

Electronic General Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Number: 12
September 21, 2020, 9:30 AM - 1:00 PM
Live streamed

Roll Call	Mayor Frank Scarpitti	Councillor Reid McAlpine
	Deputy Mayor Don Hamilton	Councillor Karen Rea
	Regional Councillor Jack Heath	Councillor Andrew Keyes
	Regional Councillor Joe Li	Councillor Amanda Collucci
	Regional Councillor Jim Jones	Councillor Khalid Usman
	Councillor Keith Irish	Councillor Isa Lee
	Councillor Alan Ho	
Staff	Andy Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer	Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator
	Trinela Cane, Commissioner, Corporate Services	John Wong, Technology Support Specialist II
	Arvin Prasad, Commissioner Development Services	Graham Seaman, Director, Sustainability & Asset Management
	Claudia Storto, City Solicitor and Director of Human Resources	Shane Manson, Senior Manager, Revenue & Property Taxation
	Joel Lustig, Treasurer	Grace Lombardi, Election & Council/Committee Coordinator
	Martha Pettit, Deputy City Clerk	Rob Grech, Manager, Stormwater
	Phoebe Fu, Director of Environmental Services	Mark Visser, Sr. Manager, Strategy Innovation & Investments
	Morgan Jones, Director, Operations	Sameem Shah, Project Manager
	Hristina Giantsopoulos, Elections & Council/Committee Coordinator	

1. CALL TO ORDER

In consideration of the ongoing public health orders, this meeting was conducted electronically to maintain physical distancing of participants. With the recent passage of Bill 197 COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, municipal Council Members are now permitted to meet remotely and count towards quorum.

The General Committee Meeting convened at the hour of 9:33 AM in the Canada Room with Regional Councillor Jack Heath presiding as Chair for all items on the agenda.

Mayor, Frank Scarpitti addressed the Committee to speak about the death of the Right Honourable John N. Turner, former Prime Minister of Canada. The Mayor recognized his contributions to Canada and on behalf of all Members of Council extended deepest condolences to Mr. Turner's family and advised that flags at all City facilities would be lowered. Mayor Scarpitti led a moment of silence in his honour.

2. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were none disclosed.

3. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

3.1 MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2020 GENERAL COMMITTEE (16.0)

Moved by Councillor Keith Irish

Seconded by Councillor Karen Rea

1. That the minutes of the September 8, 2020 General Committee meeting be confirmed.

Carried

4. DEPUTATIONS

Deputations were made for the following item:

8.1. Geese Management At Swan Lake - Overview Of Options & Path Forward

Refer to the individual item for the deputation details.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

6. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

7. CONSENT REPORTS - ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

7.1 ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE (5.0)

Graham Seaman, Director of Sustainability and Asset Management, addressed the committee to advise that this report is an Auditor General recommendation and is the first of subsequent annual reports. In response to the inquiry from the

Committee, he confirmed that future reports will encompass more detail to provide a better overview of City assets and their management.

The Committee requested that staff prepare a revised memo that provides more detail on the asset evaluation criteria and processes being considered for the 2021 Asset Management Plan update.

Moved by Councillor Reid McAlpine
Seconded by Councillor Isa Lee

1. That Council receive the Asset Management Plan Progress Update.

Carried

7.2 MARKHAM SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES – (SWAN LAKE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PROGRAM) – AUGUST 14, 2020 (5.0 & 10.0)

Moved by Councillor Reid McAlpine
Seconded by Councillor Isa Lee

1. That the minutes of the Markham Sub-Committee - (Swan Lake Water Quality Control Program) meeting held August 14, 2020, be received for information purposes.

Carried

8. PRESENTATIONS - ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

8.1 GEESE MANAGEMENT AT SWAN LAKE – OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS AND PATH FORWARD (5.0)

Fred Peters, representative of Friends of Swan Lake Park, addressed the Committee and delivered a presentation entitled, Friends of Swan Lake Park Geese Management and provided recommendations in support of the program proposed by staff. He requested that a strobe light initiative be added.

Ross Lunan, Swan Lake Resident, addressed the Committee in support of the hazing and relocation initiative in relation to the geese management program.

