Minute No. 664
Report – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development – July 4, 2022

Item No. 15 Amendments to the Vacant Buildings By-law No. 79/2010

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development and adopted the following:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back within 90 days on the following:

    A. Amendments to the Vacant Buildings By-law No. 79/2010 to require owners of vacant buildings be solely responsible for paying the total cost for fire response services to any vacant building in the event of a fire, with exemptions for the following situations:

        i. Fires originating from unrelated arson

        ii. Natural disasters

        iii. Collisions/accidents from vehicles

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Gilroy,
That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development be adopted.

Carried

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On July 13, 2022, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development and submitted the matter to Council.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On July 4, 2022, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development concurred in the Council Motion of June 23, 2022 and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On June 23, 2022, Council ruled automatic referral of the following motion to the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development:

Moved by Councillor Klein,
Seconded by Councillor Nason,

WHEREAS there has been a noticeable increase in fires at vacant buildings in the City;

AND WHEREAS the fire response to vacant buildings is not always reported by the media;

AND WHEREAS the City has limited financial resources to meet desired objectives and strategic plans such as for infrastructure, roads, sewer overflow, recreation, parks, forestry, policing, and fire;

AND WHEREAS vacant buildings are more susceptible to large out of control fires due to lack of people present to identify, report, and take early steps to extinguish the fire;

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

AND WHEREAS the owners of vacant buildings must take greater responsibility for fire prevention and reporting, so as to reduce the risk of large fires dangerous to fire crews and costly to the City to extinguish;

AND WHEREAS fires in vacant buildings often damage in full neighbouring buildings, which is a devastating event for the adjacent property owners;

AND WHEREAS an effective method to compel owners to achieve the prevention of large fires at their vacant buildings, is to require the owners to absorb the cost of fire response;

AND WHEREAS Section 5(1)(d) of the Winnipeg Charter states that the City is responsible to "promote and maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants", which includes residents of properties next to vacant buildings and responding fire fighter crews;

AND WHEREAS the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation lists the active duty deaths of over 1,700 firefighters, including many from Manitoba and Winnipeg;

AND WHEREAS on June 14, 2022, there were three Winnipeg firefighters taken to hospital, including one in unstable condition, after battling a fire at a vacant home which subsequently spread to a neighbouring house;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back within 90 days on the following:

1. Amendments to the Vacant Buildings By-law No. 79/2010 to require owners of vacant buildings be solely responsible for paying the total cost for fire response services to any vacant building in the event of a fire, with exemptions for the following situations:

    A. Fires originating from unrelated arson

    B. Natural disasters

    C. Collisions/accidents from vehicles

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.