



**The Corporation of the City of Stratford  
Committee of the Whole In-camera Session  
Minutes**

A meeting of the Committee of the Whole was held in In-camera Session on Monday, May 25, 2020 electronically at 1:03 p.m.

**Present in Chambers:** Mayor Mathieson - Chair presiding

**Present Electronically:** Councillors Beatty, Bunting, Burbach, Clifford, Gaffney, Henderson, Ingram, Ritsma, Sebben and Vassilakos

**Regrets:**

**Staff Present in Chambers:** Joan Thomson – Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe – City Clerk

**Staff Present Electronically:** Ed Dujlovic – Director of Infrastructure and Development Services, David St. Louis – Director of Community Services, John Paradis - Fire Chief, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Janice Beirness – Acting Director of Corporate Services, Jacqueline Mockler - Director of Human Resources,

Prior to going to In-camera session, Item 1.0 is to be dealt with in open session.

Call to Order by Mayor Mathieson

**1.0 Adjournment into In-camera Session**

Motion by Councillor Ritsma and Councillor Burbach

*"Strengthening Our Community: Attracting People and Investment"*

**THAT the meeting adjourn to an In-camera Session to discuss:**

**4.1 COVID-19 Financial Relief Measures**

**[Security of municipal property of the municipality or local board (section 239.(2)(a)), AND**

**A position, plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiations carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the municipality or local board (section 239.(2)(k))];**

**5.1 COVID-19 Pandemic Workforce Planning Update For Gradual Staged Recovery**

**[Labour relations or employee negotiations (section 239.(2)(d))].**

**Carried**

The meeting then adjourned to an In-camera session.

█ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

█ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**4.0 Report of the Acting Director of Corporate Services**

**4.1 COVID-19 Financial Relief Measures**

[Security of municipal property of the municipality or local board (section 239.(2)(a)), AND

A position, plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiations carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the municipality or local board (section 239.(2)(k))]

**Objective:** To provide recommendations on relief requests.

**Background:** The COVID-19 virus has had a significant impact on our community and City operations. Many functions of the City have been impacted and most of them have financial implications to the City's budget.

This is the first time we have experienced a complete pause on City operations and mass job losses in the community leading to immediate and widespread financial hardship among our residents.

At the April 1, 2020 Council meeting the following resolution was passed:

THAT the following be approved to provide for the immediate relief and flexibility of residents and businesses in the City of Stratford:

- Waive penalty and interest related to the April 9<sup>th</sup> property tax installment due date and stop all aggressive collection activities until August 30, 2020
- Waive penalties, interest, late payment charges and other fees related to water and sewer billing and suspend all progressive collection activities until August 30, 2020
- Suspend any water meter disconnections until August 30, 2020
- Suspend the transfer of overdue water accounts to the property tax account to assist landlords
- Provide free parking until May 31, 2020 or the commencement of the Festival Theatre season
- Waive interest on any general invoices for the City until May 31, 2020
- Suspend the non-sufficient fund administration fee for returned payments until May 31, 2020
- Provide credits or refunds on cancelled city-run community programs and services
- Provide free transit until August 30, 2020
- Continue with the requirement for paid bag tags for curbside collection

**Analysis:**

Since the April 1, 2020 report the City has received requests for additional relief. The following initiatives could be implemented to provide continued support to those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Refund of Bed and Breakfast Licenses – The City has collected \$27,730 in license fees from Bed and Breakfast businesses. Since the announcement of the Stratford Festival cancelling its season we have received numerous requests to refund these license fees as reservations are being cancelled. Part of the license fee includes a City inspection which would no longer be required. If a business chooses to continue to operate a license fee would not be refunded.
2. Refund of Patio Licenses – The City has collected \$5,150 in patio license fees. With social distancing in effect it will be difficult to keep these patios open and the City has received requests for refunds of these license fees. A business can choose to have a patio open and those license fees will not be refunded.
3. Rent reduction – The Stratford Festival leases the Normal School, the current lease expires December 31, 2021. The 2020 lease amount is \$95,000. The Stratford Festival is requesting a 75% reduction in their 2020 lease payment amounting to a reduction of \$71,250. After operating expenses a significant portion of the lease revenue is transferred to a reserve fund for capital projects on this facility. This request will cover the operating expenses but will result in a reduction to the contribution to the reserve fund. This reserve fund is budgeted to cover the HVAC replacement this year at a cost of \$25,000. For this reason, staff is recommending a 50% reduction in rent amounting to \$47,500.
4. Lease Waiver – The Stratford Festival leases the Queen Street Parking lot, the current lease expires November 28, 2020. There are 2 parts to the lease payment, a rental payment of \$17,910 and a resurfacing cost of \$7,130. The resurfacing portion is transferred to the Parking reserve fund for capital maintenance of the parking lot. This request would be a reduction in revenue as well as a reduction in the contribution to the reserve fund. If the Stratford Festival does not rent the parking lot for 2020, this will give the City the opportunity to use the parking lot if necessary.
5. Lease Waiver – Crazy Dogz leases the Memorial Gardens space. The lease is a 5 year lease expiring in 2023. The 2020 lease amount is \$3,060. Crazy Dogz is requesting the contract be placed on hold for 2020. The lease agreement provides that the contract can be terminated but does not contain a clause for placing it on hold. This lost revenue would also result in lost revenue for a business license in the amount of \$502. This has been a difficult space to lease and staff recommend waiving the 2020 rent rather than a cancellation of the 5 year contract. Crazy Dogz will not operate in this space in 2020.

