STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 292
Councillor Havixbeck asked when Council would have a work plan for the undertaking of the 2014 budget. Councillor Wyatt agreed to take that under advisement.

Councillor Havixbeck questioned when budget consultation would begin with Arts groups, the general public and city departments. Councillor Wyatt agreed to take the question under advisement.

Councillor Havixbeck questioned if she should contact the CFO and / or the Director of Public Works directly for the city-wide list of streets that would be re-done under existing monies in the Public Works budget and those that will be done under the new one percent infrastructure tax money. Councillor Wyatt replied in the affirmative.

Councillor Swandel inquired if Council would be following the recommendations made during the Council strategic planning process and engage the Standing Policy Committees much earlier in the budget process. Councillor Wyatt suggested that the strategic planning process was driven largely by the Mayor's Office and the question should be directed to the Mayor.

Councillor Swandel referred to the $700,000.00 that was included in the recent budget for policy development and inquired if someone had been hired, or was close to being hired to be a policy advisor in the budget world. Councillor Wyatt stated that the budget was passed by Council, the monies were set aside with the policy office reporting to the Mayor's Office and the question should be directed to the Mayor.

Councillor Swandel asked the Chairperson to give Council some indication, at a conceptual level, of where budget process planning was at and how early the process would be started and how early all Councillors and the Standing Policy Committees might be engaged in the process. Councillor Wyatt agreed to take the question under advisement.

Councillor Swandel inquired if the Chair would consider hiring somebody to give advice rather than taking stuff under advisement.

Standing Policy Committee on Finance – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Wyatt advised that they have committed to undergo and do public consultation city-wide. Councillor Wyatt noted that there had been a lot of discussion about how the previous budget process was not a process which listened or consulted and stated he strongly disagreed with that. He added that he worked quite hard, along with Executive Policy Committee colleagues in the last budget process to try to address any concerns that were heard, especially when Councillors came forward. Councillor Smith came forward and spoke passionately about Sherbrook Pool and the Mayor and the Executive Policy Committee listened and $200,000 was placed in the budget to sort out the Sherbrook Pool issues. Councillor Eadie spoke eloquently, year after year, about local streets and the need for street renewal and the Executive Policy Committee moved forward a program to set aside one percent in the hope of beginning a long-term program to fund and renew local street infrastructure, which was the first time the City has ever done anything like that. Councillor Gerbasi identified a large, regional park issue and $850,000.00 was moved for discussion of the 2014 budget to try to address the issue. Also, Councillor Orlikow made a motion at a previous Council meeting prior to the budget process about the waterpark money and, because of the situation in Elmwood where a community club burnt down, a chunk of the waterpark funds went to the new community club and the balance of it was divided equally amongst all wards, $271,000 per ward, which all Councillors were working feverishly to get into their community to re-invest in recreation, playgrounds and the like. In conclusion, Councillor Wyatt stated that in terms of resources, they were looking at different options but nothing had been expensed at this point.