



Stratford City Council Regular Council Open Session

MINUTES

Meeting #: 4775th
Date: Monday, July 14, 2025
Time: 7:00 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Council Present: Mayor Ritsma - Chair Presiding, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Biehn, Councillor Henderson, Councillor Hunter, Councillor McCabe, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Wordofa

Staff Present: Adam Betteridge - Interim Chief Administrative Officer, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services and Interim Director of Human Resources, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Taylor Crinklaw - Director of Infrastructure Services, Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Neil Anderson - Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, Audrey Pascual - Deputy Clerk, Victoria Trotter - Council Committee Coordinator, Mandy Koroniak - Manager of Children's Services, Marc Bancroft - Manager of Planning, Emily Robson - Corporate Initiatives Lead, Greg Skinner - Chief, Stratford Police Services, Joani Gerber - CEO, SEEDCo./investStratford, Kendra Fry - Housing Specialist, investStratford, Melanie Reasbeck - investStratford

Also Present: Members of the Public and Media

1. Call to Order:

Mayor Ritsma, Chair presiding, called the Council meeting to order.

Councillor Burbach and Councillor Briscoe provided regrets for this meeting.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

Singing of O Canada

Respectful Conduct Statement

2. Declarations 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 to otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest made by a Member at the July 14, 2025 Regular Council meeting.

3. Adoption of the Minutes:

R2025-280

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor Henderson

THAT the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of Council of The Corporation of the City of Stratford dated June 23, 2025, be adopted as printed.

Carried

4. Adoption of the Addenda to the Agenda:

R2025-281

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Seconded by Councillor Hunter

THAT the Addenda to the Regular Agenda of Council and Standing Committees dated July 14, 2025, be added to the Agenda as printed.

Carried

5. Report of the Committee of the Whole In-Camera Session:

5.1 Committee of the Whole In-camera Session - July 14, 2025

The July 14, 2025, Committee of the Whole In-camera Session was cancelled.

6. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations:

6.1 Adjournment to Public Meetings Under the Planning Act:

R2025-282

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT the public comments provided by Nicole Borden regarding Zone Change Application Z04-25 for 225 Oak Street be received.

Carried

R2025-283

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

THAT the Council meeting adjourn to public meetings under the Planning Act to hear from members of the public with respect to the following planning applications:

- **Zone Change Application Z04-25 for 225 Oak Street; and**
- **Zone Change Application Z03-24 for 105 Wright Boulevard;**

and to reconvene following the public meetings.

Carried

Council adjourned to a Public Meeting at 7:06 P.M.

Council reconvened at 7:33 P.M.

6.2 ADDED - Requests for Delegation regarding Item 7.1 Grand Trunk Revitalization Update and Superstructure Scenario Considerations (COU25-084)

R2025-284

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Hunter

THAT Mike Ennis, Jay Colquhoun, Lesley Walker-Fitzpatrick, and Jane Marie Mitchell be heard.

Carried

Mike Ennis, CEO, and Jay Colquhoun, Operations Manager, of the YMCA of Three-Rivers spoke to Council regarding Item 7.1 - Grand Trunk Revitalization Update and Superstructure Scenario Considerations.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- the YMCA offering programs beyond recreation including childcare, immigration services, youth and older adult;
- the YMCA team being excited to continue to adapt as the growing community changes; and
- partnerships being important for next steps at the Grand Trunk site.

Members of Council, Mr. Ennis and Mr. Colquhoun held a discussion regarding the following:

- it being noted the YMCA has funds and land for the project;
- the amount of contribution by the YMCA to similar projects in other municipalities varying according to the project; and
- it being noted the YMCA allocates 20% of their programming on their local community needs.

Lesley Walker-Fitzpatrick spoke to Council regarding Item 7.1 - Grand Trunk Revitalization Update and Superstructure Scenario Considerations.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- it being important to maintain the superstructure;
- there being historical value to the superstructure;
- it being important to limit the number of historical buildings being demolished; and
- the City's economic health being tied to heritage.

