



## **At Large Townhall Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, November 2, 2023, 7:02 p.m.**

**S.H. Blake Memorial Auditorium**

**Present:** Councillor Rajni Agarwal  
Councillor Mark Bentz  
Councillor Shelby Ch'ng  
Councillor Kasey Etreni

**1. At Large Town Hall Meeting 02-2023**

Chair: Councillor Shelby Ch'ng

**2. Resource Persons**

Katie Piché, Council & Committee Clerk

**3. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed those in attendance.

**4. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the At Large Town Hall meeting held on June 6, 2023, for information.

The Chair provided an overview relative to the above noted.

**5. Canada Games Complex Renovation Update**

Councillor Kasey Etreni provided an overview of the recent Canada Games Complex renovations. A PowerPoint presentation was held relative to the above noted.

The following highlights of the project are as follows:

- High Efficiency Boiler Plant Upgrade
- Direct Digital Control System
- Retro Commissioning
- Supply Fan Replacement
- Changeroom Renewals
- North Wall Reconstruction
- Mural artwork in front lobby (entitled Turtle Island)

It was noted that there are currently some line drainage issues that have come to light during the renovations, that are in the midst of being resolved.

The following questions were submitted prior to the Townhall meeting, relative to the renovations:

What were the total cost of the renovations? Councillor Etrene advised that the project cost is approximately \$3,000,000, with 80% of the project funded through the Federal Government's GICB (Green & Inclusive Community Building) Program.

When was the last time the Canada Games Complex had a large renovation and what was the cost at that time?

The Canada Games Complex has had many renovations over the years. The last major renovation was in 2018, when the women's members changeroom was created and the spa and sauna moved to the pool deck. The cost was approximately \$1,000,000.

## **6. Multi-Use Indoor Sports Facility & Tennis Centre Update**

Councillor Mark Bentz provided an overview relative to the background and timelines to date of the Multi-Use Indoor Sports Facility and advised that a report to Council will be coming forward on November 6, 2023 which will discuss the proposed financing strategy to support the subsequent procurement steps for Soccer Northwest Ontario's (SNO) proposal of a facility near the Community Auditorium.

An overview was provided regarding the questions that were submitted prior to the Townhall meeting relating to the proposed facility. The following items were discussed:

- Price a driving factor with community
- Must do this in economical way and must ensure that price is not excessive
- Discussion on design build concept (which could include operation and maintenance)
- Drive down price with partnership
- Private sponsorship
- Must be sustainable model
- Appropriate rate could be charged, which would help offset operational costs
- What is long term cost for community?
- Location - Auditorium site - Council has given direction on this site.
- Most Members of Council would like to see the facility built, but there are price tag limitations

Councillor Mark Bentz provided an update on the Thunder Bay Tennis Centre. The Thunder Bay Tennis Centre is seeking to develop a proposed indoor racquet sport facility to accommodate indoor tennis and pickleball on City park land northwest of their existing seasonal facility at Chapples Park. The proposed facility is an air supported structure to contain 6 new indoor courts of which 2 courts will accommodate pickleball during specific hours. An overview of the background and timelines to date was also provided.

## **7. Strong Mayor Legislation Update**

Councillor Ch'ng provided an overview relative to the Strong Mayors Legislation, including information on legislative changes to the Municipal Act, that give Ontario Mayors new tools to advance provincial priorities, including building 1.5 million new homes over the next ten years and the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. An overview of other strong mayor powers was provided, and also information on Mayor Boshcoff's decisions and directives to date.

Questions relating to building more homes faster, affordability of these homes, rental units and if developers will be selling the homes they build were asked. A discussion was held and the following responses were provided:

- The City of Thunder Bay is working with housing partners, home owners and developers and through the Building Homes Faster and Housing Accelerator funds, incentivizing them to build more units.
- The City's focus is to encourage infill opportunities for development that make use of existing infrastructure, utilities and available public services; as well as densification of residential uses such as 4 units on an urban lot. The HAF

program provides for bonus funding where affordable homes for purchase or rent are developed.

## **8. Homelessness Issues and Advocacy**

Councillor Ch'ng provided an overview relative to homelessness and the City's implementation of a human rights-based approach to responding to encampments.

Councillor Ch'ng also provided statistics that were provided by Elevate NWO regarding encampment numbers, frequency of clean ups, nursing staff and providing vaccinations.

## **9. Housing Accelerator Fund Update**

Councillor Rajni Agarwal provided an overview relative to the above noted, including information on the City of Thunder Bay's CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) application with associated timelines and background. The following was also discussed:

- affordable housing
- supply and demand
- rental builds
- new builds and retrofits
- growth trajectory
- capacity in Thunder Bay for new homes

## **10. City Budget**

Councillor Mark Bentz provided an overview relative to the upcoming 2024 City of Thunder Bay Proposed Budget schedule, including key budget dates. It was noted that the City Manager and City Treasurer continue their work to bring Council a budget in line with their direction of an increase of more than 5.5% (net of growth).

Discussion was held relative to infrastructure gap, reducing operating costs, and service impacts to public.

A short recess was held due to technical difficulties.

## 11. City & Community Issues

A question was asked relative to increasing the funding for the Thunder Bay Tennis Centre project due to inflation. Administration will follow up.

A question was asked relative to the Thunder Bay Tennis Centre's project, and the environmental aspects of the proposed structure and the City's Net Zero Strategy.

It was noted that as per Council direction, the funds have been committed to this project and contracts have been signed.

A question was asked relative to the previous term of Council's proposed indoor turf facility discussions and the private sector expressions of interest that were submitted with no open public debate on proposals. It was noted that, at that time, previous Council did not have interest in proceeding with the Expressions of Interest. The current indoor turf proposal discussions will be held at the November 6, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting.

A question was asked relative to the operations and management of the Thunder Bay Tennis Centre, accessibility concerns, staffing contracts and employee conduct. A discussion was held and Administration will follow up.

A question was asked relative to the City Manager performance review process. The Chair advised that all members of Council have the opportunity to provide input on the City Manager performance review.

A question was asked relative to the City's year-end audited and consolidated financial statements and quarterly variance reports. Administration will follow up.

A question was asked regarding if the City will debenture the proposed indoor turf facility (similar to the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre debenture). Administration will follow up.

A question was asked relative to the Building More Homes Faster and Housing Accelerator Funds that the City may receive. What if the City does not receive any funding? How will builders be incentivized?

It was noted that the provincial funds (Building More Homes Faster) are funds for the City to use to assist with, for example, additional administrative costs. The federal funds (HAF) would be used to incentivize the general public to build. Eligibility for incentives, DSSAB funding increase for transitional housing/affordable housing were also discussed.

A question was asked relative to the 2012 flood lawsuit between the City and their insurer and when it will go to trial. Administration will follow up.

A question was asked relative to the 2024 budget meeting schedule and it was noted that there are no deputation meetings scheduled during the 2024 budget deliberations (due to lack of participation in previous years). The Chair advised that this year, there will be a Question & Answer Information night for constituents to ask budget-related questions to Administration.

The Chair noted that Strong Mayor powers are now in effect and the budget process could potentially be changed in 2025, as per Mayoral direction.

## **12. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.