



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

Date: Friday, November 27, 2020
Time: 9:00 A.M.
Location: Electronically

Committee Present Electronically: Councillor Clifford - Chair Presiding, Councillor Gaffney - Vice Chair, Mayor Mathieson, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Bunting, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Henderson, Councillor Ingram, Councillor Ritsma, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Vassilakos

Staff Present in Council Chambers: Joan Thomson - Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Chris Bantock - Deputy Clerk

Staff Present Electronically: Janice Beirness - Director of Corporate Services, Ed Dujlovic - Director of Infrastructure and Development Services, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, David St. Louis - Director of Community Services, John Paradis - Fire Chief, Wendy Partridge – Administrative Assistant, Greg Skinner – Police Chief, Gerry Foster – Deputy Police Chief, Julia Merritt – CEO, Stratford Public Library, Zac Gribble – Director, Stratford Tourism Alliance, Joani Gerber – CEO, investStratford

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the Meeting to Order.

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

No disclosures of pecuniary interest were made by a member at the November 27, 2020 Finance and Labour Relations Committee.

3. Introduction

The Chief Administrative Officer, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, provided an introduction to the 2021 budget process. Highlights of the presentation included:

- key projects delivered to date including emergency daycare, green bin program, on-demand transit, community transportation pilot program, and various virtual programming;
- the City being well positioned to respond to the demands of COVID-19;
- projects paused in 2020 to be discussed by respective Departments;
- budget preparation and recommendations based on reduced revenue projections and a focus on rebuilding reserves;
- the City's strategic priorities driving the budget process;
- challenges such as aging infrastructure, pandemic unknowns, staffing resources, and increased number of capital projects; and,
- CLT providing information and recommendations to assist in the decision making process.

4. Overview

The Director of Corporate Services, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, provided an overview of the 2021 budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- a collaborative effort by Departments and outside entities to make difficult decisions during a year with reduced revenue and increased costs;
- presenting a target as close to 2% as possible and listing what was reduced to get there should Could wish to provide direction on adding any items back in;

- Stratford Tourism Alliance and investStratford having no increases and then reducing their budgets further;
- the current overall budget increase being 2.26% after including numbers from outside entities;
- each department presenting their budget, challenges, and reductions made; and,
- public input being available through email, phone, and a survey on the City's website.

Members discussed the layout of the survey and if all projects or a short list of projects could be listed. Concern was raised about surveys not being representative depending on the amount of responses received.

5. City Department 2021 Budget Presentations

5.1 Mayor/Council/CAO

The Chief Administrative Officer, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the Mayor/Council/CAO 2021 budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- this budget being status quo and driven by COVID-19 responses with no new services, positions or capital projects identified;
- operating budget being made up of salaries and benefits, memberships, and special projects and initiatives;
- use of funds from reserves and reduction to special projects and initiatives to come in under 2%; and,
- the impact of COVID-19 and maintaining essential and administrative services such as communications, responding to health guidelines, employee wellbeing and enhanced safety, and continuation of virtual Council and Committee meetings.

In response to a question about Council's use of their personal phones and security, the Director of Corporate Services advised that two system authentication is available. A new cell phone contract will be entered into in the Fall of 2021 and the provision of Councillor phones will be reviewed.

5.2 Human Resources

The Director of Corporate Services, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the Human Resources 2021 budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- significant recruitment efforts continuing into 2021, including bargaining for CUPE 197 and 1385, and IBEW 636;
- responses received to the RFI issued for a Learning Management System and continuing with that project in 2021;
- the Department increase coming in at 3.37% with benefits and an additional retirement; and,
- continued deferment of training opportunities due to COVID-19.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- the impact that retirements have on the budget and an increase in anticipated retirements across the Corporation;
- all currently vacant positions being listed in the 2021 budget and such positions being budgeted based on full year cost;
- the challenges of filling vacant positions and being competitive in the marketplace to attract good candidates; and,
- the report coming back on wage review potentially addressing marketplace competitiveness.

5.3 Corporate Services

The Director of Corporate Services, referring to a PowerPoint presentation presented the Corporate Services 2021 budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- potential challenge of deferred dividends from Festival Hydro continuing and only including half the years dividends in the budget;
- \$100K in budget for administrative salary review but exact costs to implement are unknown and will be phased in over a few years;

- 2021 parking revenue remaining unchanged with 44% of revenue being transferred to the reserve fund. A reduction in revenue will result in a lower amount being transferred;
- items not included in 2021 budget include installation of patio boardwalks, continuation of Lights on Stratford, potential requests for fee waivers or refunds depending on pandemic progression, and climate change initiatives;
- the 2021 Corporate Services budget which was at 2.38% was achieved through a decrease in the amount budgeted for annual grants, small reductions to materials, conferences and audit expenses, and transferring \$500K from the tax stabilization reserve fund; and,
- increased costs being related to rising insurance premiums, benefit costs, and IT enhancements for business expansion requests.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- anticipated costs for climate change planning and extending the climate change coordinator; and,
- looking further at the proposed decrease to the amount budgeted for the community grant program.

