



The City of Saint John

MINUTES - OPEN SESSION GROWTH COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 21, 2019 AT 2:30 P.M.
8TH FLOOR COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBER (Ludlow Room), CITY HALL

Present: Mayor D. Darling
Deputy Mayor S. McAlary
Councillor J. MacKenzie
Councillor B. Armstrong
Councillor R. Strowbridge

Also

Present: City Manager J. Collin
Commissioner Growth and Community Development J. Hamilton
Deputy Commissioner Building and Inspection Services A. Poffenroth
Deputy Commissioner Growth and Community Development P. Ouellette
Population Growth Manager D. Dobbelsteyn
Manager Infrastructure Development H. Young
Administrative Assistant K. Tibbits

1. Meeting Called To Order

Mayor Darling called the Growth Committee open session meeting to order.

1.1 Approval of Minutes – February 12, 2019

Moved by Councillor MacKenzie, seconded by Councillor Armstrong:
RESOLVED that the minutes of February 12, 2019 be approved.

MOTION CARRIED.

1.2 2018 Year-End Reporting and 2019 Outlook

1.2.1 Economic Development Greater Saint John

(Mr. Gaudet, Mr. Oland, Mr. McPherson, Mr. Lawson and Ms. Crozier entered the meeting)

Mr. Oland, chair of EDGSJ, stated that the two main objectives for 2018 were the achievement of the key performance indicators and the development of a three year work plan, which is focused on growing the labour force in greater Saint John.

Mr. Gaudet commented on the submitted report, reviewing key performance measurements for 2018, the three year economic development plan, and the work plan for 2019. The vision of the work plan is consistent long-term economic growth and alignment of economic development. The plan strives to make a positive impact on workforce development, entrepreneur development, business investment and innovation and marketing greater Saint John. The goal is to increase consumer confidence in the area by increasing the employment level, labour force, and GDP beyond that of the province of New Brunswick. Increased consumer confidence leads to increased quality of life and how people feel about the area in which they live and work.

There are many unfilled jobs in the City. It is not an issue of not having jobs in Saint John but having skill sets and people to fill those jobs. The target in 2019 is to fill 350 of these unfilled jobs. To date, 220 of those have been successfully filled. EDGSJ assists local companies by reviewing their hiring practices, matching people with jobs, and assisting to re-skill people to fill these vacant positions. A job database has recently been developed to match and recruit skill sets to unfilled jobs.

In response to a question, Mr. Gaudet stated that not enough is being done to positively market Saint John and surrounding areas.

Moved by Deputy Mayor McAlary, seconded by Councillor Armstrong:

RESOLVED that the presentation from Economic Development Greater Saint John, be received for information.

MOTION CARRIED.

1.2.2 Develop Saint John

(Mr. Irving, Mr. Carson, Ms. Comeau, Mr. Cyr, Mr. Power and Ms. Magee entered the meeting)

Mr. Power stated that the mission of Develop SJ is to increase the tax base by working together as a team with other agencies and people. A positive customer centred experience is fundamental. It is also necessary to have a common theme and a common vision to identify our value proposition and our brand.

Mr. Carson, referring to the submitted report, stated that three catalytic projects, identified as a new school in the Southern Peninsula, Fundy Quay site and Route 1 Interchange project, were selected in 2018 to drive growth and leverage private sector investment. Develop SJ is involved with 55 active projects with a potential tax base lift of \$463M. Not all of these projects will come to fruition but they are optimistic that a number of them will move forward.

Develop SJ assists developers through the process of securing funds, site acquisition and preparation, building permits, construction and other overcoming other challenges.

Moved by Deputy Mayor McAlary, seconded by Councillor Armstrong:

RESOLVED that the presentation from Develop Saint John, be received for information.

MOTION CARRIED.

1.3 Growth and Community Development Services – Customer Service Enhancements

Mr. Collin stated that the goal is to enhance good customer service into better customer service. The organization is being re-aligned to focus on the growth agenda. Growth and Community Development services are undertaking initiatives to enhance customer service and responsiveness to the client.

Ms. Hamilton, referring to the submitted presentation, commented on the customer service enhancement plan for 2019. Enhancing customer service is a key priority in an effort to drive tax base growth to ensure sustainability going forward. The One Stop Development Shop is a very powerful economic development tool and the goal is to improve that model to ensure a positive environment for developers. The plan for customer service focuses on three key areas which include fostering a customer centric culture; reducing barriers and incentivizing smart growth; and improving processes to reduce red tape.

