EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 665
Councillor Gerbasi requested an update on the status of the Poverty Reduction Council as there was to be a City representative on that committee and noted that nothing further has been heard since Council endorsed the initiative on July 26, 2006 and provided the United Way of Winnipeg with one time start-up funding, to a maximum of $45,000, from the Operating Budget.

His Worship Mayor Katz indicated that he believed the new Chief Administrative Officer, Glen Laubenstein, was the committee representative and agreed to obtain an update and report back.

Councillor Smith requested an update on some of the projects that the Mayor's Environmental Advisory Committee was discussing. His Worship suggested that Councillor Smith could meet with the Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor Gerbasi, to obtain the requested information.

In noting that the Mayor was quoted at a rapid transit media announcement saying that he "didn't think this would get anyone out of their car to use rapid transit", Councillor Vandal questioned why he was championing a report, which was before Council today, to borrow 90 million dollars in regards to rapid transit.

His Worship clarified that the media announcement was about rapid transit and both the Premier and himself specifically stated that rapid transit would be permanent and dedicated, with a goal to have it become light rail transit (LRT). He added that it was not a debate about today, it was a debate about the future and what the City was to be 20 years from now. He added that Winnipeg was the only major city that had no form of rapid transit and needed to get on board right now if you want people to think of Winnipeg as a progressive, exciting city that they want to live in. He further indicated that he made it very clear that he believes LRT will get people out of their cars. By the same token, if you have bus rapid transit (BRT) and work with the administration and figure out a way to get people from their homes to the line it will work and, for the first time ever, there was a business case that showed how BRT would pay for itself.

In noting that His Worship mentioned at the rapid transit press conference that light rail transit was just around the corner, Councillor Vandal questioned just when that would be.

His Worship stated that a new Federal Government had just been elected and there have been discussions about important topics such as crime, safety, infrastructure and the hope was that there would be funding from Ottawa for transit. He further stated that both the Premier and he had said that for stage two of rapid transit, they would be looking for the Federal government to be a partner, with each level funding one-third.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

In reference to handicapped parking passes, Councillor Clement noted that although parking has not been free for years, people with handicap passes have not been charged to park, and asked why the Parking Authority was advising that the commissionaires would start charging. Councillor Clement questioned if the Parking Authority had the authority to do that or does Council have to give them direction to cease and desist.

His Worship indicated that although the City had the authority to enforce the rule and start charging, a decision was made not to and it remains status quo. He added that a new person on the board of the not-for-profit organization did not have the proper information and although letters were sent out, parking charges / fines for persons with handicap parking passes would not be enforced.

Councillor Swandel requested an update on the status of the City's Urban Aboriginal Strategy. His Worship replied that there were plans for an economic development zone not far from Madison Avenue and the City had done everything required so now it is up to the Federal government to make the final decision. His Worship further advised that he had several meetings with both the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Grand Chief Ron Evans, as well as the Manitoba Métis Federation, David Chartrand and an announcement on a very important project should be imminent and that would be one of the first steps in addressing some of the issues that were out there presently.

Councillor Vandal noted that Justice Minister Chomiak announced that he would advance some sort of civilian oversight for police officers charged with a crime and questioned if His Worship had any information to share on how that could potentially affect the City of Winnipeg Police. His Worship replied that he would obtain more information after meeting with Minister Chomiak and would report back.