STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 669
Councillor Havixbeck asked the Chair when he expected the budget to come to Council, to which Councillor Wyatt replied that the budget was being worked on, and that hopefully both the Capital and Operating Budgets could be dealt with before the holidays.

Councillor Havixbeck asked if the Chair was anticipating a tax increase, and if so how much. Councillor Wyatt replied that the budgets needed to be waited for.

Regarding the Lyndale Drive riverbank stabilization, Councillor Havixbeck mentioned that there was potentially $2 million that had been found, since a contract was not yet awarded for this project. $2 million is half a percentage point of infrastructure money from 2013 that would not have been spent, and the Councillor asked the Chair if that would be sufficient to off-set part of the 1 percent. Councillor Wyatt replied that this was part of the capital program, and while capital programs had been raided in the past, the infrastructure deficit was growing, and it was important to ensure these budgets remained in place to deal with these deficits.

Councillor Swandel stated that he believed that moving some of the capital dollars earlier was now possible, with the policy allowing up to one-third. He further noted that in the last year many of the road projects were delayed, but that most of the regional and residential street work was known, and asked if the consulting engineers could get the tenders ready as early as possible to ensure the work got done. Councillor Wyatt replied that the Capital Budget was brought forward in January, to move some of those projects up to allow for that engineering work to be done in the event that the Capital and Operating Budgets are ready. The staff had been challenged but were hopefully getting ready and geared up to move in the right direction.

Councillor Swandel stated that often money was put into the budget, but it was not actually possible to do the work and asked if other ways were being looked at to do longer term budgeting, like a three year or five year capital budget to ensure the budgeted monies could be spent. Councillor Wyatt replied that the budget that was currently being worked on was a one-year capital budget with a five-year projection, with projects provided with the full amount of funds for that year, but by the time all the work was moving, it was not within that fiscal year; he further noted that there may be a benefit to putting a smaller percentage in the year preceding that to allow for work to start-up, prepare, and do preliminary design and land assembly to allow for that project when that year does come to actually flow and be constructed.

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

Councillor Eadie stated that the City has made commitments to do infrastructure repairs and that there was a 25-year plan to deal with local residential streets, and asked if the budget coming forth would be proposing at least a 1 percent to deal with the broken down residential streets. Councillor Wyatt replied that the budget would be coming forward, and that it would contain the answer to the question.

His Worship Mayor Katz stated that on many occasions, the Chair had commented on how the City was not getting its fair share to deal with the massive infrastructure deficit, and that sitting back and doing nothing was not the way to go, so last year, the one percent was put into effect for local streets, and asked if the Chair would be supportive of that for the coming budget, to which Councillor Wyatt replied that he would be.

The past summer, there were surplus funds in January for capital projects, and Councillor Havixbeck mentioned the number 7.2 million over, because bids had come in under projected amounts. The Councillor asked what the Chair would do to ensure that there is a mechanism in place if this were to happen again next summer, going back to the Finance Committee would not be necessary, and more bids for projects could be made to move forward with more tenders that the Administration could get out. Councillor Wyatt replied that he would be happy to discuss some ideas with the Councillor, and there was surplus that was formally reported at the end of July. With the Mayor's leadership, that funding was able to be out right away in terms of assigned projects that needed to be done, and the Chair stated that he would be open to suggestions and ideas.