EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 662
Councillor Gerbasi asked the Mayor if he was working towards re-visiting the issue regarding Council's 2009 vote to create an Ethics Commissioner, as the Province has named Minister Kevin Chief as the new Minister Responsible for the City of Winnipeg. His Worship Mayor Katz replied that the Province has been asked on many occasions to move forward on said legislation, but that he would be happy to go directly to the Premier and ask if there may be a change of heart.

Commenting on a media report about a deadline in negotiations with the Province on Rapid Transit to complete Phase 2 of the Rapid Transit corridor, Councillor Gerbasi inquired what would occur if that deadline was not met, and if it was possible that Rapid Transit in the City of Winnipeg not be proceeded with. His Worship Mayor Katz replied that it was simply an internal deadline that the City had imposed upon itself in order to have the City and the Province on the same page, and then submit the application to the Federal Government, so the deadline would not be missed.

Councillor Gerbasi asked for confirmation that there was support to continue with the Rapid Transit project and that an announcement would occur soon, to which His Worship Mayor Katz replied that the conversations were positive and ongoing, but that as with all issues, things may come up and he would advise Council if anything occurred.

Noting that the Audit report of Fire Stations noted that there were groups interested in the Grosvenor land building and that the building was considered re-usable, Councillor Orlikow asked that when the land was declared surplus, why the other groups were not identified. His Worship Mayor Katz replied that when Council declared a piece of property surplus, the City of Winnipeg goes to all the other Departments and asks them if they have a need for that building, and once those answers are received, they move forward and offer it to the public, which was what was occurring now.

Noting that signs have been going up in school zones to reduce speed limits, Councillor Orlikow asked if the enforcement of these reduced school zones would be done by photo radar or if an actual officer would be present to enforce this, to which His Worship Mayor Katz replied that this was something that the Chief of Police would decide on.

Noting there were a number of oil tanker cars parked along the rail line that cut through the middle of River Heights, and Councillor Orlikow asked if the Mayor has been lobbying the Federal Government to force rail lines to disclose to municipalities, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) was trying to do, to say what was in those tankers, as it was causing a growing concern in the neighbourhood.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

His Worship Mayor Katz replied that he had been in communication with several Members of Parliament, and the majority of Council would wish that the rail lines be moved out, but they were there as the railways helped build the City, and it would now cost billions and billions of dollars to move them. His Worship Mayor Katz further committed to write a letter to Members of Parliament to get information to see if anything could be done to further protect the citizens of Winnipeg.

Discussing the Rapid Transit issue, Councillor Wyatt stated that it was roughly $350 million to complete the line to the University of Manitoba, but the project had now been combined with other projects, to raise the total value to somewhere around $600 million. Suggesting that it be de-linked from the Calrossie and Jubilee matter, he asked if the Rapid Transit line could just be built, and then tell the Province they need to borrow their own money. His Worship Mayor Katz replied that if there was an opportunity to receive funding from other levels of government, it would be in their best interest. He further noted that the de-linking makes sense, however if the whole package was together, the Federal Government would pay 25 percent of it, which was a significant contribution, and the remainder would be split 50-50 between the Province and the City, noting that he believed that combining the projects was the direction he believed the City should go in.

Councillor Wyatt asked that hopefully the City would not be in a position to lose the ability to direct and influence and have governance of the Transit Department, noting that the Police Board scenario would be a path to avoid, since that would be too high of a price to pay. His Worship Mayor Katz replied that he believed Councillor Wyatt was referring to a transportation authority model, which he believed was very positive, as it had been very successful in other cities and noted that before anything happened, Council would have the opportunity to know what the tentative deal on the table was.

Councillor Eadie asked if the Mayor would consider having a Standing Committee on Human Resources with the City, so that some of the bigger issues such as the employment code could be dealt with through that committee. His Worship Mayor Katz replied that when it comes to Human Resources, elected officials do not really have much involvement, noting the Human Resources Department in itself dealt with hiring, firing, negotiations, unions, etc.

Councillor Eadie stated that the function of the Committee could be to work along with whoever was hired to negotiate with the unions, but could allow participation of some people in the higher level considerations of employment in the City of Winnipeg. His Worship Mayor Katz replied that in regards to negotiating with unions, it was probably best left with the professionals, noting that if the Councillor would like to discuss these ideas with the Mayor, he would be more than happy to listen.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Eadie then asked the Mayor on what date should they meet, to which His Worship Mayor Katz replied that he would be happy to hear about the Councillor's suggestions at any time.

Councillor Havixbeck asked how bad of a scenario the Fire Hall Audit was, and why the CAO was allowed to leave the organization. His Worship Mayor Katz replied that it was not something that was initiated by him; a decision was made and that there would not have been much difference if the departure would have been after the Audit was released. He further noted that he was not happy with the way things turned out, but decisions were made and contracts were honoured.