



The Corporation of the City of Stratford Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee MINUTES

Date: February 20, 2024
 Time: 4:30 P.M.
 Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Sub-committee Present: Councillor McCabe - Vice-chair Presiding, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Nijjar

Regrets: Councillor Hunter, - Chair and Councillor Burbach

Staff Present: Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Neil Anderson - Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Miranda Franken - Council Clerk Secretary

Also Present: Joani Gerber – CEO of Invest Stratford

1. Call to Order

The Vice-chair called the meeting to Order.

Councillors Hunter and Burbach provided regrets for this meeting.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

No disclosures of pecuniary interest were made by a Member at the February 20, 2024, Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee meeting.

3. Delegations

3.1 Request for Delegation by Judah Bootsma

Motion by Councillor Beatty

THAT the delegation by Judah Bootsma be heard.

Carried

Sub-committee Discussion: Judah Bootsma, referring to documents circulated to Sub-committee, requested special consideration be given and that their property taxes be reduced to the 2023 amount. Highlights of the delegation included:

- there being a belief that this case is rare and would not apply to others;
- in the Fall of 2022, their family having moved into an 1890 built farmhouse on the edge of town;
- the house having been severed from the surrounding farmland and due to the severance, the property having been flagged for reassessment by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC);
- in 2022, MPAC having assessed the property at \$219,000.00 and the reassessment notice indicating it is now \$519,000.00;
- the owner having completed preliminary property tax calculations which indicate the property taxes will be increasing from \$3,034.00 per year to \$7,814.00 per year, representing a 157% increase;
- no renovations having been completed and there being no significant changes to the home except for a new septic tank that was installed;
- MPAC having directed the owner to the City to speak about tax rates;
- the owner feeling the amount is high, unaffordable, and unethical and stands to increase if the 2024 taxes increase;

- a study by the Fraser Institute indicating that the average Canadian pays about 45% of income in taxes, and 35% for necessities of life;
- concerns being expressed that high taxes will not result in a prospering City and will not encourage people to move to the City;
- the property being within Stratford's City limits but does not rely on Stratford services or amenities;
- if the request is granted, the tax amount would be maintained from previous years as there have been no reductions with the severance;
- before the severance, almost \$9,000.00 was collected on the farm as a whole, with the severance \$6,000.00 will be collected from the farm land and if granted, \$3,000.00 for the house; and
- it being noted the City also made money off the sale of the property due to the severance.

4. Report of the Director of Corporate Services

4.1 SEEDCo/investStratford Update to December 31, 2023 (FIN24-006)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation (SEEDCo./investStratford) Update (FIN24-006) for the period ending December 31, 2023 be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The CEO of investStratford, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, provided an overview of the investStratford update to December 31, 2023. Highlights of the presentation included:

- the report summarizing activities from July through to December 2023;
- there being many ongoing investment opportunities for both City owned properties and privately held commercial and industrial properties;
- there being instances where the City does not have a particular parcel that can meet the needs of a investment opportunity resulting in investStratford working to ensure all industrial and

commercial properties are available and marketed to the particular individuals and companies;

- 64 startups being supported by the Small Business Enterprise Centre;
- 130 consultations having been completed with entrepreneurs and new small business owners;
- 117 new jobs being created between June to December, 2023;
- a workshop having been hosted for small business and entrepreneurs on human resources;
- looking at what Generation Z and young employees look for in jobs, which is a different perspective than the past model;
- the sessions being available on the website so entrepreneurs can review at any time;
- three trade missions and trade shows with the South Western Ontario Marketing Alliance Partners netting more than 65 foreign direct investment leads that they consistently follow up with;
- with respect to City owned industrial land activity:
 - the Wright business Park being fully sold with work beginning on Lot 6 and part of Lot 1; and
 - two parcels being available in the Crane West Business Park, with many interested parties;
- the first visit to Japan since 2019 was completed in November 2023 with Mayor Ritsma;
- during the visit, all 5 parts suppliers were visited;
- in the community more than 29 hundred people go to work daily in a Japanese part supplier, they occupy 1.15 million square feet of industrial space and generate \$2.69 million in annual tax revenue;
- Mr. Hayashi noted that the Stratford Hayashi facility is the best facility they have world wide regarding production and efficiency;

- the trip being a foreign direct investment opportunity and saw engagement with more than 500 companies and organizations and many opportunities to meet with firms while in Japan;
- an event having been hosted with the Embassy and the Consulate General with economic updates being received;
- with respect to the Summer Company program, it being open for 2024;
- the Summer Company program being for students ages 15-29 to start small business through the summer;
- grants up to \$3,000.00 being available to purchase start up equipment, complete marketing etc.;
- there being mentorship opportunities throughout the summer from local community leaders and guidance from the small business team;
- there being a women in business celebration on March 25th which is an opportunity to help women in business to think on their feet, think strategically and to get dialogue flowing;
- a Foodpreneur program being started in partnership with Perth County;
- the program being for entrepreneurs doing work outside of traditional restaurants from a food manufacturing perspective, e.g. food processing packaging, labelling, ingredients;
- it being a free program with 6 weeks of expertise;
- the program being specific to individuals in Perth County, Stratford and St. Marys in the food space;
- CanExport funding having been approved with the funding leveraging the tradeshow budget and there being a specific strategy for the IndoPacific Region and Agrotech in food sectors;
- The Small Business Enterprise Center contract having been renewed for the third year to March 31, 2025;
- there being \$217,000 in provincial grants that are reliant on Council contribution; and

- when the City provides money, they are able to leverage that money and look at opportunities to grow the money.

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation (SEEDCo./investStratford) Update (FIN24-006) for the period ending December 31, 2023 be received for information.

Carried

4.2 2023 Annual Reports from Committees of Council (FIN24-005)

Sub-committee discussion: The Vice-Chair noted that the Annual Reports from committees of council (FIN24-005) were received for information as follows:

- Active Transportation Advisory Committee;
- Heritage Stratford Committee;
- Accessibility Advisory Committee;
- Energy and Environment Committee;
- Stratfords of the World Committee, and;
- Communities in Bloom Committee.

5. Advisory Committee/Outside Board Minutes

There were no Advisory Committee or Outside Board minutes to be provided to Sub-committee.

6. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee meeting is March 19, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

7. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee meeting adjourn.

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 4:50 P.M.