EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 729
Councillor Magnifico questioned the status of the implementation of the Red Tape Commission Report to which His Worship Mayor Katz noted that Council had endorsed recommendation no. 6, and as a result, the use of a Provincial Companies data base to track business is on the City's agenda for upcoming discussion with the Province.

His Worship further advised that they have now received the administration reports on an easy pay policy, better front doors, a single permit for regular special events, as well as 311. He further noted that a number of the other recommendations were going forward to Council in the near future.

His Worship also advised that a working group on the new Zoning By-law had been established and that a proposal to simplify the entertainment tax was forthcoming.

Councillor Magnifico requested assurance that the implementation of the Report's recommendations was still a high priority for the Mayor to which His Worship replied in the affirmative.

Councillor Gerbasi referenced recent newspaper articles regarding negotiations about a hog processing plant being built in the St. Boniface area and questioned if the Mayor was concerned about the potential environmental impact of a hog processing plant near new suburban developments and how the plant would be paid for.

His Worship noted that there have been conversations with the two levels of government along with the proponent about the project, but that no deal had been concluded. He further stated that he was cognizant of any impact on the environment and assured that unless they could be addressed, he would not support the project.

Councillor Gerbasi requested an update on the Urban Transportation Showcase program to which His Worship responded that it was a project the administration has been working on and would he believed, be coming forward to Council shortly.

Councillor Gerbasi requested an update on the transformation of Portage and Main in view of the recent design competition proposal to which His Worship replied that funds had been invested in a prize competition where nothing could be done regardless of the end result because of legal obligations with stakeholders; communication with stakeholders was on-going regarding the project.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

Councillor Swandel made reference to the recent announcement of Operation Clean Sweep to address crime in the inner city and questioned what funding source would be used to pay for the new policy.

His Worship replied that while the City was looking at a $17 million dollar deficit, this was a problem that needed to be acted on, and that the funds would be found to undertake this project.

Councillor Swandel questioned if Police overtime was mandatory to which His Worship advised that in order for Police to solve problems they use the resources that were available to them and that overtime was sometimes part of that solution.

Councillor Wyatt also referenced the announcement of Operation Clean Sweep and questioned if new Police officers were being added to the Police complement or if existing officers were being pulled from duty onto Operation Clean Sweep to which His Worship responded that it was a combination of the two.

Councillor Wyatt further questioned what areas of the Winnipeg Police Service are going to be directly impacted by the re-deployment of officers to which His Worship replied that the Chief of Police understood how to make use of his resources and would do it in a proper diligent way to ensure that the no areas were negatively affected.

Councillor Wyatt noted that 40 police officers were becoming operational in field training roles in mid-December and asked if these officers would be added to the existing gangs and organized crime unit to which His Worship advised he believed part of them would be added.

Councillor Benham made reference to violent crime being related to poverty and asked if the Mayor agreed that the proposed Poverty Action Committee is the right place to begin the process of consultation to which His Worship replied in the affirmative.

Councillor Benham questioned if the proposed Poverty Action Committee is accepted by Council, would the administrative report being prepared to address root problems be referred to the Poverty Action Committee for advice and action.

His Worship stated that once the report is complete, he believed that the Poverty Action Committee should be part of that process, but noted that this initiative does not just take leadership from the City government, but from all levels of government.

Councillor Benham asked how 45 Police officers can be dedicated to one task in one part of the City without affecting police presence in other parts of the City to which His Worship stated that the Chief of Police and his staff had advised that this was something that they could do.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

Councillor Smith questioned if there were geographical limits or boundaries to show where the new Police resources would be operating in to which His Worship replied that resources would be directed to where the problem was the greatest.

Councillor Wyatt made reference to a previous reorganization in the Police gang units in May of 2000 and cited an operational review that indicated problems with that reorganization. He questioned if the issues cited in that organizational review had been addressed for this project to which His Worship responded that he would take the question under advisement.

Councillor Wyatt questioned if the Mayor would get back to Council with information on how many of the 45 officers are additional to the work of the Police gang unit to which His Worship applied in the affirmative.

Councillor Wyatt questioned what action was being taken regarding cruiser cars being pulled out of their normal neighbourhoods to respond to calls in the inner city to which His Worship replied that if there was an emergency and cars are needed, they do go from one area to another.

Councillor Gerbasi asked if the Mayor would address the concern that under the new recreation policy, community centres would not be allowed to expand, particularly in older inner city neighbourhoods.

His Worship replied that the policy, endorsed by the Greater Council of Winnipeg Community Centres (GCWCC), does not negate the opportunity for expansion, but means there would be a review.

Councillor Gerbasi asked if the Mayor would address the inconsistency in the policy whereby community centres which are staffed by volunteers have restrictions on them, while private/public partnerships are not subject to any restrictions.

His Worship replied that no one was trying to prevent community centres from making their area a better place to be, but what was trying to be accomplished was to make sure it's done logically, with support of the GCWCC, and that it was sustainable.