



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

Date: June 15, 2023
Time: 4:31 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

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

Sub-committee Regrets: Councillor Wordofa

Staff Present: Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Michael Mousley - Manager of Transit, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary, Tatiana Dafoe - Clerk

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the Meeting to Order.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

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 June 15, 2023, Community Services Sub-committee meeting.

3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of the Director of Community Services

4.1 Stratford Minor Girls Softball Association Agreement 2023 - 2028 (COM23-007)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the agreement between The Corporation of the City of Stratford and the Stratford Minor Girls Softball Association be entered into for a five (5) year term to January 31, 2028;

AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk, or their respective delegates, be authorized to sign the agreement on behalf of the Corporation.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Director of Community Services provided the following highlights from the staff report:

- an agreement having been entered into with the minor boy's baseball association in December 2022;
- this agreement being for the use of Anne Hathaway Park for a five (5) year term, similar to past five year terms with this group;
- the draft agreement having been reviewed by the City Solicitor; and
- the staff recommendation being to authorize the Mayor and Clerk to enter into the agreement.

It was questioned whether the contract price was increasing. The Director stated that the association pays a fee per participant and that fee is included in the yearly Fees and Charges By-law approved by Council.

Motion by Councillor Briscoe

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the agreement between The Corporation of the City of Stratford and the Stratford Minor Girls Softball Association be entered into for a five (5) year term to January 31, 2028;

AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk, or their respective delegates, be authorized to sign the agreement on behalf of the Corporation.

Carried

4.2 Stratford Urban Gym Proposal (COM23-008)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Stratford Urban Gym" (COU23-008), be received;

THAT a public notification be given to the surrounding residents advising of the Urban Gym proposal and to obtain comments on the proposal;

AND THAT following the public notification process, and confirmation of success of the fundraising, staff be directed to issue a Request for Proposal for the design and installation of a Stratford Urban Gym for Shakespeare Park.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Director of Community Services advised that staff were approached by the resident who assisted with establishing the All Wheels skate park at Shakespeare Park about a new initiative. Highlights of the staff report were provided as follows:

- during COVID, there being an increased awareness about outdoor fitness;
- the resident having brought forward an idea for an adult urban gym at Shakespeare Park;
- this project being funded through the resident and his fundraising activities, with no impact to the tax levy;
- following notification to adjacent residents, staff would like to issue a request for proposals (RFP);
- during that process, staff would consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to make sure all design elements are considered for accessibility; and
- it was noted that this installation would enhance the family friendliness of the park, in addition to the skate park, tennis courts and children's playground.

The Chair noted this park has become a destination park. This added feature adds another opportunity for the whole family to participate.

Motion by Councillor Briscoe

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Stratford Urban Gym" (COU23-008), be received;

THAT a public notification be given to the surrounding residents advising of the Urban Gym proposal and to obtain comments on the proposal;

AND THAT following the public notification process, and confirmation of success of the fundraising, staff be directed to issue a Request for Proposal for the design and installation of a Stratford Urban Gym for Shakespeare Park.

A question and answer period took place between Sub-committee and the Director as follows:

- it was noted that some Shakespeare residents were opposed to the skate park before it was established and questioned whether public feedback on this project would come to Council before the tendering process;
- the Director advised that feedback from the neighbours has been that the noise from the skate park is not as bad as they thought it would be;
- notification to the neighbours is more of a courtesy;
- staff believe that the resident has been in touch with the neighbours and the response has been positive;
- if there were major concerns, they would be brought to Council prior to issuance of the RFP;
- this gym has little to no noise associated with it;
- staff can send out information to Council via email with the feedback from the neighbours; and
- following the procurement process, staff are hoping for a mid to late fall installment.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

5. Report of the Manager of Transit

5.1 2023 Transit Bench Advertising Locations (COM23-004)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Management Report titled, "2023 Transit Bench Advertising Locations" (COM23-004), be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Transit provided background information outlined in the report as follows:

- the vendor was to supply thirty (30) advertising benches to be installed at bus stops throughout the City;
- twenty (20) benches were installed in 2022 and 10 are to be installed in 2023;
- locations of the remaining 10 benches, along with photos, were included with the staff report; and
- all benches have been installed in the City's right of way, none are on private property.

