EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 379
Councillor Gerbasi made reference to the City Summit scheduled for May 3 and 4, 2006 and its guest speaker, the former Mayor of New York. She also stated that the campaign period for Winnipeg's mayoralty race begins May 1st and requested the Mayor's assurance that holding such a Summit is appropriate and fair during a mayoralty election campaign.

His Worship Mayor Katz advised that he was not even thinking about the next election and that he would be doing his job as normal during the Summit on May 3 and 4.

Councillor Gerbasi advised that the cost for attending the dinner with Rudy Giuliani at the Summit will be $250 per plate and asked if the Mayor would explain how people of modest means would be able to be included in this evening in Winnipeg.

His Worship noted that the cost of bring Mr. Giuliani into town would be funded by the private sector with no dollars coming from the City of Winnipeg and that the price being charged for the dinner would be paying for those expenses.

Councillor Gerbasi asked if the Mayor would provide members of Council with a list of the people who had been invited as delegates to participate in the City Summit to which the Mayor advised that he did not have a list of the delegates but that the Councillor could ask the volunteer committee if they would provide it.

Councillor Swandel noted that Council had just accepted the recommendations in the Auditor's report on the red light camera issue and stated that the recommendations, where appropriate, need to transcend the entire organization and asked if the Mayor had any plan or means by which this might happen.

His Worship stated that if a recommendation or suggestion made applies for one department, common sense would dictate that we use it for other departments. He further stated that it is important for all members of Council to receive as much information as possible in order to make proper decisions when representing the City of Winnipeg and assured Council that he would be happy to look into this further and to make sure that is the process being followed.

Councillor Swandel asked it the Mayor would consider tasking one of the Standing Policy Committees with the assembly of recommendations that would be appropriate to transcend the entire organization from the number of audits that have come forward, to which the Mayor replied that he would take the question under advisement.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

Councillor Benham noted that last week, the Mayor had toured Fire-Paramedic operations in three US cities with Chief Shoemaker and the President of the United Firefighters of Winnipeg. He advised that since the paramedics were excluded from the trip, they have withdrawn their support for Fire-Paramedic integration and called for an audit of the Fire Paramedic Service. He questioned why the Mayor did not include the Professional Paramedics Association of Winnipeg on his tour.

His Worship clarified that this was not his tour, but was a result of meetings that took place between the Chief Shoemaker and the President of the UFFW. He noted that as a result of these meetings, the UFFW came up with the suggestion of a tour, talked to the Chief, organized the trip, with the Mayor being extended an invitation.

Councillor Benham questioned why the Mayor did not insist that the Paramedics be invited or else he would not go, to which the Mayor replied that the facts are that he has met with PPAW and has told them that if they wanted him to go on a trip with them, he would be happy to do so.

Councillor Benham questioned who paid for the trip and how much it cost, to which His Worship replied he would take the question under advisement.

Councillor Smith stated that the cost for dinner with Rudy Giuliani at the Winnipeg Summit was stated as $250 in the press and on the website, yet when he called the Mayor's Office, he was told $260 and advised he'd like to know which figure it was, to which the Mayor replied it was $250.

Councillor Smith asked if persons who receive an invite get a free meal, or do they have to pay for their dinner.

His Worship replied that it was his understanding that the delegates being invited are from a broad cross-section of the City of Winnipeg, and that all Councillors would be invited. He stated that when a person is invited to something, he considers that to be an invitation.

Councillor Smith advised that all 200 spots were taken already and asked how someone who wants to attend, who is not included in the 200 figure, would be able to attend.

His Worship noted that there are many ways of participating in the Summit, such as workshops and noted that he believed the Committee had come up with a good cross-section of invitees that represent the City.

Councillor Thomas referenced the Mayor's tour of the three US cities and questioned if they saw both the paramedic and the firefighting side of the tour to which His Worship advised that in the cities mentioned, they were not divided; firefighters are paramedics; paramedics are firefighters - they all work together.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

Councillor Thomas asked how one could fairly comment on the accuracy of the statement that it works well together when only one half of the amalgamated unit was asked to participate and ask questions.

His Worship relied the Chief was the one initiating the questions that were being answered by paramedics, firefighters and a slew of people who were there to help, not to hinder.

Councillor Thomas asked if the Mayor thought it fair that when two unions are representing one workspace, that only one of the unions is asked to participate and not the other, to which the Mayor replied that the head of PPAW has the exact same opportunity if they so desire.

Councillor Benham made reference to the Mayor's past statement promise to appoint a new Environment Committee and requested an update.

His Worship advised that a preliminary meeting had taken place with various individuals to participate in this new committee and that the meeting was to basically discuss what was going on and who was prepared to be part of it, and what some of the challenges were.

Councillor Benham noted that the former Civic Environmental Committee met in public and had its agendas published on the internet and asked if the Mayor could indicate whether or not that these two requirements would be requirements of the new Committee, to which the Mayor replied that he would discuss it with the Chair of the Protection and Community Services Committee and report back.

Councillor Benham requested confirmation that the Mayor has not discussed, considered or made any decision on whether or not the new Environment Committee would meet in public and publish its agenda on the Internet, to which the Mayor replied he had not made any decision to do that or not to do that.

Councillor Gerbasi stated that when the press release was issued announcing the Fire Paramedic Tour, that was when the PPAW union also became aware of the tour. Councillor Gerbasi asked if the Mayor would concede that there had been damage done to the morale of that union and that some action needs to be taken to deal with that.

His Worship responded that PPAW was notified by his office, not through the media and that he was of the opinion that as a result, there may actually be the opportunity to make some positive headway.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

Councillor Swandel questioned whether in all the dealings in regards to the nine year old issue on Fire and Paramedic amalgamation, had the safety of our citizens been the highest priority, to which the Mayor responded that the safety of the citizens, the safety of the firefighters and the safety of the paramedics was most definitely the highest priority.

Councillor Swandel asked if the Mayor could advise if there were any plans on moving ahead with the two primary unions involved, in terms of addressing citizen safety as a key priority in the amalgamation process, to which the Mayor responded that from the department's point of view and from his point of view, citizen safety should definitely be the highest priority.