



**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 Tuesday, November 24, 2020 electronically at 7:06 p.m.

**Present in Chambers:** \*Mayor Mathieson - Chair Presiding

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

**Regrets:** None

**Staff Present in Chambers:** \*Joan Thomson - Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Chris Bantock - Deputy Clerk

**Staff Present Electronically:** \*Janice Beirness - Director of Corporate Services, \*Paula Lombardi - City Solicitor, \*Joani Gerber, CEO investStratford

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

Call to Order by Mayor Mathieson

**1.0 Adjournment into In-camera Session:**

Motion by Councillor Henderson and Councillor Beatty

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

**3.1 [REDACTED] Cost Sharing Agreement Update**

**[Advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege including communications necessary for that purpose (section 239.(2)(f))],  
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));**

**4.1**

[REDACTED]

**Carried**

The meeting then adjourned to an In-camera session.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**3.0 Report of the Chief Administrative Officer**

**3.1** [REDACTED] Cost Sharing Agreement Update

[Advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege including communications necessary for that purpose (section 239.(2)(f))], 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))]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Mayor Mathieson advised that following the discussion from the November 23,2020 In-camera Session, he has chosen to recuse himself from the In-camera discussion. He advised the members that he contacted the Integrity Commissioner and asked him to investigate his involvement as it relates to In-camera direction. Mayor Mathieson stated he has represented the interests of the majority and that while they do not always agree, they respect each others' opinions. He stated it was best to rescues himself from the room to allow Council to have a frank discussion. The Chief Administrative Officer also recused herself from the meeting.

\*Mayor Mathieson and the Chief Administrative Officer departed the meeting and Deputy Mayor Ritsma assumed the role of Chair at 7:13 p.m.

[REDACTED]

\*The City Solicitor departed the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Councillor Vassilakos advised she had a conversation with the CAO to discuss how Council got to this current position. She stated she believes it is because of the nature of in-camera meetings, specifically the nature of having information for small periods of time. The conversation was framed around the current process, which does not lend to good decision making on big items under pressure. It was suggested that in order to move forward a template needs to be created for how these projects roll out that can be easily tracked by everyone. It was suggested a data room be created to make sure everyone has access to the necessary information at the same time.

Councillor Beatty stated he deals in facts, not in feelings. He advised he was upset with Council's behavior and that Mayor Mathieson works hard for the City and cares about the community. He agreed that process is important and that we are human

and do not always get things right the first time. He stated Council needs to get moving forward and that he is tired of talking in circles about process. What we are doing is not being able to think about the bigger picture that is in front of us. He stated Council needs to make a united decision and suggested members be mindful of how staff are treated. He stated everyone wants to do what is best for the community and that everyone needs to be treated with respect.

Councillor Clifford expressed concern with calling into question someone's honesty and integrity without proof. Concern was also expressed with decorum during meetings and questioning why a member of Council is not speaking on a matter before them. He suggested being careful with words and stated that he understands the process and that while he would like more public input it is not always what the majority of Council wants.

Councillor Henderson stated she loves to hear what everyone else is thinking as sometimes it can give additional background or change her mind on an issue. She stated Mayor Mathieson works hard for the City and has been following Council's direction. Frustration with the process was expressed and that members of the public feel council is untrustworthy. She stated Council and staff must work together.

Councillor Vassilakos stated she has never said anything publicly against other Councillors. She questioned if everyone is upset with what happened with the Mayor, are they also upset about the Mayor laughing at her and accusing her of covering. She stated she was trying to piece together what happened and did not have all the information, which the Mayor does. She stated that when she was trying to go through the process she was not accusing anyone. She further stated that when there was a discussion about integrity the Mayor challenged her integrity and used a motion that she had made, out of context, to try and shame her for questioning the context. Councillor Vassilakos stated she likes to believe she also works hard and should get equal consideration when her integrity is challenged at an In-camera Session. She stated she finds this difficult, as she was threatened, but does not get equivalent consideration for how that happened.

Councillor Sebben stated he was not at the last meeting but is offering general comments. For his work outside of Council he works remotely and does not see his co-workers. E-mails with people you never see can easily grow into bigger things than they are. He stated that if the pandemic had not occurred they would still be able to meet briefly before the meeting to exchange pleasantries.