Members of Council and Ms. Walker-Fitzpatrick held a discussion regarding the following:

- the scale of the redevelopment of the previous archives building being much smaller;
- there being a concern with fiscal responsibility with a project of this size; and
- it being demonstrated that a number of citizens are interested in the redevelopment of the superstructure.

Jane Marie Mitchell spoke to Council regarding Item 7.1 - Grand Trunk Revitalization Update and Superstructure Scenario Considerations. Highlights of the presentation included:

- a comparison of the recommendation from the Grand Trunk Ad-Hoc Committee and the recommendation under Item 7.1;
- there being concerns that previous consultant reports indicate the superstructure was found to be in good condition;
- it being noted that when the roof was removed and the trusses sandblasted it was found to be largely in the same condition as 100 years ago; and
- Council being requested to hold a town hall meeting should the recommendation included in the staff report be passed.

7. Orders of the Day:

7.1 Resolution - Grand Trunk Revitalization Update and Superstructure Scenario Considerations (COU25-084)

R2025-285

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT Dan Mathieson, Melanie Hare, Joe Svec and Rock Wang, be heard.

Carried

Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford and Emily Robson, Strategic Initiatives Lead, provided an overview of the report noting the following:

- the Ad-Hoc Committee has been working towards this for two (2) years;

- Joe Svec and Rock Wang, Svec Group, will present the three (3) options;
- the superstructure being crucial to determine the direction for the rest of the site;
- no immediate action will be taken following a decision on the superstructure; and
- the direction from Council allowing consultants to continue their work and report back to the committee.

Dan Mathieson, Chair of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee, presented the Ad-Hoc Committee's recommendation noting the following:

- direction being required to move from Phase 3 to Phase 4 of the project;
- Svec Consulting has been retained and will walk Council through the options;
- Council being requested to take time to deliberate and provide direction; and
- a final recommendation from the Ad-Hoc Committee will be provided in September.

Members of Council and the Chair of the Ad-Hoc Committee held a discussion. Highlights of the discussion included:

- it being important to have direction on the superstructure prior to looking for partners;
- the recommendation reflecting the motion of the Ad-Hoc Committee;
- it being an option to leave the YMCA in the current location; and
- the potential costs to build a YMCA being \$700 per square foot.

Joe Svec and Rock Wang of SVEC Group presented to Council. Highlights of the presentation included:

- an overview of their careers and previous projects of similar nature that they were a part of;
- an overview of the current condition of the site based on the reports provided to the consultants;
- there being a need to consider the current condition of the superstructure and the associated remediation required;
- there being a need to have a vision for the entire site prior to attempting to get interest from others to build housing on the site; and
- an overview of the three scenarios for Council's consideration and the implications of each option.

A discussion took place between the Members of Council, Mr. Svec and Mr. Wang. Highlights of the discussion included:

- adding additional levels to the current structure not being feasible without incurring significant costs;
- the vapours from contaminants in the concrete being required to be vented;
- there being a need to move into Phase 4 prior to reaching out to the private sector;
- there being various options for uses under Option 2;
- the associated costs for getting the site ready for development being large and could lead to a high tax increase;
- the direction on the options allowing the Ad-Hoc Committee to complete further review and provide recommendations;
- the cost to create a structure in the current structure being much higher than using the structure as an open-air space; and
- there being long term costs for the municipality in operating the structure as an open-air space.

R2025-286

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor Hunter

THAT the Grand Trunk Site Update report and attachments be received for information.

Carried

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT staff and the consulting group be directed to include Scenario Three, removal of the superstructure, in Phases three through six of the workplan, bringing back findings for Council consideration.

Members of Council, staff, and the consultants of SVEC Group held a discussion regarding the motion. Highlights of the discussion included:

- Scenario Two (2) being the closest to the feedback from members of the public as well as the Ad-Hoc Committee recommendations;
- Council not being required to commit to the scenario at this time, the consultants to bring their findings to Council regarding the selected scenario for their consideration in the fall;

Councillor Sebben requested a recorded vote.

