



Stratford City Council Regular Council Open Session

MINUTES

Meeting #: 4793rd
Date: Monday, March 9, 2026
Time: 7:00 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Council Present: Mayor Ritsma - Chair Presiding, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Biehn, Councillor Briscoe, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Henderson, Councillor Hunter, Councillor McCabe, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Wordofa

Staff Present: André Morin - Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Audrey Pascual - Deputy Clerk, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Taylor Crinklaw - Director of Infrastructure Services, Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Adam Betteridge - Director of Building and Planning Services, Neil Anderson - Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, Nick Sheldon - Project Manager, Johnny Bowes - Manager of Asset Management, Mandy Koroniak - Manager of Children's Services, Will Mason – Maintenance Clerk

Also Present: Members of the Public and Media

1. Call to Order:

Mayor Ritsma, Chair presiding, called the Council meeting to order.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

Singing of O Canada

Respectful Conduct Statement

2. Declarations 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 to otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Beatty declared a pecuniary interest with respect Item 7.5 - Communities in Bloom Request for Additional Funds 2026. Councillor Beatty is one of the committee members attending the event.

Councillor McCabe declared a pecuniary interest with respect to Item 4 in Item 7.2 - 2026 Community Grant Evaluation Committee Recommendations. Councillor McCabe's wife is the Artistic Director of the Here For Now Theatre Company.

Councillor Burbach declared a pecuniary interest with respect to Item 6 in Item 7.2 - 2026 Community Grant Evaluation Committee Recommendations. Councillor Burbach noted that INNERchamber Inc. is a client.

Councillor Burbach declared a pecuniary interest with respect to Item 4 in Item 7.2 - 2026 Community Grant Evaluation Committee Recommendations. Councillor Burbach is a board member for the Here For Now Theatre Company. (Did not declare initially but noted it when voting for Item 7.2 started).

3. Adoption of the Minutes:

R2026-89

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

THAT the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of Council of The Corporation of the City of Stratford dated February 23, 2026 be adopted as printed.

Carried

4. Adoption of the Addendum to the Agenda:

There was no addendum to the March 9, 2026 Regular Council agenda.

5. Report of the Committee of the Whole In-Camera Session:

5.1 Committee of the Whole In-camera Session - March 9, 2026:

The March 9, 2026, Committee of the Whole In-camera Session was cancelled.

6. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations:

6.1 Introduction: Interim Police Chief for Stratford Police Service

Mayor Ritsma introduced Stratford Police Service Interim Police Chief Paul Landers.

6.2 Order of Canada Recognition - Patricia O'Malley

Mayor Ritsma and Council recognized Patricia O'Malley. Ms. O'Malley is an Order of Canada recipient, recognized for her work as a chartered professional accountant who redefined financial reporting and standard setting. Ms. O'Malley is also recognized as a trailblazer in a profession traditionally held by men and is one of the first women to ever serve in a senior role.

7. Orders of the Day:

7.1 Resolution - Asset Management Plan 2026 Update (COU26-026)

The Manager of Asset Management, referring to a PowerPoint Presentation, provided an overview of the report and the plan. Highlights of the presentation included:

- the plan putting the City in compliance with Phase 4 of Ontario Regulation 588/17;
- an overview of why the Asset Management Plan matters;
- a summary of the public engagement completed as part of the development of the plan including an overview of the responses received;
- an overview of the City's asset inventory and the total replacement costs;
- the Asset Management Plan being a living document that will be updated regularly;

- an overview of the City's current sustainability position;
- an overview of the annual capital replacement requirement and how it is calculated;
- the funding challenges in Stratford not being unique as other Ontario municipalities are also experiencing similar challenges with their capital infrastructure funding;
- an overview of financial sustainability and what it means in a municipal context;
- an overview of the asset replacement infrastructure backlog;
- the City having more accurate asset condition data which will be helpful with the financial planning;
- the Asset Management Plan allowing Council to consider the impacts of changes to the levels of service;
- the Plan being a municipal tool which can be used to plan projects and inform major Council decisions; and
- an overview of the staff recommendation.

Members of Council, the Director of Corporate Services, and the Manager of Asset Management held a discussion regarding the following:

- the Asset Management Plan being a good tool for Council and can be used for long-term planning;
- an overview of how Council can direct the use of reserve funds;
- the Plan to provide more accurate data, eliminating any guess work and establishing a framework for asset management; and
- the Asset Management Plan being covered as part of Council onboarding.