Councillor Bunting stated he has served on council for six years and often tells people that Council is made up of 11 individuals who are all different. He stated that one thing he praises is that even if they do not see things the same way, that once a decision is made, they move onto the next matter. He stated things have deteriorated for several reasons including, not seeing each other anymore and it being a difficult time as a result of COVID-19. He stated he agrees with the comments made about needing a process. There are lessons to be learned and Council needs to be mindful of staff who are the most dedicated people he has worked with. All members of Council are here for one reason, to do the best for the community.

Councillor Ingram stated a lot of good comments have been made and that she agrees with most of what has been said. She stated that everyone speaking up and sharing their opinion is important as it let's Council and the public know what they are thinking. As a Council, they are responsible to the public, citizens and businesses and everyone should know whether they are in support or against a motion/project.

Councillor Ingram expressed concern that Council is spinning its wheels constantly, that they have not gelled as group and are divided. She expressed support for making decisions as a Council and to stop sending items back to staff for review. She stated staff are tired because they prepare reports with as much information as Council needs and if questions were sent to staff before Council then they could be answered at the meeting where they are posed. The last term was very progressive but the last two years have not. She further stated Council needs to deal with the two motions on the table and move forward.

If the decision is to approve the cost sharing agreement the public needs to know as they believe they have the ability to provide input and therefore the ability to influence the decision. She stated public process is extremely important and that it should have started earlier in the process as now there is not sufficient time for the public to provide input. Councillor Ingram expressed concern with killing the trust, honesty and transparency that the public has in them. She requested the motions be dealt with so that everyone can move on.

Councillor Burbach stated she does not disagree with anything that has been said. When using words of integrity and trust, in her mind she was not implying certain people are lacking it. She stated that as a group they need to understand the way this project unfolded. She expressed frustration that there were repeated requests for items like a communication plan that were never provided when Council was told they would be. She stated this information would have saved them from the current

situation they are in. Consideration of the request for the MZO should have been made in open session, like other municipalities have done. She stated she trusted that the communication plan would be developed, but that Council also needs to move on and make decisions. Councillor Burbach apologized for putting Councillor Beatty on the spot at the last meeting and for not following the procedural by-law by asking questions through the Chair.

Councillor Burbach stated Councillor Vassilakos has made a good point and that Mayor Mathieson has also mocked and criticized her by stating she agreed to a motion a year ago and is now changing her mind. She has tried to have an open mind and was interested in the project at first but as more information has been provided she has changed her position. She expressed concern that this project is too big for the City and that staff are being asked to do things they have never done before. She encouraged an open dialogue and requested information and feedback to be provided if she is not following process/procedures.

Councillor Vassilakos stated a plan needs to be developed to regain public trust and to outline a process that is suitable for large projects.

Discussion was held on the feedback being received and whether it is from a minority of members of the public. Discussion was held on the misinformation being circulated among members of the public.

Councillor Gaffney stated he received a call from a member of the investStratford Board of Directors who spoke on behalf of staff regarding their treatment. He stated that as councillors they need to provide encouragement to staff who are under a lot of pressure. He stated he agrees that it is time to move on and apologized to Councillor Vassilakos for how she was treated at a previous meeting.

Councillor Bunting requested that steps be taken to ensure Council is not handcuffed in the future when considering projects. With respect to public relations, he stated they need to stand united and come up with a statement that they recognize this project was not handled well and that steps are being taken to prevent this from occurring in the future.

Discussion was held on how to regain public trust and that as a Council they need to have each other's backs and not disclose information from in-camera sessions which are confidential.

Councillor Burbach stated she has told people she is not supportive of the cost sharing agreement as it is. Councillor Vassilakos stated she has told people her position but does not discuss the position of other members of Council.

Councillor Ritsma stated everyone has to own a bit of this and that developing a process moving forward is important. At a previous meeting [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Councillor Ritsma expressed this information is needed in order for him to make a decision and that he has been challenged by the inappropriate remarks being made about ethnicity.

Councillor Ingram stated that while she missed previous In-camera Sessions she has reflected on the advice from the CAO that if a decision is being made to turn down the cost sharing agreement that it be done so quickly and no more information be requested. She stated that if there is not enough information after two years to make a decision then there is a problem.

\*The meeting recessed at 8:37 p.m.

\*The meeting resumed at 8:41 p.m., [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



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