A question and answer period between staff and the Manager took place as follows:

- it being questioned what the options are to not continue with installation of the remaining 10 benches;
- the Manager stating he would need to review the contract;
- it being noted there was some concern at the beginning of the project, however, it has been tastefully done to date and there are always people sitting on the benches;
- it being asked whether local business have opted into the advertising spaces;
- it being stated that Creative Outdoors does the marketing for the spaces;
- all existing 20 advertising spaces have been sold and there is a waiting list;
- staff understands that spaces are leased in six (6) month contracts; and

- staff spoke with Creative Outdoors to ensure that local businesses have first priority for the advertising spaces for the remaining ten (10) benches.

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the Management Report titled, "2023 Transit Bench Advertising Locations" (COM23-004), be received for information.

It was stated by a member of Sub-committee that he has heard negative feedback from residents about this program. Concerns were noted as follows:

- the Downtown Stratford BIA was upset with a bench location, and they purchased the space to prevent what they felt was an unsightly advertisement;
- benches are going in places where there is already adequate seating;
- they look fine, but he believes it would look better without them there;
- all advertisements are from the same company so far that he has seen; and
- he does not want to see this program continue, noting that 10 years is a long time.

The Chair noted that he inadvertently read out the wrong staff recommendation and the correct motion was then read aloud.

A question and answer period took place between Sub-committee and the Manager of Transit:

- it being questioned whether the Manager was aware of the concerns from the BIA;
- the two locations that the BIA had concerns with were resolved by not installing benches in those locations;
- the BIA being okay with the bench located near Shoppers if they could install their own advertising, which they did, and it was believed there were no further concerns; and

- it was suggested this was a move towards a greener City, as Council is incentivizing transit and active transportation and providing opportunities for transit riders or walkers to sit which supports that goal.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

Motion by Councillor Sebben

THAT the expansion of the transit bench program be paused; and that the City solicitor be consulted as to whether the contract could be cancelled.

Defeated

5.2 Community Transportation – PC Connect Fare Increase Feasibility (COM23-005)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Community Transportation - PC Connect Fare Increase Feasibility" (COM23-005), be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Transit stated Council directed the preparation of a report on the potential future of the PC Connect service and how much it would cost to sustain it financially. This report was prepared in response to that request. An overview of the staff report was provided as follows:

- the report includes what the service would look like if fares were increased;
- the report provides information on the current fares, including the three buses that Stratford operates, as well as the two buses operated by Perth County, for a total of five buses;
- it is a very economical mode of transportation;
- in 2022, ridership was 22,105, with almost \$57,000 in revenue for the year;
- if Council were to look at an increase to make the service financially sustainable, without contributions from the other levels of government or the tax levy, the cost would be \$35 per ride;

- the demographics of people who use the service currently include those with disabilities and seniors, as well as those who use the service to come into the City to work;
- it was suggested that \$20 per ride would cover just over half the costs to provide the service;
- 3,000 passes have been sold over the past few years to Ontario Works for use by their clients;
- the project received an extension from the Ministry of Transportation Ontario and is being funded for an additional two years, although only at half the amount received in the first five years;
- staff are having conversations with all the partners as there are budget implications for all municipalities; and
- ridership has consistently been climbing.

A question and answer period took place between Sub-committee and the Manager as follows:

- it being questioned whether the first step is covering the shortfall of \$100,000 to \$200,000 to start in January;
- the Manager stating that the \$611,936.91 received from the Province will cover expenses until the end of 2023;
- the beginning of 2024 is when the substantial financial commitment will be required by each municipal partner;
- the Manager stating that following discussions with the partner municipalities and once he knows who is willing to continue participating and how much they are willing to contribute, he will have a better idea of a potential rate increase; and
- this service will be included as part of the 2024 budget discussions.

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Community Transportation - PC Connect Fare Increase Feasibility" (COM23-005), be received for information.