5.4 Social Services

The Director of Social Services, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the Social Services 2021 budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- a 1.97% increase with no new staffing requests;
- opportunities such as implementation of HIFIS 4 and connectivity of housing;
- introduction of 201 new childcare spaces and additional shared services for Anne Hathaway Daycare;
- 2021 revenue being impacted by unconfirmed funding allocations from the Ministry, provincial rent freeze, and COVID-19;
- adjusting the 3-5 year housing connectivity plan to be a 7-10 year plan in order to reduce yearly budget impacts;

- the City's tax levy being at 10% or \$3.2 million;
- the capital budget including \$6 million for phase 2 of Britannia and 673K for Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation properties; and,
- COVID-19 impacts on services including increase in janitorial costs at Anne Hathaway Daycare, reduced daycare capacity, increase in housing legal costs, and increase in price of lumber and raw materials.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- assessing the feasibility of individual, older homes that could be replaced with more modern units as current needs where capacity is not met is in single dwellings;
- budget impacts for operating agreements with partners only in 2021 if end users do not continue within programs; and,
- working with investStratford and local realtors to address the high demand for single units across the City.

5.5 Fire/Airport

The Fire Chief, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the 2021 Fire budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- the age of the current aerial truck being 30 years old by 2022 and \$2 million in debt financing being required for the design, build and RFP for a new truck.
- capital reserve contributions being cut by \$100K and adding \$25K per year until it is back to the \$200K annual total;
- consideration for 50K contributions in 2022 and 25K for the next two years;
- the budget increase being 3.62% if 25K contribution this year; and,
- no change to Fire's revenue while salary and benefits have increased.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- the height of a new aerial truck being no less than 100ft;
- aerial trucks being able to assist individuals with accessibility issues during an emergency;

- the only other aerial truck across neighboring municipalities being in Listowel and North Perth;
- designing a new aerial truck being preferred in order to take advantage of all warranty work; and,
- confirmed capability of debt financing for a new aerial truck in 2022.

The Fire Chief, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the 2021 Airport budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- COVID-19 not having a large impact on the Airport's budget;
- increase of airport fees and charges to eventually reach cost neutrality;
- a decrease in 2020 revenue with an increase to the overall operational budget; and,
- no capital projects being presented.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- an increase in hobby fliers during COVID-19 keeping fuel sale revenue where expected to be; and,
- project capital items not requiring an adjustment in transfer to capital reserves as not all proposed items are required.

5.6 Break

It was the consensus of Committee to recess for 10 minutes. Committee recessed at 10:09 a.m., and reconvened at 10:19 a.m.

5.7 Infrastructure and Development Services

The Director of Infrastructure and Development Services, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the 2021 Infrastructure and Development Services budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- departmental recruitment challenges;
- ongoing refinement of the asset management plan including programs to enhance in the budget;

- assessing the impact in 2021 on resources and capacity to handle the downloading of linear environmental compliance approvals from the province;
- renovations at 82 Erie Street which will result in the re-location of investStratford to this building as approved by Council;
- operating budget items with additional costs/funding: Wightman fiber installation project, update to the Transportation Master Plan, Development Charges Study update, and 3 household hazardous waste days;
- additional hazardous waste days costing the City \$25-30K per day;
- capital budget items for servicing the annexed lands subject to Council approval, Queen Street trunk storm sewer project, new landfill cell, Huron Reconstruction Phase 1, and Renewable Natural Gas Project;
- the Renewable Natural Gas Project being put on hold and looking to Council for commitment to proceed with any expenditures moving forward as project restarts;
- a request for one additional CADD position for design and as built drawings; and,
- impacts of COVID-19 on departmental services being additional custodial staff hired and reduction in building permit and planning application revenue.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- opportunities for surface work on the Queen Street project to begin in the Spring of 2021;
- the commitment required from the City to move forward with the Renewable Natural Gas project and not being required to proceed if funding is not extended;
- the adjusted setup and increased hours resulting in 3 hazardous waste events equaling approximately the same attendance as the 6 events held the year prior;
- a detailed costing report coming to Council on the implementation of a mattress recycling program at the City's landfill site;

- the new landfill being a cell and not a site as the current site's life expectancy has been extended due to increased diversion activities;
- opportunities on land around the site of the City's current landfill to explore climate change mitigation initiatives;
- revised pricing on the Renewable Natural Gas Plant being provided to Council;
- the rollout of green bins to businesses to catch materials still going to the landfill and not being recycled by restaurants and other establishments; and,
- requesting an extension from the province on the downloading of the linear environmental compliance approvals until 2022 so that proper resources can be put in place and any available funding being applied for.

