EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 46

In reference to the extension of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Councillor Mayes asked His Worship Mayor Katz if the Administration could be directed to possibly use the proposed plaza station, which will be adjacent to what were sugar beet lands, to commemorate and celebrate Japanese Canadians that worked under great duress in the sugar beet fields and for their role in Winnipeg during the War. His Worship confirmed that he would be more than happy to explore those opportunities to see if that is a feasible scenario.

Councillor Havixbeck questioned if the Mayor was aware of any agreement, either in writing or in principle, with regard to the sale of the new police headquarters tower and inquired where the proceeds of the sale would go.

His Worship replied that, to his knowledge, there had been no unsolicited offers for the tower and it has not been declared surplus to sell. Mayor Katz confirmed that the intention was to sell, noted that the value of the building is in the tenant, and the City wants to make sure there is maximum occupancy, with quality tenants, and the cap rate will determine what someone will pay.

Councillor Havixbeck inquired if there was a report being prepared internally that would outline what processes and procedures occurred with regard to the police headquarters constructions transactions, other than the report going before the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development, Heritage and Riverbank Management.

His Worship advised that the report "Over-Expenditure Authorization for the Redevelopment of the Winnipeg Police Service Headquarters Building", gives a detailed review of exactly what has taken place and suggested that questions could best be answered when the report is considered at the November 22, 2013 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown, Development, Heritage and Riverbank Management.

Councillor Havixbeck questioned if the Mayor would support the release of the Project Steering Team meetings, the dates of meetings, the members on the committee at the various times and the meeting minutes. His Worship confirmed that he was aware of the steering committee, had specifically identified who was on the steering committee but had not seen the meeting minutes.

Councillor Gerbasi verbalized delight on the funding agreement that was reached on rapid transit and questioned at what point Council would learn how borrowing issues and other aspects of the agreement were resolved and how they would deal with those costs going forward.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

His Worship advised that the Province committed publicly to 225 million for rapid transit, the City is in for 225 million, and they are hopeful that they will get the maximum contribution of 25 percent from P3 Canada, which would be 150 million. His Worship further advised that the City will have to pay for its share from borrowing funds.

Councillor Orlikow inquired if all the other reports related to the new fire paramedic stations construction project would be made publicly available as the motion passed by Council on October 23 stated; which would include Stantec's traffic study report for Portage Avenue, Steering Committee updates, other administrative analysis and other reports Executive Policy Committee received.

His Worship stated that it was his understanding that two reports would be coming forward but indicated that he was not aware of Steering Committee reports.

Councillor Orlikow referred to the announcement for the southwest BRT / Pembina underpass / Active Transportation connectivity / Calrossie line, and questioned how confident the Mayor was that, based on Class D estimates for a very complicated project, that the City would not be on the hook for more than 225 million.

His Worship confirmed that if Federal Funding through P3 Canada does not hit the max of 150 million, the City would be required to find more monies. He added that the Administration has done their calculations and put in what they believe was significant funding for any new things that may appear and concurred that it would be right to get some due diligence so all Members of Council feel confident with those numbers.

Councillor Orlikow inquired how the City would be able to take out 225 million in loans for the project. His Worship advised that they know their debt servicing ability on an annual basis and meet with bond holders to talk about capacity, etc. He indicated that the Chief Financial Officer sits in on the meetings and noted that the City continues to grow, has new revenue coming in on a regular basis and the tax base is always getting bigger.

Councillor Swandel asked the Mayor to confirm that, in principle, he agrees with the position that the City should stand by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) standards for development near railroads when looking at doing BRT and relocation of the rail lines closer to the existing Richmond West / Waverley Heights residential area. His Worship replied that he agreed that the rail lines should not be moved closer to residential.

Councillor Swandel clarified that he hoped if they were forced to move the railroad line that the set of standards established by FCM would be adhered to; which His Worship replied in the affirmative.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councilor Browaty referred to the recent rapid transit announcement and asked the Mayor to confirm that the Province's portion of the project, the 225 million, will not be borrowed by the City of Winnipeg inasmuch as he has concerns about the City's debt ceiling and since they are holding the debt on behalf of the Province for Phase 1.

His Worship emphatically replied "no" and advised that he has stated, both publicly and privately, that the City is not in a position to carry that debt as was done in the past. He added that the Province will find their funding sources, as will the City.

Councillor Havixbeck questioned when the realty audit would go before Council. His Worship replied that the City Auditor has advised that it would be within the next couple of months.

Councillor Havixbeck questioned how much coverage the City has on a building such as the St. James Civic Centre, referencing a recent fire, and requested a simple chart that shows a list of all buildings with the anticipated overage and whether that is enough for replacement value.

His Worship recalled that the City had just under a million dollars in insurance and now has funding to not only re-build the St. James Civic Centre but to build something bigger and better but stated that he does not know how much insurance coverage the City has on every property.

Councillor Havixbeck asked His Worship to tell what the anticipated property tax increase will be for citizens. His Worship advised that the budget would be tabled on November 29 and, at that particular point in time, everything will be in black and white.

Councillor Swandel inquired if His Worship was aware that the City constantly reviews its insurance requirements so the cost of insurance was reasonably related to the need of insurance; to which His Worship replied in the affirmative.