6. Lease Waiver – Art in the Park has a multi-year rental agreement that ends Fall of 2021. They will not be holding this event in 2020 and have requested the City waive the 2020 rental fee of \$10,000.

**Financial impact:** As noted above. The total financial impact could be as high as \$118,982 depending on the number of licenses refunded. If approved, the City will have to find additional cost savings to offset this lost revenue. There is the potential to achieve this through reduced contributions to reserve funds in 2020. However, these reserve funds are needed to fund future capital projects.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

**Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships:** Sound fiscal governance and adherence to regulations supports all Strategic Priorities of the City.

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT direction be given to the City Clerk to list the following recommendations to provide for the immediate relief of businesses in the City of Stratford on the next available Council Agenda:

- Bed and Breakfast licenses be refunded for those businesses not operating in 2020
- Patio licenses be refunded for those businesses not opening a patio in 2020
- The Normal School rent be reduced by 50% for 2020
- The Queen St Parking lot lease payment be waived for 2020
- The Memorial Gardens lease payment be waived for 2020
- The Art in the Park lease payment be waived for 2020.

**In-camera Discussion:** The Acting Director of Corporate Services advised six additional requests for relief have been received and are being presented for Council's consideration.

It was questioned whether businesses wishing to operate a patio can apply for the licence. The City Clerk advised applications are being accepted but there are delays in processing.

It was questioned how the City would handle a situation where a bed and breakfast establishment received a refunded licence but then wanted to operate. It was suggested it would be based on the honour system. The Chief Administrative Officer advised there is liability for the City for not enforcing a by-law when there are health and safety components.

It was questioned whether the fee could be withdrawn with the understanding there would be consequences for failure to comply with the by-law. It was suggested there may still be individuals who operate their establishment without obtaining the proper approvals.

The Chief Administrative Officer advised direction could be given to require the issuance of a licence prior to operation. It was questioned how much financial relief is to be offered.

The ability to pro-rate licences for 4-5 months was questioned. The Chief Administrative Officer advised there are a number of options available. If directed, staff would review and prepare a report. Staff were requested to prepare a review and to consider the possibility of extending the season and additional fee options.

Discussion was held on the ability to waive a portion of the fee but require the fee for inspections to be paid. Discussion was also held on the possibility of receiving financial assistance from the Federal Government.

It was questioned whether the Queen Street parking lot could be used if the fees are waived. It was noted the lot is owned by the City and that the City can open it for use. The maintenance required was questioned. The Director of Infrastructure and Development Services advised it is mainly sweeping but the lot is in good shape.

The financial impact of not charging fees was questioned. It was advised it could be double. It was suggested the keeping of businesses operating in the City is important and that the waiver of fees is a small gesture to provide relief. Guidance is required from staff in order to limit the City's risk and liability.

Support was expressed for the waiver of the bed and breakfast licence fee while still requiring inspections to be obtained. It was noted patios are more complicated. It was questioned whether the fee waiver for bed and breakfast establishments could be limited to existing operators.

**In-camera Direction:** Motion by Councillor Ritsma and Councillor Sebben **THAT direction be given to the City Clerk to list the following recommendations to provide for the immediate relief of businesses in the City of Stratford on the next available Council Agenda:**

- **The Normal School rent be reduced by 50% for 2020**
- **The Queen St Parking lot lease payment be waived for 2020**
- **The Memorial Gardens lease payment be waived for 2020**
- **The Art in the Park lease payment be waived for 2020;**

**AND THAT the requests to refund bed and breakfast and patio licences be referred to staff to prepare a report for Council's consideration outlining the available options, terms and conditions that could be applied.**

Discussion was held on the use of the Normal School by the Festival and the impacts to their budgets as a result of the pandemic.

