;
- the grant covering 70% of the salary up to \$70,000 however the eligible amount only being applicable to the Community Energy Liaison position and the split role not being eligible for the full funding;
- the grant funding being for a one-year term; and
- the benefits of hiring a full-time permanent position versus a two-year contract position.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

**Defeated**

The Chair called the question on the original motion as re-stated below:

**Motion by** Councillor Burbach

**Seconded by** Councillor McCabe

THAT the joint Community Energy Liaison and the Communications Coordinator position be added to the 2025 Budget.

**Defeated**

**Motion by** Councillor McCabe

**Seconded by** Councillor Burbach

THAT the Communications Coordinator position be added to the 2025 Budget.

Members of the Committee held a discussion regarding the Corporate Communications Specialist Expansion Request as follows:

- there being concerns about how the position will result in an increase in taxes; and
- there being more ways that the City can communicate to the community without hiring an additional position.

Councillor McCabe assumed the role of Chair at 5:21 p.m.

Discussion continued as follows:



- a proposal to review the work that is currently being done by staff to see if time spent on social media work can transition.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

**Defeated**

**Motion by** Councillor Hunter

**Seconded by** Councillor Burbach

**Committee Decision: THAT \$45,000.00 be added to the CAO's 2025 Budget for communications services.**

An amendment to the motion was put forward.

**Motion by** Councillor Sebben

**Seconded by** Councillor Biehn

**Committee Decision: THAT staff be directed to report back to Council with a summary of what was achieved by the extra funding.**

Members of the Committee and staff held a discussion regarding the amendment as follows:

- the possibility of hiring student interns to assist with corporate communications similar to the arrangement undertaken by the Police Services Board;
- the position not only focusing on social media but will work on various projects;
- there being a need to undertake public engagement for the different upcoming projects;
- the possibility of hiring the position as a co-op role;
- an overview of the co-op experience of the Planning Department and how they received support from the students due to staffing shortage; and
- how the hiring of a co-op role may add more work to current staff.

The Chair called the question on the motion to amend the main motion.

**Carried**

The Chair called the question on the motion as amended as noted below:

**Motion by** Councillor Hunter

**Seconded by** Councillor Burbach

**Committee Decision: THAT \$45,000.00 to be added CAO's 2025 Budget for communications services;**

**AND THAT staff be directed to report back to Council with a summary of what was achieved by the extra funding.**

**Carried**

**Motion by** Councillor Hunter

**Seconded by** Councillor Burbach

**Committee Decision: THAT the Backflow Prevention Officer be added to the 2025 Budget.**

Members of the Committee and staff held a discussion regarding the Backflow Prevention Officer Expansion Request as follows:

- there being costs associated with the position in the first year but moving forward can be funded by the water and wastewater fees; and
- an overview of the fees associated with the service provided by the officer.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

**Carried**

Councillor Hunter resumed the position of Chair at 5:38 p.m.

**Motion by** Councillor Hunter

**Seconded by** Councillor Biehn

**Committee Decision: THAT the Transfer to Reserve in Budget 1256 Discovery Centre (Former Teacher's College) be reduced from \$350,000 to \$100,000.**

**Carried**

**Motion by** Councillor Wordofa

**Seconded by** Councillor Beatty

**THAT the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Program be eliminated.**

Members of the Committee and staff held a discussion regarding the Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) Program Elimination as follows:

- the possibility of reducing the service;
- there being great benefits to having the DEI program;
- there being a more diverse population coming to Stratford and how the program can assist the City with understanding programs it can be providing;
- the value of having two full-time staff and how all programs should be reviewed regularly;
- how outside resources providing the program will also cost money and how internal and customized programs could result in savings for the City;
- there being legislative requirements related to accessibility which falls under this division;
- the staff report providing a summary of the work being done by the division and the organizations that currently provide DEI programs;
- there being a number of committees and community groups who can support similar programs; and
- there being support for a review to be done instead of eliminating the program entirely.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

**Defeated**

**Motion by** Councillor Biehn

**Seconded by** Councillor Nijjar

**Committee Recommendation: THAT the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Program be reviewed.**

Members of the Committee and staff held a discussion regarding the Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) Program Review as follows:

- there being concerns about unnecessary programs;

- the ongoing need for the division and the roles being reviewed and the possibility of amalgamating the roles;
- the review being referred to the Corporate Leadership Team to have a discussion on the parameters of the review; and
- the Corporate Leadership Team, comprised of all the directors, to set parameters for the review and to bring a report back to Council for consideration.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

**Carried**

The Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting recessed at 6:19 p.m.

The Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting reconvened at 6:46 p.m.

**8. Adjournment to In-camera Session - 6:30 p.m.**

**Motion by** Councillor McCabe

**Seconded by** Councillor Wordofa

**THAT the meeting adjourn to an In-camera Session to discuss:**

**4.1 Confidential Verbal Update of the Chief Administrative Officer with respect to a Shared Services Agreement (CM-25-01) - Litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals affecting the municipality or local board (section 239.(2)(e)); Advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege including communications necessary for that purpose (section 239.(2)(f)); and A position, plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiations carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the municipality or local board (section 239.(2)(k)).**

**Carried**

The Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting adjourned to an In-Camera Session at 6:46 p.m.

The Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting reconvened in open session at 8:07 p.m.

**9. Draft 2025 Budget Deliberations Continued**

There were no further discussions held with respect to the 2025 Budget.

**10. Upcoming Budget Meeting**

There were no discussions held with respect to the Upcoming Budget Meeting.

**11. Adjournment**

**Motion by** Mayor Ritsma

**Seconded by** Councillor Nijjar

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

**Carried**

Meeting Start Time: 4:05 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 8:07 P.M.