



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

MINUTES

Date: May 20, 2025
Time: 4:30 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Hunter - Chair Presiding, Councillor McCabe - Vice Chair, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Nijjar

Regrets: Councillor Beatty

Staff Present: Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Michael Koktan - Manager of Financial Services, Miranda Franken - Council Clerk Secretary

Also present: Zac Gribble - Destination Stratford Executive Director

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to Order.

Councillor Beatty provided regrets for this meeting.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

Respectful Conduct Statement

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 May 20, 2025 Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee meeting.

3. Delegations

3.1 Request for Delegation - Stratford Arts and Culture Collective

Motion by Councillor Burbach

THAT Chris Leberg and Marian deWever of Stratford Arts and Culture Collective be heard.

Carried

Chris Leberg, Co-chair, and Marian deWever, Board Member, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective (SACC), referring to a PowerPoint, spoke to Sub-committee to appeal the Community Grants decision. Highlights of the presentation included:

- the SACC Community Grants 2025 application having been denied;
- in response to a letter dated April 23, 2025, three reasons the funding should be granted were noted:
 - alternate funding not existing;
 - SACC financial structures being aligned with best practices; and
 - donations to other groups not directly, indirectly or effectively having been made with City funds;
- SACC bringing two dozen arts and culture groups together aiming to satisfy community need for a multi-use, multi-user auditorium at the Grand Trunk Site;
- being in a strong position to meet the mission with the YMCA, Stratford Public Library and being a not-for-profit organization without share capital, with government documents up to date, board meetings monthly and no staff;

- volunteers hosting two events annually with high audience numbers and combined community expenditure of approximately \$150,000, offering discounts, subsidies and complimentary tickets to the community;
- spending being focused with detailed and transparent applications and a history of community building with denial being difficult to understand;
- SACC actively sourcing alternative funding through Corporate sponsorship with this being a challenging time and granting organizations with qualifying opportunities being limited regionally and highly competitive;
- the community grant going into an operating fund to support short term cash flow and retain sufficient cash flow to support months with no revenue;
- the reserve fund being for long term community building and to meet the mission;
- past community grant funds having been spent on what was proposed and not given to other organizations;
- in January 2024 SACC having donated a portion of surplus funds from "A Stratford Christmas 2023" to Shelterlink Youth Services and Optimism Place and in January 2025 a portion of surplus funds from "A 2024 Stratford Christmas" donated to the Local Community Food Centre;
- the sharing of a portion of SACC surplus having been interpreted as inconsistent with the City's policy;
- this decision being separate from the grant application process and not achieved through surplus as a result of the community grant;
- the grant policy language being vague enough to be open to misinterpretation with SACC not seeking to mislead and regretting the misunderstanding; and

- municipal support being crucial for endorsement of SACC showing the organization can be trusted with public and private money and for leveraging seed funding.

Members of the Sub-committee, SACC delegates and staff held a discussion regarding the following:

- SACC being in the first stages of a capital campaign to invest in a quality auditorium on the Grand Trunk Site with the reserve fund intended for this;
- the amount requested being consistent with the original application and with any amount being appreciated noting past grant amounts being approximately \$2,300;
- a member expressed concerns for the development of the Grand Trunk Site with Council not having seen financials behind what a Community Auditorium would cost and not having enough information regarding SACC goals and they noted the City Hall Auditorium is underutilized;
- a SACC member outlined reasons the Auditorium is not suited to theatre;
- the Grand Trunk Renewal having finished a third iteration of a feasibility study in March 2025 to field interest;
- the SACC goal being a 400 seat auditorium with proper seating, a stage large enough to hold the Stratford Symphony, dance and touring shows at an affordable rate;
- it was noted only the Stratford Festival can afford to use the Festival spaces with other groups making do in other spaces;
- a member commented it being positive having more community groups to help invest and noted this will require flexibility in the plan; and
- a member noted the dance competition circuit being a draw for shoulder seasons and being a potential for revenue generation.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

THAT Council reconsider the Stratford Arts and Culture Collective (SACC) Community Grants Funding request.

Members discussed the motion:

- clarification was requested on the amount of the grant requested and whether the mover was assigning a grant amount to be considered;
- SACC working with the Public Library, the YMCA and the Director of Community Services to look at making the auditorium a reality;
- a Member concerned with finding a financially viable model of groups working together and requested a future presentation from SACC to address this;
- SACC noted the YMCA having the experience to draw on and cited two YMCA Auditoriums in Alberta; and
- Staff noting the SACC request for \$15,000 in 2025 and \$3,000 in 2024.