- a member noting that they are not in support of the motion as the City has already spent nearly 30 million only to demolish the building;
- significant funds being needed to develop the site;
- the Interim CAO noting that a motion to reconsider may be required if the motion to demolish the superstructure is passed and Council wishes to revisit the decision in the future;
- there being a concern with the scale of the project and the ability of the taxpayers to fund the project without other investments.

Councillor Biehn withdrew as the seconder for the motion. There was no seconder for the motion.

R2025-287

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT in keeping with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee, staff and the consulting group be directed to include SCENARIO TWO (KEEP PART) of the Superstructure in Phases three through six of the workplan, bringing back the findings for Council consideration, including, but not limited to: site configuration and land use mix, capital and lifecycle cost implications, market viability and private sector delivery models, phasing and implementation strategies, impacts on value generation, infrastructure needs, and community benefit.

Councillor Henderson requested a recorded vote.

Members of Council held a discussion regarding the motion. Highlights of the discussion included:

- the recommendation being in line with the recommendation from the Ad-Hoc Committee;
- the option presenting the best possibility for saving the building but findings may be that it is not possible;
- there being a possibility to pursue other options for the development of the site in the future;
- there being a concern that the motion is too far from the recommendation from the Ad-Hoc Committee; and
- there being a concern with only keeping one-third of the structure as per the scenario presented.

The Mayor called the question on the motion.

In Support (6): Councillor Henderson, Councillor Hunter, Councillor Nijjar
Councillor Biehn, Councillor McCabe, and Mayor Ritsma

Opposed (3): Councillor Beatty, Councillor Sebben, and Councillor Wordofa

Carried

Council recessed at 9:50 P.M. Council reconvened at 10:03 P.M.

7.2 Resolution - Community Improvement Plan (COU25-086)

Kendra Fry, Housing Specialist of investStratford provided an overview of the management report. It was noted that in May of 2023 the Stratford Attainable Housing Project brought forth three recommendations to expand affordable housing initiatives in the City and this is the final initiative.

Members of Council and the Housing Specialist held a discussion regarding the following:

- the funding for the 2025 program being through the Municipal Accommodation Tax Fund;
- the reduction in property taxes taking place over a 10-year period;
- the number of units to be subsidized cannot be determined until the units are assessed; and
- further information will be brought to Council following the Public Meeting.

R2025-288

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT Council direct the public process outlined in section 17 of the Planning Act be initiated to consider the proposed Tax Increment Equivalency Grant Community Improvement Plan;

AND THAT a Public Meeting be scheduled on Thursday, August 14, 2025, or on an alternative date as deemed appropriate.

Carried

7.3 Resolution - Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities-2025-2035 (COU25-083)

Greg Skinner, Police Chief, Stratford Police Services and Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services and Interim Director of Human Resources, City of Stratford, presented the report and the Plan. Highlights of the presentation included:

- in 2021 the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan: Roadmap for Collaboration was endorsed and adopted by Council;
- the next chapter of the plan building off the collaboration established previously;
- there being a focus on risk intervention, prevention and social development;
- engagement sessions, public survey and partner survey being completed in 2023 and 2024;
- priority areas of the plan including housing and homelessness, intimate partner violence/gender-based violence and mental health and addiction; and
- there being a liaison role created for each priority area.

Members of Council, Chief Skinner and the Director of Social Services held a discussion regarding the following:

- the project being funded by the partnered municipalities;
- a staff member in the Social Services Department being the coordinator of the program; and
- partners focusing on operational priorities and coordination of resources.

R2025-289

Motion by Councillor Biehn

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

THAT The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan: Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities 2025-2035, be received, adopted, and endorsed by Stratford City Council;

AND THAT The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan: Charting the Next Chapter: Empowering Safe and Connected Communities be forwarded to the Ministry of the Solicitor General, as required by the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 1990*.

