



The Corporation of the Town of Essex

Special Council Meeting Minutes

October 19, 2020, 4:15 pm

Location: <https://www.youtube.com/user/EssexOntario>

Present: Deputy Mayor Richard Meloche
Councillor Joe Garon
Councillor Morley Bowman
Councillor Kim Verbeek
Councillor Sherry Bondy
Councillor Chris Vander Doelen

Absent: Mayor Larry Snively
Councillor Steve Bjorkman

Also Present: Chris Nepszy, Chief Administrative Officer
Robert Auger, Town Solicitor, Legal and Legislative Services/Clerk
Shelley Brown, Deputy Clerk, Legal and Legislative Services
Doug Sweet, Director, Community Services/Deputy CAO
Jeffrey Morrison, Director, Corporate Services and Treasurer
Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services
Kevin Girard, Director, Infrastructure Services
Chris Loreto, Strategy Corp
Tony Haddad, Strategy Corp
Lauren Wyman, Strategy Corp
Umar Shaikh, Strategy Corp
Yael Boyd, Strategy Corp

1. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Meloche called the meeting to order at 4:23 PM.

2. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Adoption of Published Agenda

3.1 Special Council Meeting Agenda for October 19, 2020

SP20-10-004

Moved By Councillor Garon

Seconded By Councillor Bondy

That the published agenda for the October 19, 2020 Special Council Meeting, be adopted as presented.

4. Public Presentations

4.1 Strategy Corporation Town of Essex Service Delivery Review

- Current State Assessment Report
- Power Point Presentation from the October 13 2020 Special Council meeting.

Chris Nepszy, Chief Administrative Officer, explained that the purpose of the meeting was to receive initial input from Council and have a discussion as it pertains to the Service Delivery Review.

Chris Loreto, Principal at Strategy Corp, acknowledged that he received email correspondence from Councillor Bondy and Councillor Garon and outlined some of the items mentioned in the emails including:

Councillors Garon's comments:

1. There are concerns regarding our police service including lack of communication, unaccountability with respect to numbers of officers patrolling our streets at any given time, and lack of presence in our community.
2. We need to find a solution to the lack of geared-to-income and/or affordable housing.
3. We need to explore any means of saving money with respect to outsourcing or partnering with others, as long as we do not end up in a position where we are not getting the same service, or it leads us to open to the possibility of any further amalgamation.
4. Roads - we need to figure out how to get more roads into the budget, while being sensitive to the fact residents do not want to spend more money on taxes.
5. Continue to push for customer service.
6. Assess to hire a full-time executive assistant to exclusively support both the CAO and Mayor. This is not something I think we need at our level, but I am receptive to exploring it if it means our CAO and Mayor are more accessible to Council, Department Heads, media and Residents.

Councillor Bondy's comments:

1. Continue to improve asset management plan.
2. Continue to invest in staff and professional development training.
3. Continue to develop the economic development strategy to increase our commercial and industrial tax base.
4. We deserve OMPF funding due to our lean departments and rural base.
5. Streamline the Mayor and the CAO's workload, take them off all emails and go directly to the staff member that can assist in the situation.
6. Fire service – discuss an expanded Mutual Aid Agreement.

7. Develop a clear service standard.
8. Develop a by-law review best practices.
9. Improve records management.
10. New town hall – we should have a public discussion on this...what is the new town hall going to look like. Is there any appetite to have more staff in the Harrow area?
11. Better procurement support.
12. Improve communications tool box.
13. OPP – This is NOT the term of Council to discuss regional policing in my opinion.
14. ELK - ELK minutes should be sent to shareholders, and there is no reason why their meetings couldn't be open to the public.

Mr. Loreto noted that they will work on the specifics and business cases to determine feasibility from a cost benefit perspective. Mr. Loreto expressed that he would like concerns or questions to be submitted in writing.

Councillor Bowman commented that the Province provided funding for this type of exercise and that maybe the Town Council be part of the next phase of whatever they are going to fund. He feels that by completing this exercise we put ourselves in a place to receive additional funding as it comes available.

Councillor Vander Doelen stated that his response to the draft plan was already sent, which included:

1. There are a couple of sharing suggestions from the study that could save money, such as regional building inspection, shared purchasing and pooling the pickup truck fleet.
2. The Essex study praises the town as being a "fairly lean organization", which it may be. But this is all the more concerning since our taxes are among the highest in Ontario. How can we be understaffed and still be so expensive?
3. The study makes no mention of the cost-sharing programs already going on in McGregor with the Town of Amherstburg and Co-An Park, which are not working very well and appear to be breaking down.
4. None of my other cost-saving suggestions - most of which came from taxpayers – can be found in the report.
5. I have never heard a resident wish for a new town hall. What I hear from residents as major "wants" in service delivery are asphalt surfaces on the concession and side roads, full grading and snow removal services on the 94 beach roads and lanes, better broadband internet and faster permits. There is no mention of those in the report.
6. Selling ELK to "free up" money? Selling profit-making assets and raising debt levels are not an improvement to service delivery, they are the opposite.

7. The Town of Essex has to fight climate change to improve its services? How did those things get dragged into a discussion on increased regional efficiency? He stated that he was not in support of the findings in the report. He felt this was sold as an exercise in finding efficiencies and improved service delivery and he feels it is mainly a wish list of what staff seems to want and overlooks what residents are looking for.

Chris Loreto advised that they will take comments into consideration as part of the next phase of the review and will prepare a detailed business case analysis to determine the efficiencies. The next phase is when Council can make decisions as to whether or not the cost benefit is enough to proceed with some of the recommendations

Councillor Verbeek asked for assurances that Council's remarks and concerns will be brought in to the next report.

Chris Loreto stated that any feedback will be considered in the next phase.

Deputy Mayor Meloche expressed his views that more items should be centralized at the County, i.e. insurance, larger bidding items, purchasing etc.

Chris Loreto said that shared service analysis will be part of the next phase, but to keep in mind that willing participants are a necessary part of all of this.

SP20-10-005

Moved By Councillor Vander Doelen

Seconded By Councillor Bowman

That the presentation entitled Town of Essex Service Delivery Review presented by Strategy Corporation, be received.

Carried

5. Adjournment

SP20-10-006

Moved By Councillor Garon

Seconded By Councillor Bowman

That the meeting be adjourned at 4:47 pm.

Carried

Mayor

Clerk