R2026-90

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT the report titled, "Asset Management Plan 2026 Update" (COU26-026), be received;

THAT Council adopt the City's Asset Management Plan 2026 and direct staff to begin implementing the recommendations included in the Plan as presented;

THAT \$1,800,000 of unallocated proceeds from the sale of 3188 Vivian Line 37 in 2024 be transferred to the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund R-R11-PWCA;

AND THAT \$262,481.78 be transferred to the Community Improvement Plan Incentive Reserve G-R18-CIPI for the heritage façade and masonry loan program.

Members of Council and staff held a discussion regarding the motion.

Highlights of the discussion included:

- the unallocated proceeds augmenting the transfers to reserves and can help with the infrastructure backlog;
- there being an increase in the contribution to reserves in the last few years to reset it to baseline levels; and
- staff envisioning that the transfers to reserves to continue to increase but not at same pace as previous years.

The Mayor called the question on the motion.

Carried

7.2 Resolution - 2026 Community Grant Evaluation Committee Recommendations (COU26-030)

R2026-91

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Briscoe

THAT the 2026 community grant recommendations (one time and multi-year) as outlined in the attached summary to Report COU26-030;

AND THAT any appeals received from applicants be considered by Council.

Councillor Burbach requested Items 4 and 6 in Report COU26-030 be taken separately as she is a board member for the Here For Now Theatre Company and therefore has a pecuniary interest with this item.

The Mayor called the question on the motion, excluding Items 4 and 6 in Report COU26-030.

Carried

The Mayor called the question on Item 4, being the 2026 community grant for the Here For Now Theatre Company.

Carried

Councillor Burbach and Councillor McCabe having declared pecuniary interests did not participate in the discussion or vote on the matter.

The Mayor called the question on Item 6, being the 2026 community grant for the INNERchamber Inc.

Carried

Councillor Burbach having declared a pecuniary interest did not participate in the discussion or vote on the matter.

7.3 Resolution - 2026 Tax Rates and Tax Policy Matters (COU26-025)

R2026-92

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Seconded by Councillor Hunter

THAT the report titled, "2026 Tax Rates and Tax Policy Matters" (COU26-025), be received for information;

THAT Council approve the 2026 tax rates and tax ratios;

AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute the by-law to set tax ratios, tax rates and tax reductions for prescribed subclasses for the year 2026 and govern and regulate the finances of The Corporation of the City of Stratford.

Members of Council and staff held a discussion regarding the motion. Highlights of the discussion included:

- a member noting their preference for the approval of Option 2, the reduction of the multi-residential tax ratio;
- the reduction of the multi-residential tax ratio to help maintain rent-geared-to-income units in older buildings;
- an overview of how the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) classifies assessments for residential/farm, farmlands, and farmland waiting development; and
- there being no lands in the City currently assessed as farmland waiting development.

The Mayor called the question on the motion.

Carried

R2026-93

Motion by Councillor Biehn

Seconded by Councillor Briscoe

THAT staff be directed to reduce the multi-residential tax ratio by 10% in 2027 as part of the budget process.

Members of Council and staff held a discussion regarding the motion.

Highlights of the discussion included:

- the reduction of the multi-residential tax ratio to level the playing field between new and older multi-residential properties;
- a comparison of the tax ratios between residential and new and older multi-residential properties;
- the municipality being required to set tax ratios within the ratio of fairness established by the Province;
- the impact of the phased-in reduction being approximately \$250,000 based on 2026 calculation;
- there being no taxes lost as the impact will be redistributed between the other property classes;

- older multi-residential buildings having difficulty building up their reserve funds for capital projects resulting in a need to raise rents to fund capital costs;
- new multi-residential properties being at the 1.0 tax ratio for 35 years and would revert to the 2.0 tax ratio following this period;
- an overview of the budget process under strong mayor powers and how the reduction can be incorporated;
- the budget being a Mayor's budget but the tax policy being determined by Council;
- the reduction in the tax ratio being a prevention method for affordable units in multi-residential properties as it would help freeze the rent rates while freeing up funds for capital spending;
- there being concerns that the reduction will not have any effect on rent increases;
- an overview of how other municipalities have handled the matter;
- the Province being focused on protecting the housing stock and could potentially mandate a reduction;
- there being buildings in the City with rent-geared-to-income units that are seeing increases in their maintenance costs and the reduction allowing them to fund these costs without raising the rent;
- the City not having the ability to set conditions on the reduction of the tax ratio as it would apply to the entire property class;
- the City not being able to raise the tax ratio back up after it is reduced; and
- there being impacts to the sale of properties relating to potential changes to the multi-residential class tax ratio.

