



The Corporation of the City of Stratford Community Services Sub-committee MINUTES

Date: February 16, 2023
Time: 4:30 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Beatty - Chair Presiding, Councillor Henderson - Vice Chair, Councillor Briscoe, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Wordofa

Staff Present: Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Michael Mousley - Manager of Transit, Danielle Clayton - Recording Secretary, Stephanie Potter - Corporate Initiatives Lead, Tatiana Dafoe – City Clerk

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 February 16, 2023, Community Services Sub-committee meeting.

3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of the Manager of Transit and Corporate Initiatives Lead

4.1 Community Transportation – PC Connect Update 2023 (COM23-001)

Sub-committee Discussion: The Corporate Initiatives Lead and the Manager of Transit provided an overview of the management report. The Corporate Initiatives Lead advised that the City received \$1.45 million in Community Transportation grant funding to operate three intercity transit routes which was launched in November 2020. The City is in an equal partnership with the Town of St. Marys and the Municipality of North Perth. The Corporate Initiatives Lead provided an overview of the routes that are available to connect riders with various towns and cities. Over the course of the program, there has been substantial growth in ridership since the end of the Provincial lockdown. It was noted that improvements have been made to the service including a digital fare booking app and that riders have provided important feedback on the value of the program to the community. The municipality is continuing to advocate for funding for this pilot program.

The Manager of Transit noted that a service extension was granted for an additional two years as the original length of the program was five years. The additional funding that was provided from the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) was less than the amount previously provided. While the program will continue in 2023, in 2024 all partners involved will need to review the programs, including the financial implications, and decide whether to continue with this service. The Manager stated that significant financial contributions would be required from all partners to keep the program at its current state, or a decision would need to be made if the program is reduced during the next budget cycle. The Manager advised that more information will be available for the next meeting scheduled for March. At this time, the City is negotiating a new contract with Voyago, who is the service provider for this project, as the contract is set to expire at the end of March 2023. The Manager of Transit indicated that there will be an increase in Voyago's fees and that the contract will be brought before Council for consideration.

The Manager of Transit advised that they have reached out to the MTO for further support for funding. The Manager provided an overview of the various marketing initiatives that have been done to promote the program

and extended his gratitude to the County of Perth for assisting with promotion.

It was questioned whether the City is likely to receiving additional funding from the MTO. The Manager of Transit advised that conversations have taken place with the MTO and at this point it does not sound like additional funding will be made available for this project. At this point in time, staff are planning on not receiving additional funding. He stated that municipalities like London and Kitchener have their own transit projects and the idea of Stratford's project was "first mile, last mile" to connect to other transit systems.

A member noted that the Stratford Festival may be interested in a transit system that connects to cities like London and Kitchener to provide another way for festival goers to attend. The Manager of Transit stated that one of the outreach programs is to engage with employers about the need for transportation. He indicated that the Festival is aware of what the program has to offer.

It was questioned whether staff have the capacity to provide the service in house. The Manager of Transit advised that it would be a large capital and operating investment to take over the program if Voyago was no longer able to provide the service. Currently, it costs approximately \$700,000 - \$720,000 per year to pay the service provider and to operate the system based on the current operation of the program. The Manager indicated that approximately 90% of the funding for this program has come from the MTO and the remaining amount has been contributed by the participating municipalities. In 2024, each Council from the participating municipalities will need to decide if a substantial investment is to be made to continue this program. The Manager stated that it would be approximately \$150,000 yearly from each municipality involved to maintain the program should funding not be received. It was noted that the project is set to end in March 2025 by the MTO. If the program is to continue after that, the various partners will be responsible for the service and any related costs. There is a small amount of funding available for January – March 2024.

The current fees for the system and whether they can be amended were questioned. The Manager of Transit provided an overview of the current fees for the various routes available. The Manager stated that fees can be set to what the municipality feels is appropriate. The current fees were set

as the program was launched during COVID-19 as an affordable option. The Manager indicated that there is a possibility to increase the fares to help with continuing the program. The Corporate Initiative Lead indicated that the fare prices are for one-way trips.

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT options for a proposed fare increase for the PC Connect Service, be referred to staff for review and preparation of a report for consideration at a future Community Services Sub-committee meeting.

Concerns were raised regarding the possibility of raising the fares. The Chair advised that the motion is to direct staff to bring back further information and that rates will not be increased at this time.

In response to Sub-committee questioning, The Manager of Transit confirmed that if rates were to be increased, all participating municipalities would need to be in agreement. Each municipality is consulted for all changes and proposals for this program. He noted that in the future there may be the possibility that a municipal partner is no longer part of the program due to budget constraints.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Community Transportation – PC Connect Update 2023" (COU23-001), be received for information.

Carried

5. Department Update

Sub-committee Discussion:

The Director of Community Services provided an overview of the departmental update and highlighted the following:

- winter control being completed on recreation facility parking lots;
- ongoing winter swan care;

- tree pruning, flowerbed design and furniture painting and repair being completed;
- hiring of seasonal employees has been completed;
- tree removal and hydro pruning have been ongoing; and
- casket and cremation interments revenue increased in January 2023 compared to the same time last year.

The Director indicated that a breakdown will be included in the next Departmental Update of the on-demand transit service. It was noted that the Request for Proposal for accessible shelters has been posted and that various capital projects are waiting on approval from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP). The Director highlighted that the ridership for the parallel transit service is at approximately 90% of normal ridership prior to the pandemic.

The Director provided an overview of the various summer camps, activities and swim lessons that the City will be hosting this summer and that program planning is underway. It was noted that the Lion's Pool is scheduled to open the first Friday in June. The Director noted that in November and December 2022, an eight-week yoga program took place at the Tom Patterson Theatre with 60 attendees each week. He noted that special events and activities in the park system are getting close to pre pandemic numbers. The renovation taking place at the Boathouse Washroom will hopefully be completed and open by March as there have been a few material delays. It was noted that now that the elevator at City Hall is back in service, rentals of the auditorium will now be accepted.

It was questioned whether groups who rented the Auditorium pre-pandemic will need to sign a new contract. The Director indicated that anyone who had a contract to rent the Auditorium pre COVID will need to rebook and sign an updated rental agreement.

Supports available for children participating in City camp programs was questioned. The Director advised staff collaborate with the Social Services Department to ensure that all children who attend camp are provided with any extra support or programs. To the Director's knowledge, there is no additional fee for families who require additional support for their children while in summer camp programs.

6. Advisory Committee/Outside Board Minutes

There were no Advisory Committee/Outside Board minutes to be provided to Sub-committee.

7. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Community Services Sub-committee meeting will be held on March 23, 2023, at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Briscoe

Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Community Services Sub-committee meeting adjourn.

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 5:02 P.M.