Mark Henschel, Swan Lake Resident, addressed the Committee to provide details on his data collection with respect to geese counts and his work with mute

swans. He indicated that he does not support the strobe light initiative because it does not isolate geese and will negatively affect the swan population.

Phoebe Fu, Director, Environmental Services, addressed the Committee to introduce the item and indicated that this is the first action component regarding the initiatives related to Swan Lake. She introduced Rob Grech, Manager, Stormwater, who delivered a presentation entitled, "Geese Management at Swan Lake – Overview of Options and Path Forward" that provided an update on current options and costs to undertake the geese management program at Swan Lake. Danny Moro, Project Manager, Toronto Regional Conservation Authority, was in attendance to respond to inquiries made by the Committee.

There was discussion relating to the proposed recommendations of the program, which included the following:

- Inquiry into the other species at Swan Lake;
- That geese population management is not a unique issue to Swan Lake and that solutions can benefit the community as a whole;
- The inclusion of the strobe light initiative for this season; and,
- The importance of developing a method to document other wildlife impacted by a strobe light initiative, without the inclusion of swans.

The Committee requested that staff obtain additional information to explore the environmental and financial impacts of a potential strobe light pilot and provide a memo at the Council Meeting on September 30, 2020.

Moved by Councillor Andrew Keyes

Seconded by Mayor Frank Scarpitti

1. That the presentation entitled "Geese Management at Swan Lake – Overview of Options and Path Forward", dated September 21, 2020, be received; and,
2. That Council approve the proposed changes outlined in the presentation to the existing Swan Lake Geese Control program; and,
3. That a review of options for modifying the habitat to deter geese from Swan Lake shall be considered through the Park Refresh Plan; and,
4. That the budget shortfall, in the amount of \$9,500, be funded from the Non-DC capital contingency for project 20250 Water Quality Improvements and Geese Control for the implementation of 2020 fall hazing and volunteer program; and,

5. That the 2021 Water Quality Improvements and Geese Control project request include \$10,000 for the TRCA managed geese relocation program; and further,
6. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Carried

Moved by Councillor Andrew Keyes
Seconded by Deputy Mayor Don Hamilton

That Council approve an additional \$9,000.00 to include a strobe light pilot for geese population management.

Carried

Moved by Mayor Frank Scarpitti
Seconded by Councillor Amanda Collucci

That staff be directed to provide additional information on the impacts of a strobe light pilot program to foster geese population management for the Council Meeting on September 30, 2020.

Carried

9. REGULAR REPORTS - ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

9.1 ASSUMPTION OF MCCOWAN ROAD WATERMAIN AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTED BY THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK (5.0)

Staff provided a description of the road assumption report and explained that in response to a water supply disruption, the Region built new watermain infrastructure and will transfer ownership of it to the City.

Moved by Councillor Karen Rea
Seconded by Mayor Frank Scarpitti

1. That the report entitled “Assumption of McCowan Road Watermain and associated infrastructure constructed by the Regional Municipality of York” be received; and,
2. That Staff be authorized to assume the ownership of the new McCowan Road 150mm diameter PVC watermain and associated infrastructure constructed by The Regional Municipality of York; and,
3. That the Director of Environmental Services be authorized to execute the Memorandum of Understanding between The Regional Municipality of York and the City of Markham related to the assumption of McCowan Road Watermain and associated infrastructure, to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor; and further,
4. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Carried

10. MOTIONS

There were no motions.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motions.

12. NEW/OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 EMERGENCY COVID-19 RELIEF FOR THE HOTEL ACCOMMODATION SECTOR

Mayor Scarpitti introduced a motion in relation to emergency COVID-19 relief specifically for the hotel accommodation sector in response to its significant financial impact.

