EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 410
In reference to a recent tour of Phase 1 of the Rapid Transit Corridor, Councillor Gerbasi noted that it was extremely exciting to zip down at close to over 70 kilometers an hour and questioned if it was the Mayor's intention to seek funding from the P3 fund for the next stage of the rapid transit project.

His Worship Mayor Katz replied that it was his intention to continue to seek funding from the Federal Government for all rapid transit throughout the City of Winnipeg.

Councillor Gerbasi referred to a deal that was in the works for the Convention Centre, noted that the list of 11 projects did not include the second phase of rapid transit, asked about the status of the remaining infrastructure money and asked if the Mayor would clarify if the Building Canada fund was expended.

His Worship stated that Council was proactive and started to address the Convention Centre issue a few years ago with the accommodation tax.

In reference to the 7 million that was set aside for the water park project, Councillor Gerbasi questioned what had happened with the water park money. His Worship confirmed that the money was still set aside if a deal were to be brought to fruition.

Councillor Smith asked why the City was not represented on the Taxicab Board and if the Mayor had taken the issue to the Premier or the Minister.

His Worship confirmed that he was waiting for the Minister to respond to his letter which stated that it was extremely important for the Councillor to be there and asked that they look at changing their Taxicab Board meetings to an alternate date as they were held on the day of Council or Executive Policy Committee.

Councillor Eadie noted that there was an ongoing cost to the City through the Veolia contract and now that the City was engaging in making agreements with Capital Region, asked for some assurance that the real cost of making agreements with municipalities outside of Winnipeg to hook up to City sewage would be taken into consideration.

His Worship acknowledged that the City hoped to have some input when residential development was right on the city border and residents there were paying one-third or one half the taxes but basically utilized all the services of the City, drove on City roads and cost the City money. He added that if the City moved forward with anyone in the Capital Region for water and sewage, not only should the City recover costs but should get a premium or a share of certain revenues and make money on the deal.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Eadie requested clarification that the Mayor wholeheartedly agreed that the City needed to recover the full costs of what would be supplied and once residents in the Capital region were hooked up, they would be paying the same rates for sewer and water as those within the City in order to cover off escalating infrastructure costs for maintenance.

His Worship emphasized that the City should get a premium or a share of the tax revenue, noting that when municipalities in the Capital Region get water and sewage services there would be more development. He further confirmed that future maintenance needed to be taken into account when the utility did its calculations as to the cost of service.

Councillor Wyatt noted that it was his understanding that based on their election laws and rules the Provincial Government had until July 4 to make any dollar announcements and questioned if the Province would make a commitment or if the City would see an announcement in terms of the other Building Canada Fund priorities.

His Worship stated that there was a little confusion about July 4; noting that one interpretation was they could not make any new announcements but the other one was that they could make an announcement on something they had already been working on and made public before. He added that Council had sent the list of 11 Building Canada Fund projects over a year ago to the Province and that there had not been a lot of progress other than Plessis Road, which was endorsed by all three levels of government. Mayor Katz stated that he was not aware of any further announcements on Building Canada Funds but stated that there were ongoing conversations with the Premier about more funding for community centres, Polo Park development, as well as Centreport and the Convention Centre.

In reference to the list of 11 Building Canada Fund Council Priorities, Councillor Wyatt noted that 20 million was desperately needed for regional streets and asked why the Province was against spending 20 million more on regional streets.

His Worship replied that in reality all the projects would definitely not be on Building Canada Funds as there was not enough money in that fund to go around and all three levels of government had to agree to contribute one-third of that amount of money. He added that he does not know why the Premier was not supportive but suggested there were other issues when it comes to regional streets.

Councillor Wyatt noted that the list called for 10 million more to go into the community club investment fund to support renewal of community club and questioned what the Premier had against renewing community clubs.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

His Worship noted that he was 100 percent supportive of the issue of community centers and thinks that it was extremely important to all Members of Council, given the state of the centres, and worthwhile fighting for. He stated there would be money for community clubs, although he was not sure what the number was and indicated that they were trying to solidify what was really left over. Mayor Katz concurred that community centres were extremely important and that more money was needed in that fund.

In reference to the announcement earlier in the month regarding the nutrient decision by the Provincial Government, Councillor Wyatt requested the Mayor to elaborate on exactly what the Provincial Government said in terms of nutrient removal and if it was still being required.

His Worship replied that the answer was a definite maybe. He stated that the scientific community basically stated that nitrogen removal was a waste of money and could do more harm to the lakes. He further stated that the Province was actually saying that the City does not have to remove the nitrogen, but may have to remove it later in the future, and so was directing that the plant should be built with the capacity to remove nitrogen, which will result in the same costs. Mayor Katz advised that he went on record saying he would not do this as this was the wrong thing to do, and a waste of taxpayer money and as it was wrong and he would do the right thing whatever the consequences.

Councillor Wyatt questioned if instructions were given to the Water and Waste Department to look at changing its approach and formally indicate that they could change the scope and specifications in terms of design and construction of the treatment plants.

His Worship confirmed that the Chief Administrative Officer had been asked to communicate with the Department and get numbers for the different options, assess the numbers and what the differences were and move forward from there.

In noting that one of the Clean Environment Commission recommendations clearly recommended that there should be three levels of government supporting and funding any changes and questioned what the Province had done to assist the City of Winnipeg in securing the other two levels of government, including themselves.

His Worship confirmed that the Province has paid one third of the total costs expended to date and that the Federal Government had made a contribution but stated that he did not believe it was a full one-third of the costs.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Havixbeck referred to the devastation, loss of property, loss of income caused by the Manitoba flood, and questioned what, if any compensation, the City would be given for the 700 City of Winnipeg workers that were sent to work on the flood for the month, resulting in services being delayed for Charleswood-Tuxedo constituents including roads that have not been grated properly as well as City-wide grass cutting, weeding and mosquito spraying that has not happened yet.

His Worship noted that a decision was made to help in the state of emergency and that it was made very clear that there would be delays when it came to painting lines on the road, park maintenance, and grass cutting. He added that the City would be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, for the sand bags provided, etc. He emphasized that it was the right thing to when it comes to someone losing their home verses a delay in grass cutting, park maintenance, painting lines and that he would do the same thing over again.