
The 2016 Business Plan and Budget Process – Public Engagement

Recommendations

1. That the Executive Committee hold a special Town Hall, public engagement meeting, as described in this report;
2. That this meeting be held on either Monday June 15, 2015, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. or Wednesday, June 17, 2015, from 6:30-9:00 p.m., at an off-site location.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline a proposed public engagement plan for the 2016 Business Plan and Budget. More specifically, the Administration is proposing that a Budget “Town Hall” meeting be held either on Monday, June 15, 2015, or Wednesday, June 17, 2015, so that City Council and the Administration can obtain public input early in the budget process.

The goal is to create a more integrated, transparent, and accountable process that will help City Council and the Administration make more informed decisions on how best to allocate resources to the proposed projects, programs, and services in the 2016 Business Plan and Budget.

Report Highlights

1. Community input into the 2016 Business Plan and Budget is a key driver of the process.
2. A June public engagement, Town Hall meeting would provide an excellent opportunity for the public to interact with City Council and provide input into the 2016 Business Plan and Budget.

Strategic Goal

The information contained in this report aligns with all of the City’s Strategic Goals because the Business Plan and Budget process impacts all seven goals.

Background

At its April 20, 2015, meeting, Executive Committee considered a report from the City Manager outlining a five-phased approach to the 2016 Business Plan and Budget.

The report noted that the Administration was proposing to develop extensive communication and public engagement plans to give the public, stakeholders, and City Council ways in which to participate throughout the budget process.

The Administration committed to Executive Committee that it would provide more details and some recommendations to the Committee at its next meeting about some public

engagement opportunities that would allow participation from the public and members of City Council, if they so choose.

Report

Community Input into Business Plan and Budget Process:

Following City Council's 2015 Business Plan and Budget deliberations in December 2014, members of City Council and the City Manager discussed the possibility of implementing a new approach to the City of Saskatoon's (City) Business Plan and Budget Process. The Administration conducted some best practice research to determine the approach other major Canadian cities have taken with respect to their budgeting process. One common theme that emerged from this research is that many cities have implemented very extensive public engagement opportunities to generate interest and participation from the public.

Although the City of Saskatoon's process has been evolving and improving in very incremental steps since 2010, the Administration found Saskatoon's process is lacking in three key areas – transparency, engagement, and technology. For example, in building previous Business Plans and Budgets, the City of Saskatoon has not included an extensive public engagement process that generates both interest and input from the public early on in the process. Essentially, the City has relied on the Civic Services Survey and focused stakeholder meetings or feedback to develop its Business Plan and Budget, and then City Council would often receive public input once the City's Business Plan and Budget is tabled.

As a result, the Administration is proposing to change the process to prepare the 2016 Business Plan and Budget by ensuring that it:

- is open and transparent so that City Council and the public have the necessary information to provide input;
- includes public engagement and consultation; and
- uses digital tools and web-based applications to make the process more interactive.

The process will also include an education process so as to create a better public understanding of the factors and constraints that the City needs to consider in preparing the Business Plan and Budget. More details on the components of the Business Plan and Budget process are provided in Attachment 1.

June Public Engagement:

At its April 20, 2015, meeting, the Executive Committee considered a report from the City Manager that outlined the 2016 Business Plan and Budget process. That report suggested that the Administration would provide Executive Committee with more details on a public engagement meeting to be held in June 2015.

In follow-up to this commitment, the Administration has considered options that attempt to provide a meaningful opportunity for City Council to engage with the community in a public format. The primary goals of this engagement opportunity are to:

- create public confidence by opening the doors of City Hall and inviting the public to learn more about how the City prepares its budget; and
- obtain the public's input about spending priorities and our future investments so City Council and the Administration can consider what matters most to residents in 2016.

To accomplish these goals, the Administration is recommending a unique opportunity for the public and City Council to discuss the 2016 Budget process in a less formal, more inviting atmosphere. The following format will provide citizens with the opportunity to learn about the budget and to provide input either in person, online, using social media or regular mail:

