



Finance Committee

Date: Tuesday, January 17th, 2006

Place: Council Chambers
Richmond City Hall

Present: Councillor Evelina Halsey-Brandt, Chair
Councillor Linda Barnes (6:05 p.m.)
Councillor Cynthia Chen
Councillor Sue Halsey-Brandt
Councillor Rob Howard
Councillor Bill McNulty
Councillor Harold Steves
Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie

Absent: Councillor Derek Dang, Vice-Chair

Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

MINUTES

1. It was moved and seconded
That the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on Wednesday, December 21st, 2005 be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

The Chair explained to those in attendance, how the meeting would proceed.

2. **OPERATING BUDGET – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**
(Report: Jan. 6/06, File No.: 03-0970-01/2006-Vol 01) (REDMS No. 1732112)

It was moved and seconded
That the report (dated January 6th, 2006, from the Acting General Manager, Finance & Corporate Services), regarding the Operating Budget – A Historical Perspective, be received for information.

CARRIED

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3. **2006 OPERATING BUDGET REFERRALS**

(Report: Jan. 6/06, File No.: 03-0970-01) (REDMS No. 1732434)

A question was raised about the increase in E-Comm related expenses and whether this rate of increase was expected to continue in the future.

As a result of the discussion, staff were requested to provide to the next non-budget Finance Committee meeting, (a) a detailed report from staff and the City's representative to E-Comm, on the E-Comm situation, (b) a copy of the E-Comm Board's long term plan, and (c) copies of the initial reports and projections at the time the City made the decision to join E-Comm.

It was moved and seconded

That the report (dated January 6th, 2006, from the Acting General Manager, Finance & Corporate Services), regarding 2006 Operating Budget Referrals, be received for information.

CARRIED

4. **2006 OPERATING BUDGET (INCLUDING ADDITIONAL LEVELS)**

(Report: January 11th, 2006, File No.: 03-0970-20-01/2005-Vol 1) (REDMS No. 1734232)

The Chair advised that the Committee would first hear from delegations on issues relating to this report, prior to the Committee making any decisions.

Mr. Vince Miele, Chair, Richmond Committee on Disability (RCD), referred to a request for funding submitted by the Committee in August of 2005, and he then highlighted certain components of that document. A copy of the document is on file in the City Clerk's Office.

Discussion then ensued among Committee members and the delegation on:

- whether the 20% increase in rent had occurred over the past five years since the establishment of the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) or over one year, and whether this increase had been discussed with the landlord
- the need for additional space for the Centre
- whether the RCD had had any discussions with City staff about the need for a larger facility
- whether a business case had been completed to support the need for a larger facility
- the provision of funding for the DRC in the City's base level budget since 2004.

In response to questions, Mr. Miele advised that the additional level request of \$30,896 would provide funding in the amount of \$17,000 to offset the operating costs for the DRC, and that the remainder would be used to establish the RCD's proposed "Sensitivity Training" program.

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Mr. Kevin Brooks, the Accessibility Awareness Facilitator at the Disability Resource Centre, spoke about the Centre's 'Accessibility Awareness' program, and he provided information on improvements which had been made by local business owners to improve accessibility for the disabled.

Mr. Brooks also talked about the success of the "Access Richmond" website, and advised that the DRC was now considered a model for other people in the community and throughout the country, who wished to create similar programs. Mr. Brooks added that the Centre had been approached by several Richmond hotels to undertake accessibility and sensitivity training with their staff. He commented that the project had expanded far beyond the RCD's expectations, and suggested that the 'Accessibility Awareness' program offered many opportunities, especially with the upcoming 2010 Olympic Winter Games, to showcase Richmond as a place to visit for people with disabilities. In concluding his presentation, Mr. Brooks urged the Committee to allow the program to continue.

Discussion ensued briefly on the 'Accessibility Awareness' program and the information which was provided to the public.

