



The Corporation of the City of Stratford Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee MINUTES

Date: August 17, 2021
Time: 3:30 P.M.
Location: Electronic Meeting

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Gaffney - Chair Presiding, *Councillor Clifford - Vice-Chair, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Bunting, Councillor Ritsma

Staff Present: Spencer Steckley - Manager of Financial Services, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary, Tatiana Dafoe – City Clerk

Also present: Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford, Zac Gribble, Executive Director of Destination Stratford, Members of the Public

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 disclosure of pecuniary interest was made by a member at the August 17, 2021, Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee meeting.

3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of Destination Stratford

4.1 Destination Stratford Q2 Update (FIN21-020)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Destination Stratford report dated August 17, 2021 be received for information.

Motion by Councillor Ritsma

THAT the presentation by Zac Gribble, Executive Director of Destination Stratford, be heard.

Carried

Sub-committee Discussion: Zac Gribble, Executive Director of Destination Stratford, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, provided highlights from the second quarter update as follows:

- piloted a non-member model in 2020.
- annual budget is on track with 74% of budgeted revenues brought in and 38% expenses incurred as of June 30, 2021.
- managing of the AI Fresco program has incurred additional expenses. They continue to seek tourism relief grants to offset those costs.
- focused on three core areas - Destination Marketing, Destination Development and Destination Management
- Q1 and Q2 marketing metrics were noted. A younger GTA demographic is beginning to explore Stratford, often for the first time.
- Destination Development projects were highlighted, including 12 experiences funded by Destination Animation, Stratford AI Fresco, Lights On Stratford summer pop-ups, culinary trails, self-guided audio tours and cycle tourism.
- Tourism grants applied for and received were noted, with over \$1 million in 2021 grant applications.
- Destination Management items were reviewed, including supply of over 35,000 StaySafe COVID-19 Rapid Screening tests to local small businesses, tourism infrastructure such as drainage on Tom Patterson

Island, drainage pads for Al Fresco tables in Memorial Gardens and website updates and interactive maps.

It was questioned what Destination Stratford is projecting for 2022 with respect to outdoor dining and the Al Fresco project. Mr. Gribble advised that he hopes the value of the program to the City has been demonstrated. He noted there are significant costs for these projects which are being funded by recovery grants. Mr. Gribble expressed support for continuing the program, considering additional funding options and noted it will become less expensive as COVID-19 safety protocols are loosened.

The accessibility of Tom Patterson Island was questioned. Mr. Gribble advised that the footbridge is the limiting factor, however, programmers who use the island design them to be enjoyed from the banks of the river as well.

Motion by Councillor Bunting

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the Destination Stratford report dated August 17, 2021 be received for information.

Carried

5. Report of the Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation

5.1 Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation (SEEDCo./investStratford) – Update to July 2021 (FIN21-021)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation (SEEDCo./investStratford) Summary & Report: Activities of investStratford, May 2021 to July 2021, dated August 3, 2021 be received for information;

AND THAT the Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation (SEEDCo./investStratford) 2020 Annual Report be received for information.

Motion by Councillor Beatty

THAT the presentation by Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford, be heard.

Carried

Sub-committee Discussion: Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford, advised that the report encompasses May, June and July of 2021, as well as the annual report from 2020. Highlights from the 2020 Annual Report were provided as follows:

- New development and local expansions accounted for 300,000 square feet of new buildings.
- 75% of local industrial sales go to homegrown local businesses.
- 60% of the largest employers expect to expand in the next 18 months.
- Task Force related activities have been successful and generated more than \$3 million in direct economic impact.
- 174 entrepreneurs and small businesses were supported through the Stratford-Perth Centre for Business.
- Budget highlights were noted, including a reduction in the budget by 9%, grants received, operational expenses were reduced due to work-from-home, offices have relocated to 82 Erie Street with a \$100,000 contribution to renovations and a small surplus of \$11,700 was retained.

Highlights with respect to business retention, expansion and investment attraction were provided as follows:

- All lots in the Wright Business Park have been sold or are reserved.
- One lot in the Crane West Business Park has been reserved, with three available and four active inquiries for those lots.
- A new Investment Attraction Advisory Committee was started in May 2021 and the group meets with investStratford twice per year.

Entrepreneurship and small business updates were provided as follows:

- 7 young entrepreneurs being supported through the Summer Company programming.
- 9 new businesses supported through the Starter Company.

It was questioned how long it takes from the time initial contact is made until shovels are in the ground. Ms. Gerber advised it typically takes 12-18 months, however, seasonal delays occur throughout the winter. It was noted that the process to select a site often occurs before investStratford

is even contacted. Ms. Gerber advised having available inventory for sale is important to attract developments to the City. Ms. Gerber advised discussions are occurring with owners of underutilized property for use as infill projects. There are approximately 100 acres available, from small sizes to 10 acres, although it is privately held and some parcels have infrastructure challenges. Landowner outreach will begin in September and further information will be available at the next update.

It was questioned whether investStratford is hearing about efforts to bring production back to Canada. Ms. Gerber advised that it comes down to reshoring of equipment and if the Federal and Provincial governments are supportive, it may begin to return to Canada. Vastly increased shipping costs and availability of land were also noted as factors.

With respect to labour force concerns and its impact, it was noted that a 3.6% unemployment rate is a great community statistic, but difficult for economic development. Organizations across Canada are beginning work on workforce development. It was suggested it was a complex problem, with many factors having an impact such as availability of housing.

Discussion occurred on developing parcels in the City and planning for the future. Additional discussion occurred on the need to invest in infrastructure, industrial land and approaching the 2022 budget.

With respect to a living wage and how it affects incoming industry, Ms. Gerber stated that decent wages are required to remain competitive and retain good employees.

Motion by Councillor Clifford

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation (SEEDCo./investStratford) Summary & Report: Activities of investStratford, May 2021 to July 2021, dated August 3, 2021 be received for information;

AND THAT the Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation (SEEDCo./investStratford) 2020 Annual Report be received for information.

Carried

6. Report of the Manager of Financial Services

6.1 Q2 Operating Budget Variance Report as at June 30, 2021 (FIN21-022)

A vibrant city, leading the way in community-driven excellence.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Q2 Operating Budget Variance Report as at June 30, 2021 be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Financial Services advised there has been little change from the first quarter variance update provided in July. Staff are forecasting a \$49,000 deficit, updated from \$36,000 in the first quarter. A few departments have revised variance estimates, including a decreased deficit from Community Services and a decreased surplus from Police Services.

It was noted that some departments may appear out of line, however, timing of expenses can occur in the 3rd and 4th quarters that will normalize those percentages in line with the approved budget. Staff continue to monitor, address and mitigate any issues that arise. The next update will be presented in October.

*Councillor Clifford departed the meeting at 4:14 p.m.

Transit ridership and whether it has affected types of services to be provided was questioned. The Manager advised he would consult with staff and provide a response.

With respect to how the 2022 budget is coming, the Manager advised that staff are preparing for the upcoming pre-budget meeting and are on track.

Motion by Councillor Ritsma

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the Q2 Operating Budget Variance Report as at June 30, 2021 be received for information.

Carried

7. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee meeting is September 21, 2021 at 3:30 p.m.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Bunting

Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee meeting adjourn.

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 3:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 4:16 P.M.