EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 34
Councillor Smith noted the recent appointment of Councillor Pagtakhan as Chair of the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee and inquired if the committee would have a meeting in 2010 since it did not meet in 2009. His Worship Mayor Katz suggested that Councillor Smith should speak directly with Councillor Pagtakhan to pose that question, but assured Council that the Committee would meet soon.

Councillor Gerbasi inquired if the operating budget process might occur earlier than in previous years and asked Mayor Katz to advise of a realistic time line to have the operating budget tabled.

His Worship stated that the goal was to try to do the operating budget along with the capital budget but it was discovered that this would have resulted in the capital budget not getting done on time and it was extremely important to get the capital budget done as early as possible and go for tender to get the best possible prices on some of the capital projects being worked on. He added that he hoped to move forward as quickly as possible with the operating budget and indicated that he would continue to update Councillor Gerbasi on a timeline for the operating budget.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned if there would be improvements to the operating budget process which would provide for pre budget consultations and more time for community members and groups to review the document and participate in the process.

His Worship stated that the goal was always to make as much time available for all Members of Council to review the budget and have input and agreed to provide an update on the timeline as they moved through the process.

Councillor Gerbasi noted that other cities like Vancouver had pre budget meetings for the communities at large and questioned if consideration would be given to doing something different than what has been done in the last few years in the budget process.

His Worship confirmed that they would endeavour to provide all people as much opportunity to participate in the process as possible.

Councillor Vandal referred to the expression of interest for wireless internet services in the downtown that was issued by the City earlier this year, which closed on March 30, 2009, and inquired about the results of that expression of interest.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued):

His Worship acknowledged that the goal was to try to provide wireless in the downtown, including outdoor areas like Old Market Square and stated that he would look into the matter and report back.

In noting that each of the Standing Committees would meet on the capital budget and then the Executive Policy Committee would hear delegations on December 3, 2009 and make final recommendations for Council on December 4, 2009, Councillor Thomas questioned why there was a dead zone of approximately two weeks between the recommendations and when it proceeded to the Special Meeting of Council on December 15, 2009. His Worship replied that he did not have a specific answer as to why there may be a gap, noting that it was just the way the scheduling turned out.

Councillor Thomas questioned if it would be more appropriate to take more time after each of the Standing Committees and after Executive Policy Committee heard delegations to consider what was presented before committing the final recommendations to Council.

His Worship acknowledged that the whole purpose was to hear from the public, which was done, and once the input was received it did not take long to make the decisions and figure out what could or could not be done with the available money.

Councillor Thomas questioned when the Mayor would be available to meet with her regarding at risk youth in the Elmwood-East Kildonan Community. His Worship replied that his door was always open; that he welcomed an opportunity to get together with Councillor Thomas and the Director of Community Services and agreed to set up a meeting immediately.

In noting that the passing of Bill 35, the Municipal Council Conflict of Interest Act, limits candidates running for Council to a $750.00 contribution to their own campaign, Councillor Steeves inquired if the province had been in contact to tell him or Council what the City of Winnipeg was expected to do, in terms of prosecution, with candidates who are in violation of the act for the 2010 Election.

His Worship replied that the Province had not communicated with him on this issue and further voiced his displeasure with the changes made by the Province and agreed to endeavour to obtain an answer.

Councillor Steeves questioned if the Mayor would co-sign a letter to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs questioning what the civic administration was expected to do with the anticipated 30 percent of people who would be in violation of the act post 2010, based on 2006 statistics.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued):

His Worship advised that he would communicate with the Minister since he was in charge of Intergovernmental Affairs but added that Councillor Steeves could also correspond if he wanted to.

Councillor Nordman asked His Worship to comment on the Sponsor Winnipeg initiative that was recently launched.

His Worship acknowledged that Council approved a sponsorship program and launched a campaign that Councillor Nordman had taken over. He noted that the program was not only for sponsoring specifics such as community centres but also provided an opportunity to sponsor programming. His Worship referred to the positive impact programming could have on children and the positive impact of having recreational facilities available to children, as opposed to options like gangs or hanging out on street corners. He concluded that the campaign would make everyone as aware as possible that sponsorship opportunities were out there; some for smaller amounts, some for larger amounts, so any one who wants to leave a legacy or create a program for children could contact Sponsor Winnipeg.

Councillor O'Shaughnessy inquired if the new election bill would not put the person who had a spouse and four children about $3,750 ahead, or the ability to be if they had the money, to a single candidate running who would be allowed $750.00. In response, His Worship encouraged all Members of Council with questions pertaining to Bill 35 to email him and he would endeavour to get some good answers from the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Councillor Vandal asked His Worship to elaborate on his comment that Bill 35, the Municipal Council Conflict of Interest Act was self-serving.

His Worship replied that he was not specifically referring to Bill 35 but to corporate and union donations. He stated that it was the nature of the game that whoever was in power, regardless of which party or at what level, would make changes that obviously assist them being there as long as possible.