The Mayor called the question on the motion.

Carried

7.4 Resolution - Implementation of a Directly Operated Licensed Home Child Care Agency (COU26-027)

R2026-94

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

THAT the report titled, "Implementation of a Directly Operated Licensed Home Child Care Agency" (COU26-027), be received for information;

THAT Council authorize staff to proceed with establishing a new directly-operated licensed home child care agency, to be operated by the City of Stratford;

AND THAT 1 FTE Home Child Care Visitor be authorized in addition to the City's current staffing complement to meet the legislative requirements of a licensed home child care agency.

Members of Council and staff held a discussion regarding the motion. Highlights of the discussion included:

- the City needing a business case to see what is viable should the Province change the funding for child care services;
- there being a significant need for child care spaces in the community;
- the program being of great value to the community and would be worth the continued funding from the City should the provincial funding not continue;
- the Province having negotiated a one-year agreement with the federal government; and
- there being ongoing discussions between the provincial and federal governments regarding the program.

The Mayor called the question on the motion.

Carried

7.5 Resolution - Communities in Bloom Request for Additional Funds 2026 (COU26-032)

R2026-95

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT the request from the Communities in Bloom Advisory Committee for an additional amount of \$4,032.00 for travel expenses related to sending four members of the Committee to the Cervia Città Giardino – Special Edition dedicated to the 80th Anniversary of the Republic: Flowers of Freedom, Roots of Hope, be approved;

AND THAT the amount be funded from the Local Boards and Committee Reserve G-R18-BRDS-0000.

Members of Council held a discussion regarding the motion. Highlights of the discussion included:

- the Stratfords of the World Committee having a similar funding request in 2025 which was denied by Council;
- there being a need to be consistent with what will be funded to be fair to all committees;
- an overview of the work done by the Communities and Bloom and the Stratfords of the World Committees;
- there being a historic connection with the Perth Regiment and the Communities in Bloom Committee having a special obligation to present at the conference; and
- it being important to establish economic connections with other parts of the world given the current global situation.

The Mayor called the question on the motion.

Carried

Councillor Beatty having declared a pecuniary interest did not participate in the discussion or vote on the matter.

7.6 Resolution - Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF) Transit Funding Update (COU26-033)

R2026-96

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

THAT Council authorize the Mayor and Clerk, or their respective delegates, to enter into a Contribution Agreement for CP-001039 Capital Plan between The Corporation of the City of Stratford and the federal Ministry of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities for the Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF), to fund the transit capital projects outlined in the agreement.

Carried

7.7 Resolution - Award of Request for Proposals for Source Separated Organics Processing (COU26-028)

R2026-97

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

THAT the Proposal (RFP-2026-01) for Source Separated Organics Processing be awarded to Generate Upcycle;

THAT the Mayor and Clerk, or their respective delegates, be authorized to sign the contract agreement for RFP-2026-01;

AND THAT the Director of Infrastructure Services be authorized to extend the contract for an additional two (2) one (1) year terms between April 1, 2029-March 31, 2030, and April 1, 2030-March 30, 2031 subject to successful contract performance and consumer price index increases.

Carried

7.8 Resolution - Farmland Lease Award – 150 McCarthy Road West (COU26-031)

R2026-98

Motion by Councillor Biehn

Seconded by Councillor Beatty

THAT the Proposal (RFP 2026-05) for the lease of 150 McCarthy Road West be awarded to Brad DeBoer, operating as Sunova Farm Incorporated;

THAT Council authorize staff to prepare and finalize the lease agreement for the property known as 150 McCarthy Road West for an initial period to December 31, 2027, with two one-year options to extend;

AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk, or their respective delegates, be authorized to sign the lease agreement.

Carried

7.9 Resolution - 2025 Annual Reports from Committees of Council (COU26-029)

Members of Council thanked everyone who serve on the various committees and recognized the projects that they do for the community.