There was discussion on the following:

- Inquiry into the possibility of requesting that the province provide assistance to other business or industry types;

- The potential response to other businesses or industry types;
- The City's proactive approach with implementing a number of property tax and fee relief measures to assist taxpayers experiencing financial hardship from the pandemic, which included;
 - Waiving late payment charges for all taxpayers until Dec 31st, 2020;
 - Elimination of the 2020 Stormwater fee;
 - Maintaining the April 1st, 2019 water rate; and,
 - Suspending the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) to Dec 31st, 2020.
- That the main issue faced by the hotel industry currently is the record low occupancy levels and limited revenue potential;
- The significance between the lack of occupancy and revenue losses being experienced by hotels versus the income opportunities experienced by shopping malls and retail sector;
- Inquiry into whether the current situation has the potential to auto-correct itself over time;
- Consideration of deferring the MAT tax for 2021, would assist hotels with financial planning and budgeting; and,
- Consideration to allow this resolution to stand alone with respect to the hotel accommodation sector.

Andy Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer addressed the Committee and indicated that this is a once in a lifetime challenge being experienced by hoteliers in City and throughout the Province, as the Hotel industry has endured substantial financial losses, driven in part by the closure of international borders and low consumer travel confidence. Staff provided the Committee with an overview of how the current value assessments (CVA) of hotels are developed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) and further indicated that the current CVA's attributed to each hotel do not reflect the negative financial impact and the substantial revenue losses hotels are currently experiencing. As such, Staff advised Committee that this will result in significant property tax burdens moving into 2021, if a revaluation of all Hotel property assessments is not completed prior to the issuance of the 2021 final tax bill by municipalities.

The Committee, without objection, requested that staff forward the resolution immediately to the Premier of Ontario and those listed.

Moved by Mayor Frank Scarpitti
Seconded by Councillor Andrew Keyes

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented public health challenges to Canada which has resulted in a slowdown of the Canadian economy and has created significant financial pressures to most industry sectors; and,

Whereas this unprecedented environment of economic uncertainty has directly and immediately impacted the hospitality and tourism sectors, with hotels experiencing record low occupancy rates driven in part by the closure of international borders, reduced business workshops and conferences combined with lower consumer travel confidence; and,

Whereas the uncertainty of recovery timing and the expectation that a full recovery may take several years, it is imperative that the provincial government provide immediate measures to protect and assist Ontario's Hotel Industry so they can remain resilient and viable during this uncertain time; and,

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic had prompted the Province of Ontario to postpone the 2020 Assessment Update, and further directed that all Ontario property assessments to be levied upon for the 2021 tax year, continue to be based on the fully phased-in assessment amounts utilized for the 2020 tax year; and,

Whereas the current property assessment values of hotel properties do not represent the current negative financial impact of COVID-19 and the substantial decrease in revenue experienced by Hotels, which will result in inaccurate property assessments and significant property tax burdens moving forward into the 2021 taxation year and beyond; and,

Whereas Markham Council through the Destination Markham Corporation is in the midst of launching several programs and strategic initiatives to support the reopening and recovery of the tourism economy with the goal of increasing Hotel overnight stays.

Now therefore be it resolved:

1. That Markham Council requests the Province of Ontario work with local municipalities to develop immediate options which could assist the Hotel Industry with mitigating the significant financial impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic; and,
2. That these options include but not be limited to the following:

- a. Requesting the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) undertake a review and re-evaluation of all Hotel property assessments prior to the issuance of the 2021 final tax bill by Ontario municipalities; and,
 - b. Requesting the Minister of Finance consider removing the education portion of the property taxes for Hotels properties in Ontario for the 2021 taxation year, and,
 - c. Requesting the Minister of Finance consider developing a tax relief program to assist Hotel properties with the record low occupancy rates and limited revenue potential during this unprecedented time; and,
3. Be it further resolved, that a copy of this resolution be sent to:
- a. The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario;
 - b. The Honourable Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance;
 - c. The Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing;
 - d. All Members of Provincial Parliament in the Regional Municipality of York;
 - e. All Council Members of the Regional Municipality of York;
 - f. All Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) Board of Directors;
 - g. Nicole McNeill, President and Chief Administrative Officer, MPAC;
 - h. Carmelo Lipsi, Vice-President, Valuation and Customer Relations and Chief Operating Officer, MPAC; and,
 - i. Greg Martino, Vice-President, Valuation and Assessment Standards and Chief Valuation and Standards Officer, MPAC.

Carried

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mayor Frank Scarpitti

Seconded by Councillor Andrew Keyes

That the General Committee Meeting adjourn at 11:47 AM.

Carried