



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

MINUTES

Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

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

Regrets: Councillor Hunter - Chair Presiding

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, Wendy Partridge – Administrative Assistant to the Director of Corporate Services, Oonagh Vaucrosson - Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator

Also Present: Joani Gerber – CEO of investStratford, Greg Skinner – Stratford Police Services Chief of Police, Members of the Public and Media

1. Call to Order

The Vice-Chair called the Meeting to Order.

Councillor Hunter provided regrets for the meeting.

Land Acknowledgement

Moment of Silent Reflection

Respectful Conduct Statement

Councillor Wordofa now present at 1:01 p.m.

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 16, 2025 Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting.

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

Motion by Councillor Biehn

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

Committee Decision: THAT the Addenda to the Finance and Labour Relations Committee Agenda dated January 16, 2025, be added to the agenda as printed.

Carried

5. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations

5.1 ADDED – Property Taxes and Impact on Seniors – Safe Haven Perth

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

Committee Decision: THAT Baiba Wilde on behalf of Safe Haven Perth be heard.

Carried

Baiba Wilde spoke to Committee on behalf of Safe Haven Perth. Highlights of the presentation included:

- their organization working with people in poverty, and homeless individuals in Kitchener;
- Safe Haven Perth providing assistance for first time homeless individuals;
- increased taxes affecting seniors dealing with the cost of living increase, decreased income and debt resulting from maintenance and renovations which contain high interest;
- property taxes being a catalyst for going into debt;
- there being a rise of seniors becoming homeless;
- there being a crisis in this demographic with the rising cost of living and increases in households receiving assistance from the food bank;
- their organization seeing a spike in homelessness in a two-year period; and
- suggesting that policies be developed to provide tax relief for eligible seniors.

Discussion was held on the experience of seniors in Stratford and on the possibility of a tax relief program.

5.2 ADDED - Strategic Priorities and the Community Climate Action Plan – Jane Marie Mitchell

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

Committee Decision: THAT Jane Marie Mitchell be heard.

Carried

Jane Marie Mitchell spoke to Committee about the City's strategic priorities and the Community Climate Action Plan. Highlights of the presentation included:

- an overview of Stratford's strategic priorities being provided;

Mayor Ritsma left the Committee meeting at 1:29 p.m. and returned at 1:30 p.m.

Councillor Beatty now present at 1:30 p.m.

- noting emissions from the city and the members of the public;
- educating the public and advising them on what they can do to reduce their emissions being especially important during this time as environmental issues occur;
- highlighting the Carbon Almanac Network;
- there being a lack of awareness by the public about the Idling By-law; and
- urging Council to fulfill its commitment and to revisit the Community Energy Liaison.

4. Treasurer Update

The Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, provided an update on the draft 2025 budget.

It was questioned what the average impact is. The Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer advised it is approximately \$354 for the average resident who has an assessed value of \$350,000. This translates into a \$30 increase per month.

6. Draft 2025 Budget Deliberations

Committee Discussion: Concerns were expressed about the increased tax levy and a request was made to defer all staff expansions with a levy impact, excluding the Backflow Prevention Officer and the Ontario Works Caseworker.

Motion by Mayor Ritsma
Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT all staff expansions which impact the tax levy, excluding the Backflow Prevention Officer and the Ontario Works Caseworker, be deferred to the draft 2026 budget deliberations.

Members discussed the motion.

The Vice-Chair called the question on the motion.

Defeated

Motion by Councillor Beatty
Seconded by Mayor Ritsma
Committee Decision: THAT the Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting recess.

Carried

The Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting recessed at 2:25 p.m. and resumed at 2:54 p.m.

Motion by Councillor Biehn
Seconded by Councillor Wordofa
Committee Decision: THAT \$60,000 for consultants to undertake the Traffic Study be deferred.

Members discussed the motion.

The Vice-Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

Members discussed the request for a consultant to undertake a job evaluation and the special projects line item in the CAO's budget.

Motion by Mayor Ritsma
Seconded by Councillor Biehn
Committee Decision: THAT \$700,000 be used from the Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund to offset the tax levy increase.

Members discussed the motion.

The Vice-Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

Members discussed the Climate Energy Liaison position.

Motion by: Councillor Burbach

Seconded by: Councillor Beatty

THAT the draft 2025 budget as amended be approved.

The motion was withdrawn.

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

THAT the draft 2025 budget be referred back to staff to identify efficiencies and items that can be deferred;

AND THAT the draft budget meet a 4% tax levy increase.

Members discussed the referral motion.

The Vice-Chair called the question on the motion.

Defeated

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

In Support (4): Councillor Sebben, Councillor Biehn, Councillor Wordofa, and Mayor Ritsma

Opposed (6): Councillor Briscoe, Councillor McCabe, Councillor Henderson, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Nijjar, and Councillor Burbach

Defeated

The Director of Building and Planning Services left the meeting at 3:36 p.m.

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

Committee Recommendation: THAT the draft 2025 budget as amended be approved.

Members discussed the motion.

The Vice-Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

Members discussed the downloading of programs and services onto municipalities.

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

Committee Recommendation: THAT staff be directed to report back to Council regarding the impacts of the downloading of services from the provincial and federal governments.

The Vice-Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

8. Adjournment

Motion by Mayor Ritsma

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

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

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 1:00 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 3:49 P.M.