



MINUTES
SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Tuesday, July 17, 2018
11:00 a.m.
City Hall Council Chambers

Present: Mayor D. Canfield
Councillor M. Goss
Councillor R. McMillan
Councillor D. Reynard
Councillor S. Smith
Councillor C. Wasacase

Staff: Karen Brown, CAO, Heather Kasprick, City Clerk, Charlotte Edie, Treasurer, Michelle Saunders, Tax Collector, Marsha McPherson, incoming Tax Collector

Call Meeting to order – Mayor Canfield

Mayor Canfield called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Public Notices

Take Notice that as required under Notice By-law #144-2007, Council intends to adopt the following items at this Special Meeting of Council:

N/A

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest & General Nature thereof

- i) On Today's Agenda
- ii) From a Meeting at which a Member was not in Attendance

There were none declared.

Deputations

None.

1. Presentation by Municipal Tax Equity (MTE) Consultants Inc regarding options for the Vacancy Rebate

Peter from Municipal Tax Equity Consultants Inc provided further information to Council on the vacancy rebates.

The vacant rebate program was put in place in 2001 as a new system that previously didn't work well. The program has generally operated as intended except that it was very simple

and started to display weaknesses in the program. One of the big programs has been a heavy target by many agencies where people are claiming 90 days here and 120 days here and are difficult to verify and difficult for staff to manage or confirm. More often than not they are just approved because there are no way to challenge it. More so in industrial versus commercial.

With those weaknesses finally the province invited municipalities to do their own policies and procedures around it. They have worked with municipalities across the province and most people are repealing the program. Overwhelming amount of municipalities are phasing out or eliminating.

The City participated in a survey process. We received several survey responses compared to other municipalities of our size which was around 15. Mostly residential but there were commercial and industrial. People were in favour of eliminating it and felt it was a very small group of people that taxpayers were picking up the costs for. Some felt it was an incentive to keep your property vacant, however, this is not a subsidy, just a small amount off your taxes. There are a lot of people that do make the point that it would increase the incentive to keep space occupied.

The request for eliminating the vacancy rebates, it would be for the 2018 vacancy year and for 2019 year. You can't build it into your tax rate, you have to budget for it.

We have the ability to do this for commercial and leave industrial as it. You do have the option, but we are better to start at the types of properties we want to have in, rather than the ones we want to leave out. Peter suggests that Council looks at eliminating partial vacancies and leaves full vacancies. There is not a lot of rebate involved, but take up a lot of the labour of the program. Getting to those gets to a lot of the problems with the program. All that work, confirmation, validity of applications are there. Full vacancies are provided under two different subsections of the regs. We could provide a rebate for the full closures.

There is a deadline put in place by August 1st and suspect these will go through. Council should at least ask for everything you might want now, as there are no guarantee to the future. This is an invitation type thing. We can ask the Province and update the package for exactly what you want, you could have it as a revisit and open the options again.

Eliminating the partial rebates would eliminate half the problems that are out there.

Staff like the flexibility in the resolution just in case the program does disappear or things change. Having the flexibility to go from 0-35% is appealing. Also like the partial rebates going away as this is the bulk of the work and half of the rebates. Easier to prove vacant buildings.

The province will consider changes to people's programs for 2018 taxation year and need to be supported by a resolution of Council by August 1, 2018.

Council was supportive of the resolution coming forward today and will make minor amendments to the recommendation at the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.