EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 669
Councillor Gerbasi inquired when the final recommendations of the *The Assiniboine Park Framework Plan* would be forthcoming inasmuch as Council, on July 21, 2004, received the report as information on the understanding that the Administration, through business case analysis, would test the feasibility, sustainability, capital requirements and fundraising potential of the Plan and present final recommendations for Council consideration.

His Worship Mayor Katz replied that he was not in a position, at this point in time, to advise when the report would come forward but acknowledged that he would like it to be as soon as possible and would endeavour to expedite the process.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned if the Rapid Transit Task Force Report, once made public, would be brought to an Executive Policy Committee meeting at the first opportunity in October to which His Worship responded that a Council Seminar would be held later this week and that the report would then move onto Executive Policy Committee and Council through the normal procedure.

Councillor Gerbasi further questioned if the Rapid Transit Task Force recommendations would be considered in the Mayor's current gas tax negotiations with the Federal government; to which His Worship replied in the affirmative.

In noting that the Mayor proposed building condos at Assiniboine Park on the same spot the Zoological Society of Manitoba proposed creating an entrance and gift shop to raise money for the zoo, Councillor Benham questioned why the Mayor, in the name of raising revenue for the zoo, proposed taking away the zoo's prime opportunity to earn greater revenue.

His Worship advised that he put forward an idea that consisted of potentially looking at either condos or apartments; noting that in the last ten days, because of his actions, the park and zoo have had more thought and more exposure than in the last ten years and he has been inundated with all sorts of suggestions. His Worship added that the proposal was preliminary and anything that is conceptual can be changed if the parties believe it is better and will accomplish a better end result.

Councillor Benham questioned where people would park for major events when on-street parking in Assiniboine Park is at capacity. His Worship responded that there are reports of 40,000 to 70,000 people attending events in Assiniboine Park and that they are finding alternative places to park, or are walking, as those parking lots provide minimal parking for the four or five annual events for which they are typically used.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

Councillor Benham questioned if Councillor Steeves, Chair of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services, was speaking on behalf of the Mayor and the Executive Policy Committee in August when he called publicly for a review of the amalgamation of Fire and Paramedic Services to which His Worship replied that Councillor Steeves was not speaking on behalf of the Mayor.

In reference to Hurricane Katrina, Councillor Wyatt inquired if it would be possible to organize a seminar for Councillors to provide an update on what the emergency plans are for Council and the City in the event of any kind of emergency and suggested that an open door session be held so that the public is also educated about the emergency plan. His Worship replied that the suggestion had a great deal of merit and that he would investigate the situation.

In noting that a Chief Operating Officer was hired to oversee the development of Assiniboine Park Enterprise, as well as the overall governance and leadership of Assiniboine Park, Councillor Smith inquired if His Worship had discussed the condominium proposal with the Chief Operating Officer before it was made. His Worship advised that he had not discussed that idea with the Chief Operating Officer; noting that it was only an idea that was being explored and not yet reality.

Councillor Smith asked if the Mayor thought it would be a good idea to talk to the Chief Operating Officer; to which His Worship stated that the dialogue could happen at any time.

Councillor Lubosch inquired if a Council Seminar could be held in the next 30 to 60 days to discuss the Assiniboine Park Enterprise and the zoo to which His Worship replied that Councillor Gerbasi had put forward a motion pertaining to that and indicated that it would make sense to have a Council seminar when the status of the business plan for the Assiniboine Park Framework Plan has been brought forward.

In noting that Mayoralty and Councillor candidates have never been fined by the City for not submitting their audited financial statements, Councillor Magnifico inquired what progress has been made to change that practice. His Worship indicated that the Province indicated that they are looking at potentially taking action and prosecuting those who have not complied with the by-law.

Councillor Gerbasi asked if His Worship would indicate his view on whether or not he supports the current public art policy / program that was unanimously approved by Council in 2003.

His Worship stated that approximately 3.7 million dollars was provided annually as operating funds for the program and that 500,000 dollars was placed annually into a capital fund for public art; he further acknowledged that the current policy made sense and he supported it, but by the same token, priorities have to be looked at if monies are not available and stated that he would have no problem making changes, if necessary.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

In reference to the Humane Society, Councillor Gerbasi inquired if the final report would address the current problems and the issue of euthanasia of too many cats and what Council should be doing in regards to the issue. His Worship advised that the key issues were funding and spaying / neutering and that he believed both those issues would have to be addressed with a long-term plan.

Councillor Benham questioned why Winnipeg is the only major city in western Canada that has not signed a gas tax deal.

His Worship acknowledged that someone is always last and inasmuch as Winnipeg has different needs than other cities, it put the City in a very unique situation when Ottawa decided that cities with a population of over 500,000 would be restricted in how the gas tax money could be spent. He added that both the Federal Minister responsible believed that they were very close to signing a deal.

Councillor Benham asked what percentage of the gas tax money the Mayor felt should go to public transit needs to which His Worship indicated that what has been discussed was a formula with 10 percent of the funds allocated for transit.

Councillor Benham questioned what steps the Mayor has taken to ensure that in the future the City is not fined 20,000 dollars for withholding information from an arbitration hearing with its own employees. His Worship advised that no decisions on that issue had been made and that it was being investigated.