EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 393
Councillor Gerbasi referred to an April 27, 2013 Winnipeg Free Press article where the Chair of Finance and Deputy Mayor announced proposed massive budget cuts and gave a list of 26 items that faced elimination of funding, which included the Winnipeg Arts Council, Rapid Transit and many more items. Gerbasi questioned if the Mayor believed the approach taken and the proposals put forward were appropriate.

His Worship advised that he had made it extremely clear that he was not supportive of those moves, but noted that there was genuine concern from the Councillor about the City being abandoned by the Provincial Government in terms of revenue.

Councillor Gerbasi referred to Responsible Winnipeg and the $90,000 that was spent on the public relations campaign, and questioned if the Mayor supported the campaign and if he felt it was an appropriate use of public funds.

His Worship suggested that there was inaccurate information regarding the issue and that all members of the public had the right to know what the facts were.

Councillor Gerbasi referred to the budget consultation process that was to be launched shortly and asked with a failed Responsible Winnipeg campaign, how he proposed to restore trust in the citizens who were questioning the sincerity of the public consultation and that the process was legitimate.

His Worship stated that he believed it was a very genuine process and something that had never happened before. He further stated that a request for proposal was put out and was awarded to a professional group who has already contacted the Councillors and who would ensure the process addressed all the issues and included input from everyone.

Councillor Havixbeck advised that she had received an apology from the Mayor in regards to the Deputy Mayor not allowing her to speak in delegation at the Alternate Service Delivery Committee and that she had been assured that this would not happen to her or to citizens. She further noted that these actions continued at other meetings and questioned what the Mayor intended to do to ensure she and citizens could be heard.

His Worship confirmed that he called Councillor Havixbeck and advised that he thought it was wrong for Councillors or citizens not to have the opportunity to speak. He further advised that that he told her that would never happen at Executive Policy Committee, which he Chaired.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Havixbeck questioned if any money was paid by the City of Winnipeg either to the Goldeyes or its subsidiary companies for the advertisement placed on the Goldeyes sign outside the ballpark during the Responsible Winnipeg campaign; to which his Worship responded no.

In reference to the John Blumberg golf course and the report that the Reeve of Headingley had said that the municipality was not in a position to be able to afford the purchase of the course, Councillor Havixbeck asked the Mayor whether he or any of his representatives had discussed with potential developers or other individuals a purchase. His Worship replied that he had not.

Councillor Eadie questioned what the Mayor was doing to deal with abandoned bulk waste that accumulated in some of the more difficult neighbourhoods.

His Worship acknowledged that bulk waste in backlanes and streets such as sofas and mattresses did lead to arson, resources being used up and people's lives being in danger. He advised that he had met with Water and Waste, members of the Winnipeg Police Service and Fire, Paramedic and asked them to be proactive and firefighters were going out to the specific neighbourhoods identified by Councillor Eadie. He concluded that it was an issue that needed to be addressed because of the inherent dangers of arson and they were going out to be preventive, identify the problems and work with the department to get the bulky waste removed as quickly as possible.

Councillor Eadie questioned if the Mayor believed that all political offices, including his own, should be accountable through policies such as the Councillor Representation Allowances in meeting certain criteria for expending the public's money.

His Worship advised that sometime ago he answered that question by being the first elected official in the Province to post expenses on the City website and make them public.

Councillor Eadie inquired if the Mayor believed that this budget process would use the latest technology in ways to reach the citizenry to find out what they believed the budget should look like.

His Worship stated that a top notch professional who had the expertise in the area had been retained and he believed they would have a thorough plan that would address any issue any Councillor had to make sure they had feedback from all the citizens.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Wyatt asked the Mayor if he would bring forward a motion to amend the Transportation Master Plan to be reflective of a 2019 opening, rather than 2018, with a cost increase of $20 million due to anticipated delays.

His Worship Mayor Katz stated that he agreed that a 2018 opening was in jeopardy, but noted that even if an application was entered, and it not supported by the Province, it would not receive a very positive response.

Councillor Wyatt asked if the Mayor would be requesting that the Premier should bear the extra cost of the delay in opening of Rapid Transit, to which His Worship replied that no specific comments would be made unless the deadline was actually missed.

Within the budget, $3.8 million has been allocated towards recreation, with $271,000 allocated per ward, Councillor Wyatt asked when the Province would be signing off on the recreational funds, as no projects could move forward without it.

His Worship stated there would be sign-off, but there was no definite answer of when.

Councillor Orlikow requested clarification on the spending for the Responsible Winnipeg campaign, to which His Worship replied that it came out of the communications budget, where the discussion first took place between himself, the Chair of A.S. D, and the Chair of Finance.

Councillor Orlikow asked why this opportunity to spend this amount of money was not publicly tendered, to which His Worship shared that there was a process, and it had been followed.

Councillor Orlikow proposed the idea of allowing all Councillors, to be able to view content on public campaigns before they go public.

His Worship noted that the end goal was to get the budget done so many of the capital costs would be taken care of as quickly as possible.

Councillor Swandel pointed out that throughout the City, and in particular in Downtown, there was quite a substantial accumulation of winter sand still on the sidewalks and streets, and asked the Mayor if anything will be done to pick up the residue.

His Worship stated that due to the late winter, there was a delay in the normal spring cleanup, noting that there were trucks out on the streets cleaning, but if there was more sand than normal, the Department would be contacted.