Ms. Hamilton stated that the customer relationship is a key priority and the Project Champion program, in which point people are assigned to key projects, assists the developer in navigating the process, anticipate issues and develop solutions for positive outcomes.

Moved by Deputy Mayor McAlary, seconded by Councillor Armstrong:
RESOLVED that the Growth committee approve the following:

That the submitted report be received for information; the presentation be provided to Common Council at the meeting of March 25, 2019; that staff move forward with client engagement and deliver customer service enhancements that are responsive to client needs; and that regular updates be provided to the Growth Committee and Council at key milestones.

MOTION CARRIED.

1.4 Development Incentive Programming

Ms. Hamilton stated that improvements and reforms to the development incentive programs are being reviewed to enhance the suite of offerings.

1.4.1 Urban Development Incentive Pilot Program/Beautification Grant

Mr. Reid commented on the Urban Development Incentive Program and Beautification Program, outlining the recommended amendments to these policies. Referring to the submitted report, Mr. Reid reviewed some of improvements that occurred in the Southern Peninsula due to the incentive programs.

Minor amendments are being proposed to the Beautification Grant Policy such as extending eligibility to exterior painting of side yards under certain circumstances; improving administration of the program; and aligning the program with the Central Peninsula Neighbourhood Plan.

Referring to the Urban Development Incentive Program, Mr. Reid reviewed the program's performance and commented on the policy amendments and impact.

Moved by Deputy Mayor McAlary, seconded by Councillor Armstrong:
RESOLVED that the Growth Committee:

- Receive and file the Urban Development Incentive and Urban Beautification Pilot Program Evaluation (2016-2018) presentation;
- Adopt the amended Urban Beautification Grant policy and recommend for approval to Common Council;
- Authorize staff to proceed with amendments to the Urban Development Incentive Program for Common Council's consideration as outlined in the submitted report.

MOTION CARRIED.

1.4.2 Heritage Development Grant: Growth Reserve Fund Request

Ms. Poffenroth stated that the Heritage Development Board requested an increase of \$120K to their Heritage Grant program for total funding of \$200K. Staff is recommending an \$80K increase to the grant program.

Ms. Sampson stated that the Heritage Grant Program assists property owners with the maintenance and upgrades to their properties. The value of work linked to these projects such as return on investment, property value increases, and building permit fees on projects that otherwise may not have occurred, have contributed strongly to growth objectives.

The recommendation to increase the Heritage Grant budget by \$80K is based on two considerations:

- 55% of the budget has already been earmarked; it is expected that the entire budget will be allocated before peak application season
- Adding aluminum-clad wood windows to the list of ineligible materials; anticipated that the demand for reimbursement of these windows will be high

Staff recommends that the reimbursement of aluminum clad wood windows only be implemented with the approval of the \$80K increase to the grant budget as a one year test program. Staff is also proposing that this grant be made available to all heritage property owners, not just those with conservation plans, to provide access and opportunity to those buildings that would benefit most strongly.

Deputy Mayor McAlary expressed concern with the proposed increase, noting that it was not approved in the operating budget, and Council publicly stated that there was no extra money to support heritage grants.

Mr. Collin noted that there is currently over \$600K in the Growth Reserve Fund. The recommendation is to withdraw \$80K from this fund for the Heritage Grant program.

Moved by Councillor MacKenzie, seconded by Councillor Armstrong:

RESOLVED that the Growth Committee make the following recommendation to Common Council:

That Common Council authorize the transfer of a maximum of \$80,000 from the Growth Reserve Fund to increase the 2019 Heritage Grant Program operating budget; and that amendments to the Heritage Grant Program Policy as outlined in the submitted report be approved.

MOTION CARRIED with Deputy Mayor McAlary voting nay.

1.5 Vacant and Dangerous Buildings Program: Growth Reserve Fund Request

Moved by Councillor MacKenzie, seconded by Councillor Strowbridge:

RESOLVED that item 1.5 Vacant and Dangerous Buildings Program: Growth Reserve Fund Request, be deferred to the next Growth Committee meeting.

MOTION CARRIED.

Adjournment

Moved by Councillor MacKenzie, seconded by Councillor Strowbridge:

RESOLVED that the open session meeting of the Growth Committee be adjourned.

MOTION CARRIED.

The open session meeting of the Growth Committee held on March 21, 2019 was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Recording Secretary