Carried

5.3 Transit Bus Electrification Feasibility Study Results (COM23-006)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Transit Bus Electrification Feasibility Study Results" (COM23-006), be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Transit, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, provided the following information:

- the study being almost complete;
- the remaining portion focusing on what needs to be done to the facility to add charging infrastructure and the associated costs;
- a consultant is assessing the viability of transitioning to Battery Electric Buses (BEBs);
- the transition to BEBs assisting the City with its goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050;
- the scope of the study including three parts, being Feasibility and Energy Modelling, Facility Assessment and Infrastructure Requirements and a Fleet Transition Plan;
- the preliminary findings being outlined with the options for a 675kw BEB and a 525kw BEB;
- it being noted that the 525kw BEBs do not last a full day and will be outdated by the time this project comes to completion;
- there being options for diesel or electric heat as well;
- vehicle charging pathway options were provided, being the garage or an on-route charger;
- on route charging not being feasible in the foreseeable future as the BEBs do not sit at stops for any length of time required for charging;

- information being provided on how long of a charge can be obtained for each BEB option;
- neither BEB size option being able to get through the 16 hour day the buses currently run;
- options being provided for the different size BEBs and heat options and how many times buses would need to be swapped throughout the day;
- the consultant completing the facility assessment now;
- conversations being had with Festival Hydro to review hydro capacity coming into the transit garage;
- there being a possible need for a small green transformer but there not being a need for a new hydro line;
- the transition plan requiring a large capital investment over 20 years;
- the payoff occurring over time as fuel costs come down;
- the transition plan indicating that with a 2026 start, in 2042 there would no longer be any diesel buses;
- the 2026 start requiring staff to apply for the Zero Emissions Transit Fund through the federal government for 80% of the costs;
- the 20% capital investment required by the City being \$40 million over 20 years;
- there being a need to begin replacing the BEBs halfway through the 20 year project span;
- the report including current diesel bus fuel data;
- those fuel costs having doubled in the last few years;
- comparison in costs between engine and battery mid life refurbishments and the warranties provided being outlined;
- lower operating costs beginning in 2035 due to lower fuel and maintenance costs;
- electricity costs being outlined in the report;

- the 15 bus fleet currently having annual emissions of 1343 metric tonnes each year; and
- that number coming down to 50 metric tonnes with electric heat and 98 metric tonnes with diesel heat.

A question and answer period took place between Sub-committee and the Manager as follows:

- it being questioned whether the City has two hybrid buses currently;
- the Manager advising they are waiting on approvals from the federal government so the buses can be ordered;
- there being hope that approvals will be received by mid-late summer of 2023;
- those buses then taking 14-16 months to manufacture;
- BEBs being very quiet as there is no exhaust;
- no infrastructure changes being needed at the transit garage for the hybrid buses;
- an explanation of how the hybrid buses work being provided;
- the charging infrastructure being located on the east side of the transit garage, with the equipment being run along the ceiling and pulled down to the buses; and
- the charging stations projected to last 20 years with today's technology.

Motion by Councillor Briscoe

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Transit Bus Electrification Feasibility Study Results"(COM23-006), be received for information.

It was noted by a Sub-committee member that long term savings could be substantial with this project, as the carbon tax is projected to increase the price of fuel significantly.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Carried

6. Department Update

Sub-committee Discussion: The Director of Community Services provided the following highlights from the department update:

- tree planting continues;
- summer staff having being hired;
- annual planting and hanging baskets having been installed;
- repair work having to be done in Confederation Park at the waterfall;
- four (4) proposals having been received for Marsh Pond playground equipment;
- installation of the Marsh Pond playground equipment occurring in mid-September;
- grass cutting and turf maintenance occurring in the cemetery;
- monument restoration being completed, with 100 stones completed by a new contractor;
- on demand ridership numbers going up;
- hybrid buses still pending;
- the bus wash replacement having been approved and will move forward;
- parallel transit ridership being almost back to pre-pandemic numbers;
- summer day camps beginning in July;
- the Lions Pool opening on June 9, 2023;
- the Municipal Cultural Plan being presented to Council on June 26, 2023;
- Fieldhouse flooring in the Agriplex being removed for the annual Pork Congress; and
- arena sound system having been completed by May 31.

7. Advisory Committee/Outside Board Minutes

The following Advisory Committee/Outside Board minutes were provided for the information of Sub-committee:

- Board of Park Management minutes of April 3, 2023

- Communities in Bloom Advisory Committees minutes of April 6 and May 4, 2023

8. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Community Services Sub-committee meeting is July 13, 2023, at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Henderson

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

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:31 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 5:21 P.M.