5.8 Community Services

The Director of Community Services, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the 2021 Community Services budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- a 1.81% budget increase, down from approximately 14%;
- the reduction of seasonal cemetery employees and reduced part time custodian budget;
- COVID-19 having a significant impact on facility and transit revenues;
- operating items that could be removed and amended include goose management, Canada Day celebrations, senior's integration services contract, change Saturday to on-demand transit, and closing of Allman and Dufferin arenas;
- capital budget projects not started in 2020 being scheduled for completion in 2021;
- potential cancellation of active adult programs, parades, and outdoor events; and,
- transit savings recognized if the schools are closes as the school special routes would not run.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- the success of online services for adult programming;
- the carry over of incomplete 2020 projects and reduction in proposed budget from 14%;
- the success of Sunday on-demand transit service and piloting the same on Saturdays; and,
- savings of \$95K if switching to full Saturday on-demand transit service.

6. Outside Board 2021 Budget Presentations

6.1 Police Services

The Police Chief and Deputy Chief, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented 2021 Police Services budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- adopting an all hands-on deck philosophy during COVID-19;
- seeing an increase in calls related to mental health, addictions, suicides, homelessness and domestic violence;
- upgrades being required to the police services radio system and administration phone upgrades as seen in the draft budget;
- consideration in deployment of body worn cameras as a result of accountability concerns; and,
- the 2021 budget being at 1.28%.

Discussion ensued between members and the Chief and Deputy Chief of Police with respect to:

- proportionate cost sharing among areas serviced as it relates to significant communications upgrades;
- long-term pension expenses being accounted for in the service agreement with St. Mary's;
- budgeting for 2021 as if courts are opened as it relates to constables who normally work in the courts;

- reporting back to Council on a one year status update regarding impacts related to servicing St. Mary's and Perth South;
- the mobile response team collaboration between Stratford Police Services, Social Services, and Healthcare Alliance resulting in knowledge transfer and better outcomes for calls relating to mental health and addictions;
- the mobile response team being funded through Social Services and Healthcare Alliance;
- enhancements of annual officer training including extended 5 day programming, bringing in external subject matter experts and development of a de-escalation program;
- the shift in training having an impact on officer recruitment; and,
- addressing training opportunities for officers in relation to domestic violence calls and violence against women.

6.2 Lunch

It was the consensus of Committee to recess for 1 hour. Committee recessed at 11:50 a.m., and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

6.3 Stratford Public Library

The CEO, Stratford Public Library, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the 2021 Stratford Public Library budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- the shift of more programs and services online due to COVID-19;
- transfers and loaned materials being delayed due to quarantining items;
- the 2021 budget including a 2% cost of living increase for staff wages and benefits; and,
- program expansions including the elimination of late fines and additional wi-fi hotspots for loans into the community.

Discussion ensued between members and the CEO with respect to:

- adding new academic catalogues and resource content on the library's website;
- the removal of late fees not substantially impacting the rate or speed of return for loaned materials;
- reminder mechanisms for upcoming due dates or overdue items including email, text, phone, and mail; and,
- maintaining contact with educators during COVID-19 to keep up awareness of available library resources.

6.4 Stratford Tourism Alliance

The Executive Director, Stratford Tourism Alliance, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the 2021 Stratford Tourism Alliance budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- working to safely and responsibly market Stratford as a destination;
- increasing destination development opportunities such as expanding visitor trails, self-guided audio tours, Lights on Stratford, and Stratford Al Fresco;
- creation of a Digital Excellence Centre for tourism operators that was co-funded with other local tourism operators;
- continuing to explore tourism-related grants from all levels of government;
- presenting a draft budget 5% below 2020 levels;
- 2021 revenues being unknown due to COVID-19; and,
- creation of Stratford Economic Response and Recovery Task Force which allowed for maximizing recovery through collaborative efforts.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- the surge of tourism as the world approaches normalcy and being poised to respond in a smart and sustainable way;
- adjustments to the organization including the name Destination Stratford and moving away from a member partnership fee model so all businesses can be involved;

- establishing collaborative relationships with Perth County and the Town of St. Mary's as it relates to tourism; and,
- continuing to build an email list for industry communications to ensure everyone is kept up to date.

6.5 investStratford

The CEO, investStratford, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, presented the 2021 investStratford budget. Highlights of the presentation included:

- the challenges of COVID-19 including impact on operations, expanded reach with virtual environment, and use of various video and online resources;
- support of special projects from other levels of government;
- mental wellness being and continuing as a top priority for entrepreneur programs;
- moving to 82 Erie in collaboration with Development Services;
- the 2021 budget coming in at 3.7% under 2020 levels; and,
- future activities and resources being largely dependent on availability of funding in 2021.

Discussion ensued between members and staff with respect to:

- task force funds having been received and spent from the federal government, in addition to grant program allocations and projects; and,
- the continued growth and expansion of the industry during the pandemic.

7. Wrap-Up

The CAO advised that staff will follow up on the list of takeaway items and will provide further information at the next scheduled budget meeting.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that discussion on the draft 2021 Capital Budget will begin on December 2, 2020.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Vassilakos

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

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 9:00 A.M.

Meeting End Time: 1:44 P.M.