Carried

7.4 Resolution - Extension of Lease of 270 Water Street and Municipal Parking Lot at Queen Street and Lakeside Drive

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT the lease for the building at 270 Water Street be extended for a period of one (1) additional year to December 31, 2026;

AND THAT the lease for the municipal parking lot at Queen Street and Lakeside Drive be extended for a period of one (1) additional year to December 31, 2026.

Members of Council and staff held a discussion regarding the following:

- the Interim CAO noting that the recommendation for the Municipal Parking Lot Lease renewal is for one (1) year however due to the work required for the property, it being possible to look at a two (2) year lease extension; and
- it being questioned whether there are annual increases associated with the lease.

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

THAT the motion be amended to direct staff to negotiate the terms of the agreement to include a 3% annual increase on the rate of the lease;

AND THAT the lease for the municipal parking lot at Queen Street and Lakeside Drive be extended for a period of two (2) additional years to December 31, 2027.

Members of Council and staff held a discussion regarding the amendment as follows:

- a member noting that previous leases had an annual increase included;
- the Director of Community Services confirming that there is a 2% increase included in the previous leases since 2021.

The mover and seconder withdrew the motion and put forward the following amendment.

R2025-290

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

THAT the motion be amended to extend the lease for the municipal parking lot at Queen Street and Lakeside Drive for a period of two (2) additional years to December 31, 2027.

The Mayor called the question on the amendment.

Carried

The Mayor called the question on the motion as amended:

R2025-291

Motion by Councillor McCabe

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT the lease for the building at 270 Water Street be extended for a period of one (1) additional year to December 31, 2026;

AND THAT the lease for the municipal parking lot at Queen Street and Lakeside Drive be extended for a period of two (2) additional years to December 31, 2027.

Carried

7.5 Resolution - Value-for-Money Audit of Anne Hathaway Day Care Centre (COU25-078)

R2025-292

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT the report titled, "Value-for-Money Audit of Anne Hathaway Day Care Centre" (COU25-077), be received for information.

Carried

7.6 Resolution - Shelterlink Request to Waive Landfill Tipping Fees (COU25-079)

R2025-293

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT Council authorizes landfill tipping fees for Shelterlink Youth Services to be waived for up to 5MT per year as requested.

Carried

7.7 Proclamation - Overdose Awareness Day

R2025-294

Motion by Councillor Nijjar

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

THAT Stratford City Council hereby proclaims August 31, 2025 as Overdose Awareness Day to raise awareness of the tremendous burden addiction has on individuals, families and communities in the City of Stratford;

AND THAT Stratford City Council authorizes the flying of the Overdose Awareness flag beginning on August 29, 2025 to raise awareness that Opioid use and overdose have reached crisis levels in all communities.

Carried

7.8 Proclamation - Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

R2025-295

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

THAT Stratford City Council hereby proclaims September as Childhood Cancer Awareness month to raise awareness that Childhood Cancer is the number one cause of death by disease of Canadian Children;

AND THAT Stratford City Council authorizes the flying of the Childhood Cancer Awareness Gold Ribbon flag in support of those affected, to remember those who have passed and to bring hope for a future where Childhood Cancer is a Canadian child-health priority.

Carried

8. Business for Which Previous Notice Has Been Given:

None noted.

9. Reports of the Standing Committees:

There were no Standing Committee reports considered at the July 14, 2025, meeting.

10. Notice of Intent:

None noted.

11. Reading of the By-laws:

The following By-laws required First and Second Readings and Third and Final Readings and were taken collectively upon unanimous vote of Council present:

R2025-296

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Seconded by Councillor McCabe

THAT By-laws 78-2025 and 79-2025 be taken collectively.

Carried unanimously

R2025-297

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT By-laws 78-2025 and 79-2025 be read a First and Second Time.

Carried two-thirds support

R2025-298

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Beatty

THAT By-laws 78-2025 and 79-2025 be read a Third Time and Finally Passed.

Carried

**11.1 Lease Agreement Extension - 270 Water Street, Discovery Centre
- By-law 78-2025**

To authorize the execution of an extension to the Lease Agreement with The Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada for the lease of certain lands at 270 Water Street, more commonly known as the Discovery Centre (former Teacher's College), to December 31, 2026.

