EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 580
In reference to an Election commitment regarding a downtown dog park, Councillor Mayes inquired if it could be determined which standing committee, Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works or Protection and Community Services had jurisdiction to explore the matter.

His Worship Mayor Bowman replied that he looked forward to having further discussions with the Councillor about any suggestions he might have on improvements for clarity on committee jurisdictions.

Councillor Mayes inquired if a Council Seminar could be held to look at the issue of ward distribution and redistribution of the ward allowance and incentive grants.

His Worship replied that he looked forward to discussing the matter and would do all that he could to accommodate all seminar requests.

Councillor Wyatt noted that studies were done in the past which looked at the concept of a Parks and Recreation Department and asked the Mayor if he would look into the matter and see what he could find and table that with Council. His Worship agreed to look into the matter.

Councillor Wyatt inquired if the Mayor could see what could be done to get Plessis Road open in the next couple of weeks rather than wait until the October 31 commitment since it appeared that the gravel was in and it only required an asphalt overlay to open the road.

His Worship advised that the project has been going on for many years and the City, regrettably, had to ask for an extension of the project with the Federal partners, which was granted. He extended a thank you to the Member of Parliament for his ongoing support and patience with regards to the initiative. He stated that they have been assured that the new time line would be met and indicated that it had been communicated to the public service to make all efforts available to open it as quickly as possible.

Councillor Wyatt questioned if the Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer and the Acting Director of Public Works would be prepared to come and inspect the work and look at what had been done and how close they were to opening the site.

His Worship advised that he was at Plessis last week for the announcement of the new rink and could not make a commitment at this time as his calendar was typically set with commitments which were already made. He added that he made an effort to get out to as many wards as possible, and he would continue to see projects first-hand as it provided a different vantage point.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Dobson cited the downgrading of the City's credit rating and inquired when the City would get spending under control.

His Worship stated that he was proud of the fact that Council supported record investments in road repairs and was happy about other key investments. He added that the budget process was an improved process from last year. He acknowledged that the City had a growing structural deficit and that the Chair of the Standing Policy Committee on Finance and the working group, comprised of Councillors Gillingham and Gerbasi, were dedicated to finding a solution.

Councillor Gerbasi inquired if the City intended to maintain a climate change co-ordinator position in the City and an Environmental Coordinator, which was only two people for a City the size of Winnipeg.

His Worship acknowledged that issues that affected the environment were very important initiatives that needed to be dealt with, both for current and future generations of Winnipeggers. He stated that he understood that the position would be filled and directed the Councillor to obtain an update from the Chief Administrative Officer.

Councillor Gilroy asked if staffing numbers could be provided as part of the current budget discussions to help enable Councillor understanding of issues, noting that the Parks area had shrunk from 150 staff members to under 100, despite growing amounts of park space to maintain. Mayor Bowman advised that he believed this information could be provided and encouraged Councillor to have those discussions with the Chair of the Standing Policy Committee on Finance.

Councillor Wyatt inquired about the timing for the relocation of Members of Council during the renovations to the Council Building; to which Mayor Bowman encouraged Members of Council to consult through the Chief Administrative Officer on the scheduling.

Councillor Wyatt questioned if they could look to find ways to renovate the entire building, removing asbestos and doing a total clean up the building rather than come back in five years for further renovations.

His Worship noted that the money for the capital expenditure to renovate the Council building was earmarked by the previous Councils and suggested that the Councillor could discuss the matter further with the Chair of the Standing Policy Committee on Finance in terms of more funds for the project.

Councillor Wyatt questioned if there was a different location for Members of Council to move to in light of the fact that the Police may not be out of the Public Safety Building by July of next year; to which His Worship advised that he would make an inquiry.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Wyatt noted that Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries wrote to the City of Winnipeg and indicated that the Corporation was exercising Royal prerogative exempting it from application of zoning by-laws through 2020 for properties at the McPhillips Station Casino and Club Regent. He asked what could be done to ensure that the Provincial Government paid their fair share of the same fees that every other citizen and business owner was expected to pay.

His Worship acknowledged that there were some dated practices in terms of revenue models and advised that he looked forward to receiving more information from the Councillor about the matter.

Moved by Councillor Gerbasi,

That Rule 14(3) of the Procedure By-law be suspended to allow Councillor Wyatt to ask an additional question, beyond the two rounds of questions permitted.

Carried

Councillor Wyatt asked if the Mayor would be prepared to facilitate or inquire with the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries what their plan of development was for their new corporate headquarters in downtown, especially regarding concerns like public access, landscaping and pedestrian access.

His Worship advised that the Provincial Government, Liquor and Lotteries, would work with the City's planning department to ensure their plans met the City's requirements and this would involve consultation with the Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development, Heritage and Riverbank Management and with the Councillor for the area to the plans conformed to the City's requirements.

Councillor Mayes referred to Item 7 of the Report of the Executive Policy Committee dated September 16, 2015 regarding Syrian Humanitarian Crisis – Refugee Resettlement Assistance and asked the Mayor to speak to what was contained in the motion that came through the Executive Policy Committee.

His Worship noted that the humanitarian crisis in Syria had been reported as one of the greatest crises of this type since the Second World War. The initiative put forward was intended to ultimately invite and welcome newcomers to the community and present the benefit of living in Winnipeg. The item, which was adopted by Council, provided support for emergencies and asked the Public Service to report back on what programs were currently in place to help refugees. He advised that it also called for an open house, which Councillor Mayes would be coordinating, where community partners involved in refugee settlement would detail their ongoing work to provide assistance to newcomers and refugees.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Moved by Councillor Gillingham,

That Rule 14(12) of the Procedure By-law be suspended to allow the Executive Policy Committee question period to be extended beyond 30 minutes.

Carried

Councillor Eadie asked if the Mayor would ask the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries to follow the Manitoba Building Standards to ensure people could get to any facility and so they do not violate zoning or Accessibility design guidelines; to which His Worship replied in the affirmative.