- Town Hall hosted on Monday, June 15, 2015, or Wednesday, June 17, 2015, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. held at an off-site location.
- Presentation of results from the 2015 Annual Civic Satisfaction Survey where a representative sample of Saskatoon residents will have been polled for their opinions on the same topic (spending priorities).
- Interactive opportunity for the public to provide input on four questions:
 - Should we be spending more, less, or about the same on a variety of services?
 - What are your top three priorities?
 - What are your top three concerns?
 - What are your top three items you feel City Council and the Administration need to consider during the early stages of the Business and Budget Planning process?
- Question and Answer Period – An opportunity for the public to ask their City Councillor about the 2016 Business Plan and Budget. The facilitator would moderate the discussion to ensure there is a variety of questions, answers, respondents, etc. The public would be able to provide their questions in advance via email, submit them live on Twitter (and potentially Facebook), or handwrite them with assigned staff collecting them right at the Town Hall meeting. This would ensure as much inclusiveness as possible.
- Community and Business Leaders, and Individual Thoughts – An online opportunity could be created for Community and Business Leaders and the public to provide input on the four questions listed above. Time could be allocated to summarize the feedback submitted online prior to the Town Hall meeting. If time doesn't permit, this information can still be shared on the website.
- Video streaming of the public engagement meeting on the City's website (or alternate website if required) to enable those not attending the meeting in person to follow the discussion.

Additional opportunities would be available to the public to participate in the same questions throughout the month of June. The current opportunities the Administration is looking to incorporate may include:

- Keeping it Digital – Including a link to the survey questions on Shaping Saskatoon and saskatoon.ca.

- Taking it on the Road – Staff conducting intercept surveys at a variety of our City leisure centres and libraries.
- Keeping it Simple – Simple interactive display panels so people can participate in a simple dotting exercise one or more of the questions found online. For example, the lobby of City Hall could provide visitors with an opportunity to participate, and at the same time see the perspective of other citizens participating.

Options to the Recommendation

Option 1 – Host in Council Chambers

- June 15, 2015, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
- Executive Committee begins at 1:00 p.m. and must end by 6:00 p.m. but consideration could be given to extending the regular meeting to accommodate a public component dedicated to the 2016 Corporate Business Plan and Budget.
- Live video stream available to the public.
- The format and agenda would be subject to the same rules of a regular Executive Committee meeting. As a result, the format would be based on an Administrative Report to Executive Committee on the 2016 Corporate Business Plan and Budget centered around the issues and challenges facing the City (i.e. revenue challenges, costs, existing commitments, etc.).
- The format would allow for written submissions, speakers scheduled in advance and questions from Executive Committee to the Administration.
- This format would not include an interactive engagement opportunity with an external facilitator.
- Estimated Cost – The Administration estimates that this option would have no significant costs other than staff time.

Option 2 – Town Hall meeting with more online and real-time input

This option would be similar to the recommended format, but it would have added online and real-time features with more interactive components to engage the public:

- Town Hall Meeting Format
- Public invited to attend in person but there is a virtual twist so people can choose to participate in the comfort of their own home.
 - Interactive Engagement with Live Results on the spending priorities where people attending in person or at home access their Smart Phone or another electronic device to feed into the live results. Depending on the available time, the results of those participating live could be displayed beside the preliminary results of those who participated in the Civic Services Survey to identify variances.
- Estimated Cost – The Administration estimates that this option would cost approximately \$35,000.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

The 2016 Business Plan and Budget will include a variety of public and stakeholder engagement opportunities in five major project phases (Attachment 1).

This report focuses on the first two phases which are Education and Engagement.

The engagement opportunities outlined in this report offer a variety of ways to participate depending on an individual's available time and interest:

- Time Sensitive – opportunities for those who have limited time but are willing to invest 5-15 minutes (e.g. short telephone, online, or in-person/intercept surveys).
- Interested and Busy – opportunities for those who have limited time but are willing to invest 15-30 minutes (e.g. social media chats and budget information sessions).
- Interested and Invested – opportunities for those who are interested and able to invest more than 30 minutes time (e.g. in person and/or virtual public meetings).

Communication Plan

A communication and engagement plan has been prepared for the 2016 Business Plan and Budget. The goal is to inform citizens of the budgeting process, and to provide an opportunity for citizens to give their input into the budget, well in advance of City Council approval.

The June Town Hall meetings and other engagement opportunities would be promoted through news media, website advertising on saskatoon.ca and Shaping Saskatoon, social media posting on Twitter and Facebook, City Page advertisement, ads to various organizations and community groups (Community Associations, business leaders, etc.), posters at the leisure facilities and libraries, etc. Electronic artwork and social media messages would be provided to the Mayor and City Councillors to share with their constituents.

Financial Implications

The estimated cost for the proposed engagement strategy is approximately \$15,000.

The project may be funded through the City Manager's Project Reserve Fund, which has sufficient funding to cover this expenditure.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, environmental, Privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

The results of all public engagement activities for the 2016 Business Plan and Budget will be compiled and shared with the Executive Committee prior to the tabling of the 2016 Business Plan and Budget on October 19, 2015.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachment

1. The Business Plan and Budget Process (May 19, 2015)

Report Approval

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