Ms. Frances Clark, representing the Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society, referred to correspondence dated September 4th, 2005 in which a request was made for an additional \$7,000 to cover increased overhead costs, and to a further letter dated October 25th, 2006, in which a request was made for additional funding over and above the \$7,000 requested previously, for a total of \$23,400. She explained that the reason for the increase in funding was because the Society had been advised that the rent at the Twin Oaks riding facility would increase by \$16,400 annually, from \$40,000 to \$56,000.

Ms. Clark then spoke about the therapeutic riding program offered by the Society, advising that the number of children and youth participants in the program had increased; that there was still a waiting list in place even though participation had increased, and that the program had been expanded to include classes for students who wished to participate in competitive riding. She also talked about her own life and how she came to be so supportive of the riding program. In concluding her presentation, Ms. Clark urged the Committee to support the program and the parents who were working hard to 'make it happen'.

Ms. Alice Lawless, Co-Chair of the Parent Committee for the Therapeutic Equestrian Society, asked the Finance Committee to approve the additional funding required to continue with the Society's riding program. She talked about the positive impact which the program had had on children with disabilities, including her own daughter, who was afflicted with autism.

In response to a question from the Chair, information was provided that \$23,000 had been included in the base level budget for the Therapeutic Equestrian Society, and that the Society was seeking an additional \$23,400.

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Discussion then ensued among Committee members and the delegation on:

- the length of the waiting list and the number of youth and children waiting to participating in the riding program
- whether there were any other similar programs offered through British Columbia and how funding was provided for these programs
- the amount of funding being requested, and the total annual cost to operate the riding program
- how the Society would obtain the remaining funding required if the request to the City for additional funding was approved
- the rent increase faced by the Society and whether this increase was for one year or longer
- the cost of enrolling a child in the riding program, in comparison to the overall operating expenses for the Society
- whether the rent increase would continue on an annual basis

During the discussion Ms. Clark talked about the substantial increases in rent faced by both the Disability Resource Centre and the Therapeutic Equestrian Society. She stated that both groups were endeavouring to raise funds but without the support of the City, the groups ran the risk of losing their programs.

Reference was made to the number of students enrolled in the riding program and to the number of students on the waiting list, and in response to questions, advice was given that the Society only had five horses, which restricted the membership, and that to increase the number of horses would result in even higher operating costs.

Ms. Olive Bassett, Chair of the Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee, accompanied by Ms. Georgina Hamilton, President of the Richmond Seniors Society, voiced support for the 'Seniors Wellness Coordinator' position, and she urged the Committee to put the funding for this position in the City's base level budget. She noted that this position took into consideration the wellness of all Richmond seniors, and stated that the position should be a fulltime permanent position, instead of only two days per week.

Discussion ensued among Committee members, the delegation and staff on:

- the history of the position
- the approximate annual cost of a fulltime position
- whether the funding request submitted had been for a part-time or fulltime position
- whether two days per week was sufficient because wellness programs were now being offered at all the City's community centres with the same staff and the same two days per week, and the belief of the Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee that the position should be a regular fulltime position

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- whether there were other resources in the City which levered other activities at other centres.

The Chair thanked the delegations for their presentations.

Discussion then ensued among Committee members and staff on the 2006 additional level requests, with the Chair reviewing the options which were available to the Committee.

As a result of the discussion, the following **amended** motion was introduced:

It was moved and seconded

That the 2006 Operating Budget be approved, based on Option 4, which would (i) result in a 2.01% increase to maintain existing service levels, (ii) add an additional 1.00% contribution to reserve accounts for infrastructure replacements, and (iii) add an additional 0.89% for the additional levels recommended by TAG; and with the addition of funding for:

- (1) *the Richmond Committee on Disability, in the amount of \$30,896;*
- (2) *the Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society, in the amount of \$23,400; and*
- (3) *the 'Seniors Wellness Coordinator' position, in the amount of \$32,900,*

which would result in an additional tax increase of .08%, for a total tax increase of 3.98%.

The question on the motion was not called, as the following **amendment** was introduced:

It was moved and seconded

That the 'Seniors Wellness Coordinator' position be made a regular fulltime position at an annual cost of \$51,500, and that the position be put into the City's base level budget.