R2026-99

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Seconded by Councillor Burbach

THAT the 2025 Annual Reports from the following Committees of Council be received for information:

- **Active Transportation Advisory Committee,**
- **Heritage Stratford Committee,**
- **Accessibility Advisory Committee,**
- **Stratfords of the World Committee,**
- **Communities in Bloom Committee, and**
- **Energy and Environment Committee.**

Carried

7.10 Proclamation - Dairy Week 2026

R2026-100

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

THAT Stratford City Council hereby proclaims April 1 to April 4, 2026 as "Dairy Week" in the City of Stratford in celebration of the Dairy Sector in Perth County, and authorizes the flying of a Dairy Producer flag at City Hall on April 1 to April 4, 2026 in recognition of the hard work and dedication behind the foods we eat.

Carried

8. Business for Which Previous Notice Has Been Given:

None noted.

9. Reports of the Standing Committees:

There were no Standing Committee reports considered at the March 9, 2026 meeting.

10. Notice of Intent:

None noted.

11. Reading of the By-laws:

The following By-laws required First and Second Readings and Third and Final Readings and were taken collectively upon unanimous vote of Council present:

R2026-101

Motion by Councillor Biehn

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT By-laws 33-2026 to 36-2026 be taken collectively.

Carried unanimously

R2026-102

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Henderson

THAT By-laws 33-2026 to 36-2026 be read a First and Second Time.

Carried two-thirds support

R2026-103

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT By-laws 33-2026 to 36-2026 be read a Third Time and Finally Passed.

Carried

11.1 Canada Public Transit Fund Transfer Payment Agreement - By-law 33-2026

To authorize the execution of a Contribution Agreement with His Majesty the King in right of Ontario as represented by the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities to receive funds through Canada's Baseline Funding Stream of the Canada Public Transit Fund.

11.2 2026 Tax Rates and Ratios - By-law 34-2026

To set tax ratios, tax rates and tax reductions for prescribed subclasses for the year 2026 and govern and regulate the finances of The Corporation of the City of Stratford.

11.3 Lease Agreement - 150 McCarthy Road West - By-law 35-2026

To authorize the acceptance of a proposal and execution of a Lease Agreement with Sunova Farm Incorporated for farmland at 150 McCarthy Road West to December 31, 2027, with two one-year options to extend (RFP-2026-05).

11.4 Source Separated Organics Processing Proposal Award - By-law 36-2026

To authorize the acceptance of a proposal, the undertaking of work and execution of a contract agreement with Generate Upcycle for the processing of source separated organics (RFP-2026-01).

12. Consent Agenda: CA-2026-022 to CA-2026-26

12.1 CA-2026-026

R2026-104

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor Sebben

THAT CA-2026-026, being a resolution from The Corporation of the Township of Perry regarding Reduced Rate Distribution of Library Resources, be endorsed.

Carried

13. New Business:

13.1 Message from Councillor Briscoe

Councillor Briscoe thanked members of Council, staff, and the public for their support during her maternity leave.

13.2 International Women's Day

Mayor Ritsma recognized the CFUW Stratford for their annual International Women's Day Breakfast that held on March 7th.

14. Adjournment to Standing Committees:

The next Regular Council meeting is March 23, 2026 in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

R2026-105

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT the Council meeting adjourn to convene into Standing Committees as follows:

- **Infrastructure, Transportation and Safety Committee [7:05 or thereafter following the Regular Council meeting]; and**
- **Planning and Heritage Committee [7:10 or thereafter following the Regular Council meeting]**

and to Committee of the Whole if necessary, and to reconvene into Council.

Carried

15. Council Reconvene:

15.1 Declarations of Pecuniary Interest made at Standing Committees

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.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interest made at Standing Committee meetings held on March 9, 2026 with respect to the following Items and re-stated at the reconvene portion of the Council meeting:

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest made by a Member at the March 9, 2026 Council Reconvene meeting.

15.2 Reading of the Confirmatory By-law:

The following By-law required First and Second Readings and Third and Final Readings:

By-law 11.5 Confirmatory By-law 37-2026

To confirm the proceedings of Council of The Corporation of the City of Stratford at its meeting held on March 9, 2026.

R2026-106

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT By-law 37-2026 be read a First and Second Time.

Carried two-thirds support

R2026-107

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor Sebben

THAT By-law 37-2026 be read a Third Time and Finally Passed.

Carried

15.3 Adjournment of Council Meeting

R2026-108

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT the March 9, 2026, Regular Council meeting adjourn.

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 7:00 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 8:39 P.M.

Meeting Start Time: 9:03 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 9:04 P.M.

“Martin Ritsma”

Mayor - Martin Ritsma

“Tatiana Dafoe”

Clerk - Tatiana Dafoe