EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 587
Councillor Mayes noted that recently the Police were unable to respond to a break and enter in progress and to an incident where citizens had stopped a drunk driver, and questioned what the Police would do to improve response rates.

His Worship Mayor Katz concurred that they certainly wanted prompt response times to calls regarding safety. He stated that a review of the Winnipeg Police Service was being done right now and that would be looked at as part of the review. He added that he did not know why the incidents were not responded to as quickly as they should have been and assured the Councillor that he would speak to the Chief of Police and share the response.

Councillor Orlikow asked if His Worship was aware of a rail line in River Heights that was expanding its operations in a residential neighbourhood and an incident brought off by Silos. He stated that they were looking at two transfer stations built in the middle of a residential neighbourhood and increasing train traffic, which would block streets on Academy, Grant, Corydon and Taylor. He suggested that cars would not be able to get across as easily anymore and the noise could not be controlled as was the case with Lindenwoods and some other short line problems. Councillor Orlikow concluded by stating that the Mayor's Office had been very helpful in helping them work with CN, BNSFT, the Federal Government and the Province.

His Worship confirmed that his office had been working on this and that he was certainly aware of it. He stated that they were looking into the legalese and preliminary information, noting that they were not sure if they had the authority to do what they had done and agreed to follow up.

In reference to a motion to slow the speed on residential streets (not arterial streets) from 50 to 40, and a CBC Report where the Mayor explained that maybe the solution was to have speed bumps, Councillor Eadie questioned if the Mayor believed they could find the money to put in speed bumps on all the residential streets analyzed by traffic for speed studies when the City could not afford to fix the poor condition of the residential local streets.

His Worship clarified that he said they should let the department go through and do what they do, analyze, come back with recommendations and make an intelligent decision. He added that in the meantime, an option for concerned residents was to take action and petition to put in speed bumps.

Councillor Eadie asked for a status update on the establishment of a Police Board which comes into law on December 1st. His Worship advised that the Provincial Government was setting up the rules but the key factor, regardless of the municipality size, were the costs incurred in having a Police Board.

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He added that they were in the process of sending a letter to the Provincial Government for verification of funding because for The City of Winnipeg the cost could be a million dollars and they were looking to find out where that money was coming from.

Councillor Eadie mentioned a proposal to have each of the five community committees select one City Councillor to sit on the Police Board and questioned if His Worship had considered letting that happen.

His Worship replied that he was open to all suggestions but thought there would have to be dialogue with the Provincial Government as they were limiting the number of elected officials and, if they were prepared to open that up, the Mayor was prepared to listen and would certainly urge Councillor Eadie to go down to Broadway to have that conversation.

Councillor Fielding asked His Worship to give a brief update on the results of the delegation that recently went to New York to visit the bond raters agency. His Worship indicated they met with the bond rater, Moody`s, Standard & Poor`s, and had other meetings with funders. As a result of the many good things happening in Winnipeg, the Mayor believed they would be maintaining a double "A" rating. He stated that one hundred million could be going into the market place and were looking at 40 year terms, with exceptional interest rates under four percent. His Worship stated that the Chief Financial Officer was working on this and he was very optimistic that the result would be to get long term money at extremely good rates, which would all go into infrastructure.

Councillor Smith questioned why the restaurant on the Esplanade Riel pedestrian bridge had not signed a new lease when their lease was up in 2010.

His Worship replied that from what he could garner, they were still negotiating and would continue the lease until a new one was finalized, and agreed to look into it further and report back.

Councillor Smith stated that in every lease there should be an over-hold clause, with the tenants paying 150 or 200 percent rent until the renewal was finalized, and asked if this tenant was paying an over-hold. His Worship reiterated that he would look into the matter and report back.

Councillor Smith questioned what the Department had done to market the space if there was no lease for two years. His Worship replied that the first thing to determine was what they were paying if it had been two years of overholding and, if they do not want to lease the space, then the Department would go outside and see if they could find someone who was interested. He concluded that he would look into the matter and report back.

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In reference to the new garbage recycling solid waste collection system, Councillor Mayes indicated that the paper bags that were to be used for leaves and yard matter were not readily available as stores had sold out, and questioned if there could be some sort of reasonable accommodation in terms of the leaf collection at least for this year. His Worship agreed that was a very reasonable request and stated he would try to move something forward as quickly as possible.

Councillor Browaty suggested that there may have been too much political interference on setting speed limits on regional streets and inquired if the Mayor would be willing to consider motions in the future to review speed limits on regional streets. His Worship stated that whether increasing or decreasing, if a motion came forward it would be sent to the Department for due diligence as they are the experts and where the engineers are located; then Council would vote on the report.

Councillor Browaty asked if the Mayor would acknowledge that some of the regional streets with extensive photo radar enforcement were streets where there had been political motions and previous Councils artificially said speed limits were too low on regional streets.

His Worship acknowledged that he had heard those types of comments but encouraged any member of Council to bring forward a concern or issue and let Council, through the expertise of the department, look at it and make a wise, astute decision.

Councillor Swandel addressed a concern regarding residential growth in the downtown, suggested that an increase in the value of non-residential property may have slowed down the conversion to residential property and questioned if the Mayor had any information about how much profit was being reinvested by the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation in downtown housing.

His Worship stated that, to date, great strides had been made downtown. He stated that the most important thing to rejuvenate was to have more people living downtown and, not that long ago, the largest growth happened in the downtown, and a lot of it was the result of Council incentives and the program with the Provincial government for affordable housing. His Worship concluded that he would correspond with the Provincial Government to determine what they were projecting for investing and housing in the downtown and report back.

Councillor Swandel suggested that the profits for some of the joint venture developments were larger than projected and questioned if His Worship would ask for a detailed accounting and the mechanism of how they contract to ensure that real profits were directed into downtown housing and not into some other project for the Provincial Government. His Worship replied that he would endeavour to get an answer from the Province as everyone wanted to see more affordable housing downtown and he believed they would do exactly what they committed to.

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Councillor Swandel questioned if His Worship would endeavor to bring the engineering groups together, from the City and the Province, to get a solid answer to get the connection of Kenaston done to the Perimeter in 2013 and alleviate some of the traffic problems on Waverley and other streets in southwest Winnipeg.

His Worship acknowledged that he was disappointed that the Kenaston project dragged on and ended up costing more money and agreed to endeavour to bring closure and get it done in 2013.