The question on the motion was not called, as comments were made about the need for an analysis of the position to be undertaken by staff prior to making a decision on whether the position should be full or part-time.

The question on the motion was called, and it was **DEFEATED** with Mayor Brodie, and Cllrs. Barnes, Chen, E. Halsey-Brandt and Steves opposed.

Discussion then continued on the main motion, with staff members providing information to Committee on the following additional level requests:

- the 'Parks Ranger – Partner Program'
- the RCMP – Crime Watch Honorarium
- the RCMP – Volunteer Honorarium
- the RCMP – Auxiliary Constable Coordinator.

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Reference was made to the RCMP additional level requests, and discussion took place on the requests in relation to community safety, and as a result, the following **amendment** was introduced:

It was moved and seconded

That the RCMP complement and civilian work force be increased as follows:

- (1) the two officer positions within the additional levels budget; and*
- (2) up to a maximum of five additional officers, as well as:*
 - (a) RCMP – Crime Watch Honorarium;*
 - (b) RCMP – Auxiliary Constable Coordinator; and*
 - (c) RCMP – Volunteer Honorarium;*

subject to the cost of funding these positions being available through complement gapping in excess of eight positions.

The question on the motion was not called, as considerable discussion ensued on the rationale for requiring two additional officers when the Detachment had provided policing services with less than the actual complement for a number of years; the feasibility of funding the positions through complement gapping; the impact to the current budget; the impact to the City in the future in the event that the RCMP achieved a 100% work force; the rationale of TAG to recommend the approval of two additional officers; and the feasibility of increasing the 'cushion' from eight to ten officers.

The question on the motion was then called, and it was **DEFEATED** with Mayor Brodie, and Cllrs. Barnes, Chen, E. Halsey-Brandt, S. Halsey-Brandt, McNulty, and Steves opposed.

Discussion continued on the main motion, and in particular on:

- the requests of the Richmond Committee on Disability, the Therapeutic Equestrian Society for additional funding, and the 'Seniors Wellness Coordinator' position
- the impact to the City if the additional level request 'Legal Services' was not approved
- the RCMP – Crime Watch Program and the rationale for the request of \$5,000
- the Curator – Art Gallery, and whether this position could be part-time
- the number of positions which were responsible for undertaking fire prevention inspections.

The Chair talked about the feasibility of not contributing 1.00% to the City's reserve accounts for 2006, and discussion ensued among Committee members and staff on the impact to the City if the contribution did not take place.

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The question on the main motion was then called, and it was **CARRIED** with Cllr. Evelina Halsey-Brandt opposed.

It was moved and seconded

- (1) *That staff review the 'Seniors Wellness Coordinator' position, and report to Council, through Committee, on the needs, etc., in relation to the position, and on whether a fulltime or part-time position was required; and*
- (2) *That the funding set aside for the Emergency Response Team not be expended until the Community Safety Committee referrals relating to the Emergency Response Team, were reviewed by the Committee and approved.*

CARRIED

It was moved and seconded

That staff report to the Community Safety Committee on the request for a Fire Prevention Officer, and the duties and expectations which would be required when inspections were undertaken.

CARRIED

It was moved and seconded

That staff report to the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee with a business case for the 'Curator – Art Gallery' position.

CARRIED

It was moved and seconded

That staff examine whether or not the Tree Protection Bylaw could be funded on an interim basis for two years with unappropriated revenue from the gaming reserves, and determine whether or not two on-staff arborists and a clerk would be necessary; and further, that the funding of \$250,000 for the Tree Protection Bylaw within the 2006 base budget be set aside until such time as staff have had the opportunity to consider with alternate methods of dealing with this bylaw.

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded

That the meeting adjourn (9:10 p.m.).

CARRIED

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Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Select Committee of the Council of the City of Richmond held on Tuesday, January 17th, 2006.

Councillor Evelina Halsey-Brandt
Chair

Fran J. Ashton
Executive Assistant, City Clerk's Office