11.2 Lease Agreement Extension - Queen Street Parking Lot - By-law 79-2025

To authorize the execution of an extension to the Lease Agreement with The Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada for the use of the Queen Street parking lot for a period of two (2) additional years to December 31, 2027.

12. Consent Agenda: CA-2025-083 to CA-2025-091

R2025-299

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor Henderson

THAT CA-2025-091, being a resolution from Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury regarding Advocacy for 'Increased Support Thresholds for Canadian Veterans', be endorsed.

Carried

13. New Business:

13.1 Endorsement of Sewer Line Insurance

Councillor Henderson stated she has received calls from members of the public as they have received letters with the City's logo included regarding sewer line insurance.

The Director of Infrastructure Services stated the endorsement of sewer line insurance was approved by the City and noted further communications on this item can be relayed to the public.

R2025-300

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT the July 14, 2025 Regular Council meeting be extended to 11:30 p.m.

Carried

14. Adjournment to Standing Committees:

The next Regular Council meeting is July 28, 2025, in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

R2025-301

Motion by Councillor Beatty

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

THAT the Council meeting adjourn to convene into Standing Committees as follows:

- **Finance and Labour Relations Committee [7:05 p.m. or thereafter following the Regular Council meeting];**
- **Infrastructure, Transportation and Safety Committee [7:10 p.m. or thereafter following the Regular Council meeting];**

and to Committee of the Whole if necessary, and to reconvene into Council.

Carried

15. Council Reconvene:

15.1 Declarations of Pecuniary Interest made at Standing Committees

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.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interest made at Standing Committee meetings held on July 14, 2025 with respect to the following Items and re-stated at the reconvene portion of the Council meeting:

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest made by a Member at the July 14, 2025 Council Reconvene meeting.

15.2 Committee Reports

15.2.1 Finance and Labour Relations Committee

R2025-302

Motion by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Councillor Nijjar

THAT Items 5.2 and 7.1 of the Finance and Labour Relations Committee meeting dated July 14, 2025 be adopted as follows:

5.2 Festival Hydro Inc. and Festival Hydro Services Inc. 2024 Audited Financial Statements and Dividend Declaration (FIN25-019)

THAT the Festival Hydro Inc. audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024, be received for information;

THAT the Festival Hydro Services Inc. audited statements for the year ended December 31, 2024, be received for information;

AND THAT Council, as the sold shareholder, declare a Top-Up Common Share Dividend in the amount of \$147,478 for the year 2024, calculated in accordance with Festival Hydro's Dividend Policy, to be paid in the second quarter of 2025.

7.1 Communities in Bloom Request for Reallocation of 2025 Budget Funds (FIN25-022)

THAT the request from the Communities in Bloom Advisory Committee to reallocate \$5,000.00 from the Special Project budget line to the CiB Symposium Expenses line in the 2025 budget be approved.

Carried

15.3 Reading of the By-laws (reconvene):

The following By-law required First and Second Readings and Third and Final Readings:

By-law 11.3 Confirmatory By-law - By-law 80-2025

To confirm the proceedings of Council of The Corporation of the City of Stratford at its meeting held on July 14, 2025.

R2025-303

Motion by Councillor Henderson

Seconded by Councillor Biehn

THAT By-law 80-2025 be read a First and Second Time.

Carried two-thirds support

R2025-304

Motion by Councillor Sebben

Seconded by Councillor Hunter

THAT By-law 80-2025 be read a Third Time and Finally Passed.

Carried

15.4 Adjournment of Council Meeting

R2025-305

Motion by Councillor Biehn

Seconded by Councillor Wordofa

THAT the July 14, 2025, Regular Council meeting adjourn.

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 7:00 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 10:58 P.M.

Reconvene Meeting Start Time: 11:11 P.M.

Reconvene Meeting End Time: 11:13 P.M.

Mayor - Martin Ritsma

Deputy Clerk - Audrey Pascual