EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 229
Councillor Eadie stated that the Province's flood report would be released on February 27, 2013, noted that the City took unprecedented steps in 2011 to make sure proper resources were in place so the City would not experience problems with emergency measures, and asked His Worship Mayor Katz to have a Council Seminar on the potential flooding situation for this year.

His Worship Mayor Katz concurred that City departments did a phenomenal job in addressing issues, kept damages to a minimum and agreed to look into Councillor Eadie's request.

Councillor Eadie questioned if His Worship Mayor Katz was the political point person on emergency measures. His Worship stated that he begins the process and updates Council.

Councillor Gerbasi voiced concern about the lack of money in the Heritage Investment Reserve, noted that the fund was intended to be a revolving fund for heritage tax credits, and questioned if action would be taken on the issue to replenish the fund.

His Worship Mayor Katz advised that he had spoken with the Director and a small amount of money was left in the fund, and Council would have to address the issue when applications came forward.

Councillor Gerbasi noted that the media reported that an RFP went out for the restaurant on the Esplanade Riel and requested an update on the process.

His Worship indicated that several months ago it was pointed out on the floor of Council that there might be restaurants or restaurateurs interested that would pay more than the current tenant. He advised that the Department put out an RFP that recently closed, that they would go through the proposals, and he hoped to share the results with Council in the near future.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned if the Mayor agreed that with issues like this, when it is such an important attraction and important for the City, that the area Councillors and the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development, Heritage and Riverbank Management should have a policy discussion before the RFP was sent out.

His Worship stated that the department followed the instruction made by Councillor Smith on the floor of Council to put out an RFP to get more money and no objections were voiced.

Councillor Smith inquired if any Councillor could park where the Chief Administrative Officer currently parked.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

His Worship advised that the scenario described by Councillor Smith was something that was initiated by the prior Chief Administrative Officer, Glen Laubenstein. He added that the Winnipeg Parking Authority, as well as Building Services, fully supported and approved it.

In reference to the police pension solvency issue, Councillor Swandel inquired if the Mayor would support the concept of having a review and comparative analysis done to see how the Winnipeg Police Pension compares to other jurisdictions; to which His Worship replied that he would be supportive.

Councillor Swandel further inquired if the Mayor would put forward a motion, or second a motion, in that regard. His Worship replied that he would if asked.

Councillor Orlikow asked if the Mayor would look into a matter regarding the Winnipeg Hydro/Manitoba Hydro review related to an issue regarding redevelopment in the River Heights-Fort Garry Ward.

His Worship replied that he was not cognizant of what exactly the Councillor was referring to but stated that if asked by the Councillor, he would be happy to do what he could to assist in getting the information so the Councillor could make an astute decision on the matter.

Councillor Orlikow inquired if City staff may not have the ability to actually use some of the equipment in a City of Winnipeg plant. His Worship stated that Veolia had not ordered new equipment for the plants and indicated that City staff were operating and maintaining the plants. The Mayor added that Veolia does not have plant operators in Winnipeg and its role was to provide advice to the City for optimization purposes. It was noted that during the course of the capital program, new equipment would likely be installed which City operators have no familiarity, but that they would receive the required training. He noted that had occurred very successfully in the past with other projects, including the water treatment plant, the NEWPCC, disinfection, and the WEWPCC biological nutrient removal.

Councillor Orlikow questioned if the Mayor believed that a senior member of the administration should be negotiating deals or arrangements when they were also a director of the same organization and asked if it was a conflict of interest if the Board Chair of an organization was a member of the City of Winnipeg senior administration.

His Worship stated that the Chief Administrative Officer was the City of Winnipeg representative on the Blue Bomber Board and his job there was to protect the interests of the City of Winnipeg. His Worship noted that the report on today's Council agenda permitted the grant provided to the City to the Winnipeg Football Club to be used for payment of any debt, rather than specifying this grant be used solely for repayment of the Provincial loan. He added that the City was not granting any additional funds or taking on any other additional debts or responsibilities.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Mayes noted that City staff were projecting a very bad year for potholes and questioned what strategy and funds the City had in place to deal with City projects for that. His Worship advised that three city crews were already out filling potholes, noted that the City was ramping up to have as many as six road patching machines, had an additional six hand asphalt crews, and concluded that the department was on top of this situation.

Councillor Mayes noted that former Winnipegger, Andy Bathgate, was commemorated in Madison Square Garden, asked if something had been done by the City of Winnipeg to commemorate this member of the Hockey Hall of Fame and suggested that if the Mayor was willing to build a $15 million arena in St. Vital, he would commit to signing off naming it in honour of Mr. Bathgate.

His Worship acknowledged that Andy Bathgate was a great hockey player but he did not know of anything that recognized Andy Bathgate, stated that he would not make any commitment at this time, but that would certainly look into the issue; he further added that he was not convinced a new $15 million arena in St. Vital was planned, but that it was important to dream.

Councillor Swandel referred to the Multi-pad Arena Development Proposal and the challenges that come with dealing with Intergovernmental Affairs and questioned if there were any ongoing conversations with the Province about how to smooth the waters in dealing with day-to-day issues between the City and the Province.

His Worship stated emphatically that this Mayor and Council had a better working relationship with the Provincial Government than probably any Council over the last twenty years. His Worship added that it required money to address both the City's and the Provinces' challenges, but that the Province had a deficit right now and he did not expect the City to receive any new incremental monies soon.

Councillor Swandel indicated that his question was directed at process and asked if there was any dialogue going on between the two levels of government in regards to dealing with related issues.

His Worship replied that many decades ago former City Councillors were involved in a process of informal meetings with the Province, and they had stated that this process did really not accomplish anything. He concluded that there was a very good working relationship between City staff and the Provincial staff and that was where the process started, before moving up to the political level.