Councillor Burbach amended the motion to clarify the amount being proposed:

Motion by Councillor Burbach

THAT Council reconsider the Stratford Arts and Culture Collective (SACC) Community Grant Funding request and grant SACC \$5,000.00 from the 2025 Community Grants Fund.

Members continued discussing the motion:

- staff noted the increased request being in expectation towards investment in Grand Trunk Site in addition to regular activities;
- a Member noted SACC having been financially able to donate to other groups and this not being in line with the rules of the grant program commenting that the organization and the donations being worthy but it being tax payer money and the City having struggles to maintain assets; and

- a Member noted the original intent of the Community Grant to help groups get on their feet and SACC successful enough to make donations.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Defeated

4. Report of the Director of Corporate Services

4.1 Destination Stratford 2025 Update 1 (FIN25-012)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Destination Stratford 2025 Update 1" (FIN25-012), dated May 20, 2025, be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: Zac Gribble, Executive Director of Destination Stratford, presented the update. Highlights of the discussion included:

- Destination Stratford being on track in the first quarter;
- the first quarter of 2025 tracking above 2024 for Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT);
- the Board having approved the Destination Stratford and LightsOn budgets with Destination Stratford operating at a slight deficit and LightsOn operating at a slight surplus as expected;
- there being an outstanding Community Grant Program for Seniors of \$25,000 with a decision from the Provincial Government potentially in June for Seniors Month and the application being under the sport tourism program with walking soccer;
- \$50,000 from the Ontario Culture Attractions Fund (OCAF) having been received towards cultural marketing for LightsOn with Phase 1 passed and moving on to Phase 2;
- the Stratford Destination Development Fund application period having closed on May 1 with a lot of interest;
- Stratford After Dark or Après Theatre being a new initiative that works with restaurants and venues to promote nightlife and cultural activities into evening and late evening to help grow Stratford's story;

- the Music Pop-up fund expanding into summer and fall with Après Theatre and a separate program continuing in winter and spring;
- Destination Stratford being engaged in three 2025 research projects: Stratford Tourism Residents Sentiment Survey, a Tourism Supply Chain Analysis, and an Indigenous Tourism Assessment;
- a March statement regarding the United States and Canada Tariff Trade War still being relevant with the message being elbows up but arms open to visitors and working with local industry to stress importance of being a welcoming community;
- the Year in Review document being a comprehensive report of the accomplishments, financial expenses, revenue and programs, having been shared with Council and available on the website;
- a marketing campaign overview regarding social media and trail numbers being provided;
- the Al Fresco program going into the sixth year to expand with more areas in the park system through work with Community Services;
- the Sports Tourism Strategy adopted by Council being close to the halfway point with Destination Stratford working closely with Community Services;
- the Poet Laureate program having been launched and being co-managed by Destination Stratford and the Public Library;
- the Strategic Plan and the LightsOn Report 2024 being available on the website;
- overview of the BIA annual survey results being provided;
- Destination Stratford marketing organization strategy evolving towards regenerative tourism and looking at what the plan is for the next 5 years with inquiries being received globally based on this work; and
- LightsOn success with a number of arts organizations receiving \$55,000 in Experience Ontario Grants and \$350,000 through Programs having come to Stratford.

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Destination Stratford 2025 Update 1" (FIN25-012), dated May 20, 2025, be received for information.

Carried

4.2 Deposits for Land Leases and the Procurement Process (FIN25-014)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Deposits for Land Leases and the Procurement Process" (FIN25-014), be received for information;

AND THAT Council direct staff regarding changes, if any, to be included in the procurement policy and process.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Deposits for Land Leases and the Procurement Process" (FIN25-014), be received for information.

Carried

5. Report of the Manager of Financial Services

5.1 Operating Budget Variance Report as of March 31, 2025 (FIN25-013)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Operating Budget Variance Report as of March 31, 2025" (FIN25-013), be received for information.

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Operating Budget Variance Report as of March 31, 2025" (FIN25-013), be received for information.

Carried

6. Advisory Committee/Outside Board Minutes

No Advisory Committee/Outside Board minutes were provided to Sub-committee.

6.1 2025 Community Grants SACC request

Sub-committee Discussion: A Member commented that the Destination Stratford presentation reminded them that municipal funding would allow SACC to access grants from other levels of government and some money would provide an opportunity to grow the amount into larger funds.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

THAT Council reconsider the Stratford Arts and Culture Collective (SACC) Community Grants Funding request and grant SACC \$2,000.00 from the 2025 Community Grants Fund.

A Member noted the Federal Grant level is in abeyance and having an effect on all arts organizations in town this year.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

Defeated

7. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Finance and Labour Relations Sub-committee meeting is June 17, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Burbach

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

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 5:25 P.M.