Mayor Mathieson called the question on the motion.

## **Carried**

### **5.0 Report of the Director of Human Resources**

#### **5.1 COVID-19 Pandemic Workforce Planning Update For Gradual Staged Recovery [Labour relations or employee negotiations (section 239.(2)(d))]**

\*Prior to the meeting an additional document entitled "Communication to City Council on Return to Work" was circulated to members of Council.

**Objective:** To provide a status update on the City of Stratford workforce planning for gradual staged recovery as the province of Ontario prepares for the next phases of re-opening Ontario.

**Background and Analysis:** The Corporate Leadership Team has discussed a gradual, and staged recovery inclusive of redeployment and recall of staff that addresses health and safety inclusive of an increase in cleaning requirements for public washrooms within city buildings, the parks system and outdoor recreation facilities.

Additionally, this includes the efficient allocation of administrative resources based on revenue driven demand with increased building permits due to the resumption of construction in the community.

**Financial impact:** An additional report will be provided at the meeting.

**Staff recommendation:** THAT the status report on COVID -19 Pandemic Workforce Planning Update For Gradual Staged Recovery be received for information.

**In-camera Discussion:** The Director of Human Resources advised the Corporate Leadership Team has been discussing a gradual, staged re-opening of City facilities. Prior to facility being re-opened, safety must be considered and there will be additional cleaning requirements. It was recommended the facilities be re-opened in stages in order to re-deploy or re-call necessary staff to ensure safety measures can be implemented.

Phase 1 re-opening would include the following facilities:

- William Allman Memorial Arena,
- Upper Queens and Parks Buildings,
- Tourism Booth Washrooms,
- North Shore Washrooms, and the
- Cemetery offices and staff building/garage.

Phase 2 includes:

- SERC,
- Packham Sports Complex - Soccer Fields, Splash Pad

Phase 3:

- All other sports fields.

It was noted a report on the City's financial position has been listed for consideration at the May 25, 2020 Regular Council meeting. Council's appetite for financial relief was questioned. It was suggested that if the Federal Government provides financial assistance to municipalities the City will need to prioritize services and programs.

It was suggested Council should create a list of priorities for staff to review which would include a review of costs and any additional measures to be implemented to ensure safety for staff and members of the public.

**In-camera Direction:** Motion by Councillor Ritsma and Councillor Gaffney **THAT the status report on COVID -19 Pandemic Workforce Planning Update For Gradual Staged Recovery be received for information. Carried**

Members of Council were asked to highlight any programming requests involving union staff. It was suggested screening be considered and training provided. The Chief Administrative Officer advised it has been built in and staff are working with Human Resources on a policy/procedure. Guidance is also still being sought from the Province and Public Health.

The use of huts for sanitizing stations was questioned. The Director of Community Services advised it had not been considered to date but that it could be.

It was questioned whether parking enforcement could be reduced if free parking was extended. The City Clerk advised the parking enforcement officer compliment was reduced from three officers to two and that the recruitment of a fourth parking enforcement officer was halted. It was noted there continues to be a need to enforce no-parking provisions and the City continues to receive requests for enforcement outside the downtown core.



The issuance of marriage licences was questioned. The City Clerk advised the provision of marriage licence, commissioning and civil ceremony services are on hold. Staff have been working to develop a plan for the provision of these services including the installation of plexiglas at the Clerk's Office front counter. The Director of Infrastructure and Development Services advised the order for plexiglas has been placed and is expected early next week. At this time the City is planning for a re-opening the second week of June.

An update was requested on the sale of garbage bag tags. The City Clerk advised the demand has decreased but orders and deliveries are still being completed. It was noted the majority of orders are for 10 or more tags.

The measures to be implemented for the holding of in-person Council and Committee meetings were questioned. The City Clerk advised staff have been working to outline the requirements for holding meetings in Council Chambers, including reviewing alternative locations to ensure social distancing. The measures to be implemented will depend on restrictions and guidance from the Province and Public Health.

It was questioned whether the re-opening of playground equipment needed to be approved by the Province first. It was confirmed it did. It was questioned when the City's skateboard park would be re-opened. The Director of Community Services advised it is on the list for re-opening but that signage is required to be installed.

Concern was expressed with the use of wooden huts for sanitizing stations as they could be gathering places. It was noted Stratford Police Services are reserving the right to implement a park patrol if necessary. It was suggested temporary sanitizing dispensers be installed.

  
  
