Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – March 16, 2011

OPERATING BUDGET REVIEW

Item No. 4 Mynarski Ward Accessibility Funding Request

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On January 19, 2011, the Executive Policy Committee referred the request from the Council Secretariat Committee (since renamed Governance Committee of Council) for additional funding in the amount of $45,000 to cover salary and associated costs for information processing and transportation accommodations for the Mynarski Ward Councillor, to the 2011 Operating Budget process.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On January 19, 2011, the Executive Policy Committee referred the request from the Council Secretariat Committee for additional funding in the amount of $45,000 to cover salary and associated costs for information processing and transportation accommodations for the Mynarski Ward Councillor, to the 2011 Operating Budget process.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On January 17, 2011, the Council Secretariat Committee referred to the budget process for deliberation by Council, the request for additional funding in the amount of $45,000 to cover salary and associated costs for information processing and transportation accommodations for the Mynarski Ward Councillor, and forwarded the matter to the Executive Policy Committee.

On December 6, 2010, the Council Secretariat Committee heard Councillor Eadie, Mynarski Ward, with respect to a request for an additional $40,000 for disability accommodation expenditures and noted that he would be making a formal request for the January 17, 2011 Council Secretariat Committee meeting.

Ross Eadie, City Councillor for the Mynarski Ward
Request for Information Processing and Transportation Accommodation

Thanks for considering the following request for information processing and transportation accommodations I need to conduct the business of my office as city councillor. My total request is to have enough money to hire a person to conduct the over all tasks related to the two categories described below. The total request is for $45,000.00 to cover salary and associated costs covered.

Information Processing

This category of work will constitute 70% of the person's work time for a cost of $31,500.00. Reports, agendas, minutes, dispositions and other information supplied by the city clerks and departmental staff are generally accessible to me. However, information not generated by the City is approximately 50% accessible with most inaccessible information coming from community groups. Examples of inaccessible information are as follows:

- Newly elected to be president of the Selkirk Avenue BIZ, I have needed to get AGM and past minutes processed into an electronic document my voice output can read aloud to me.
- *Many committee meeting items' reports have some pages not accessible. As an example, a recent request for a "per capita grant" posted on the Lord Selkirk West Kildonan Community Committee agenda had the first two pages accessible, but the last three were not, with the event detail and budget not accessible to consider the grant's value to the community.
- Many diagrams and pictures of property issues need to be verbally described to me. For the most part City staff are doing this description, but my ward has not yet had any complex images to verbally describe when City staff are to busy getting a report ready for a hearing or presentation.

building plans and zoning variance

* Example .PDF documents can be supplied if necessary.

City Corporate Services have supplied my office with a scanner and software to use in processing the inaccessible information. What happens is either a paper copy is scanned or image pages from an electronic file will have optical character recognition applied to create a voice synthesizer usable document. Each image of an alphabetic or numerical character is analyzed by the OCR software to figure out what character it is to make readable by voice output. This OCR process is not 100% accurate. Thus, someone must edit the document to ensure the right characters are in place. Just recently, an unedited OCR document told me Mary Mound School was having its 151 anniversary when it was their 100th. Most often filled in form fields with information in hand writing is totally garbled by the OCR process.

Transportation

This category of work will constitute 30% of the person's work for $13,500.00. As all city councillors know, we must select meetings and events we are able to attend out of many requests. Many of us can attend one two or even three meetings in an evening or day time. My problem is not getting to a particular location if there is enough time for buses or a taxi for part of the excursion. My problem is getting to a few meeting locations and then finding my way into a building and navigating in wide open spaces. When you are getting to the next appointment a bit late, as is usual, it is very disruptive to others and stressful to me.

As an example of one evening where I was to attend three events (one briefly), I was under a huge strain with many almost accidents. Running late, I took a taxi to the new sports facility on the Old Exhibition grounds. Upon arrival, I had to find the door with some assistance by the taxi driver, but once inside, I had a hell of a time trying to find the meeting room throughout some wide open spaces. Thank goodness I lucked out with a meting attendee noticing me feeling around. I was fortunate in an attending police officer showing me to the front door when I had to leave in the middle of this meeting to get to the next.

No time to wait for a taxi, I figured I could walk faster to my next appointment at Legion 141 at Selkirk and McGregor. But, snow! I wandered around the Old Ex grounds driveway and eventually Sinclair where there was no sidewalk to be found under the snow. Getting turned around at the intersection of Dufferin and Sinclair, I ended up in the driveway again. Luckily a husband and wife leaving a swimming program gave me a lift to Legion 141 for the Selkirk Ave. BIZ AGM. Upon getting inside the Legion I had not entered for some 17 years, I found a different layout to what I remembered. I bumped my way around into the main part of the Legion just as the speeches started. Having been stressed out from the last move to the next meeting, I was content not to make the short two block trip to Powers and Selkirk for the third event which I should have attended first.

The three events were all very important to the Mynarski Ward and problems being experienced in that immediate area around Selkirk. The North End Renewal Corporation was putting on a five year strategic planning session for recreation in the area; Selkirk Avenue BIZ was about to go under if some new business owners did not come up to serve (luckily some did); and an aboriginal organization for women and young ones were participating in an art program to offer constructive activities for children who could end up in trouble at such young ages.

This person hired would be required to have a vehicle to drive me to meetings of such importance, get me into the facility in a chair and pick me up later to another event. Of course my parking costs would be handled by my regular CRA like the rest of the city councillors. I would just be paying for the other person's vehicle. Again, the problem is not necessarily getting to the location. It is mostly getting into a facility in the right place on time hopefully.