EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 492
Councillor Gerbasi made reference to the 33,000 people who would be heading out to the new stadium at the University of Manitoba choking the local neighbourhood with their cars. She stated that there was no complete commuter bike route or rapid transit available as a truly viable alternative to the automobile and questioned when the southwest transit corridor to the University of Manitoba was going to be completed.

His Worship Mayor Katz noted that the transit corridor was being completed from downtown to Jubilee and the remainder of the way in the diamond lanes. He further noted that there was a great deal more parking available than had been identified. He advised he had met with the President of the University and there was another 60 acres of parking that was available.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned if His Worship was saying that the diamond lanes were adequate; that there was enough parking and that he didn't actually believe it was that important to proceed with the second phase.

His Worship stated that some Councillors had actually given the impression to the public and the media that the buses just stopped dead at Jubilee and that they don't go any further; which of course was anything but the truth. His Worship advised that the buses cross over to Pembina and continue all the way down to the University.

Councillor Gerbasi stated that the issues she was talking about are that of funding and time lines; where was the funding since it's been diverted somewhere else and where the time lines were.

His Worship advised he was not aware of any money that had been diverted and noted that the money was never there in the first place and it was still not there.

Councillor Eadie noted the lack of flowers in the median of Main Street in his ward while Portage Avenue and Pembina Highway had flowers. He also noted the declining maintenance of parks in his ward and questioned when the Parks Department would be funded to the level of restoring the cuts that had taken place.

His Worship advised that the North End BIZ did the plantings last year and they decided not to do it just like other BIZ's do it. He also remarked that there was no longer a Parks Department but that the responsibilities were shared by many different departments. His Worship advised that he would be happy to follow up on Councillor Eadie's concerns.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Eadie reiterated his previous comment regarding parks not being maintained properly and questioned when the cuts would be restored and enough money provided for parks to be maintained the way they were a decade ago.

His Worship stated that they were not making cuts but catching up. He commented that park maintenance and street cleaning, as well as line painting, have fallen behind because a conscious decision was made to allocate resources to fight the flood. His Worship remarked that he has seen them catch up and he has seen the grass cut in the parks and if Councillor Eadie was saying they haven't caught up yet, then he would be happy to follow up on that.

Councillor Wyatt remarked that at this time of year, you can see very clearly the state of the City's infrastructure. He further remarked that residential streets, collector streets, lanes and sidewalks are crumbling and that we're not able to keep up with this infrastructure deficit. Councillor Wyatt questioned if His Worship would be prepared to undertake a process now, working with Council, to find a way to address at least the local street and lane liability that exists today in our infrastructure deficit.

His Worship stated that he believed it was incumbent upon the Mayor and Council, on a daily basis, to seek solutions to the challenges that we face and would be more than happy to pursue and have more discussion on that.

Councillor Wyatt questioned when and how they would have that discussion; to which His Worship replied that he was available later today after Council.

Councillor Wyatt further questioned if His Worship was agreeing that we undertake a process which will come forward with recommendations to Council prior to the Capital Budget; to which His Worship stated he was agreeing to the fact that all Councillors should have the opportunity to have input into the solution to the problems.

Councillor Orlikow advised that he had read a press release regarding the City's Active Transportation Network Launches Campaign and questioned it His Worship believed it appropriate to help educate drivers on how to use a traffic circle.

His Worship replied that we should endeavor to use every means available to educate the public on traffic circles.

Councillor Orlikow noted that the marketing was being targeted to cyclists and questioned if His Worship would be willing to work with him to get some better education specifically for traffic circles.

His Worship advised that he would be more than happy to sit down with the Councillor to get tools implemented to do everything they could to educate the citizens.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

Councillor Swandel noted that he has heard a number of comments today regarding cuts. He further noted that he's seen the budgets both on the revenue and the expense side increase by more than inflation and grown combined. Councillor Swandel questioned if His Worship could explain as to how we can have budgets that show increased spending that exceeds inflation and exceeds the City growth, but yet there are still people who believe that there were cuts.

His Worship stated that the facts are, we can't. He stated that budgets have increased consistently and would continue to do so.

Councillor Swandel stated that he recently noticed an announcement from the City of Ottawa regarding a $600 million commitment to light rail from their Provincial Government to fund light rail for the City of Ottawa. He asked if His Worship could give some sense of how his discussions are going with the Province given Ottawa was a city of about 800,000 people and Winnipeg, a city of about 700,000.

His Worship noted that the Government of Ontario decided that this was a priority and were making that investment, and hoped that it would happen here too.

Councillor Swandel referenced talk earlier today about work not happening in some parks and knowing that the budgets had in fact not been cut and questioned should we also be looking at an ASD review process for that service unit as well to try and find a better way of getting the services done and a best use of the dollars.

His Worship stated that he had given some serious consideration as to whether or not a mistake was made in eliminating the Parks Department and still thought it should be something that they look into further.

Councillor Pagtakhan referenced the active transportation route being built on McDermot east of Main Street between Rorie and Waterfront Drive which included a stretch of sidewalk. He noted that due to budget constraints, the sidewalk was not going to be built. Councillor Pagtakhan questioned if His Worship was committed to ensuring that the monies were going to be there in 2012 to build that connectivity with the Exchange District as part of this A.T. route on McDermot Avenue between Rorie and Waterfront Drive; to which His Worship replied that he would take the question under advisement.

Councillor Wyatt stated he was unable to attend an open house for the Transportation Master Plan and had asked the Director for a meeting with the staff to get briefed on it and to give some input from his side. He stated that he was advised that the department was not in a position to provide briefings to individual Councillors on the open house material. Councillor Wyatt questioned if he would be able to get a meeting to speak with the staff about the Transportation Master Plan, because right now, they were being denied that.

Executive Policy Committee (continued):

His Worship advised that a request had come forward to hold a Council Seminar so that everybody could voice their concerns and give their thoughts and opinions. His Worship stated that he would follow up to find out when that was taking place.

Councillor Wyatt stated that he could not recall a time being told "no you cannot meet with our staff". Councillor Wyatt made reference to a gag order although he didn't think there was one and that maybe there was just miscommunication. He questioned if it was possible to lift that so he could have a meeting.

His Worship replied that you can't lift something that doesn't exist and that he would be happy to follow upon and get back to the Councillor.

Councillor Eadie questioned if the new garbage plan would allow for a more competitive bidding process for contracting out bulk waste collection and allow for some social good as part of the delivery system for bulk waste.

His Worship remarked that he would hope that when they go through any process, they endeavor to make sure they have as much competition as possible to make sure they are getting the biggest bang for the taxpayer's dollar.