

Sub-Item 4

Memo to: St. Catharines finance committee

Dear Councillors:

One of the main jobs of city council is to approve expenditures. Sometimes these are minor and the process's and agony required to make a decision take a lot of time. Sometimes they are voted on and we end up with inter-ward jealousies or some other extraneous issues which may cloud a decision.

As citizens we constantly observe that the city has lots of money for those things that they see as priorities but the citizens in the wards and their local experience is not always one of them and as a community we often have to go begging for the most mundane things.

I would like to propose an experiment for budget purposes. Let's take some of these minor expenses off of the city council table and empower our councillors to decide what is best for their ward. I would like to propose that each ward be given a fixed amount annually from the public purse that can be used inside the ward without having to go to council for approval. This makes for an equal footing for each ward and could streamline your agendas and yet be more responsive to public needs.

Let's start with 15,000 per ward annually which can be spent without strings attached as long as it is in accordance with a clear mandate, all the while encouraging the councillors to leverage additional matching funds from the community. The two ward councillors would be able to decide on their own, provided they mutually agree, they know their own communities better than anyone. They would be ultimately be responsible for justifying the expenditure to their constituents.

It could be spent on local cultural events, beautification, and placement of a park bench, a historical marker or even small repairs to existing public amenities. Councillors would have to navigate the issue via staff to obtain the go ahead for quality purposes but not approval. . Each ward could spend it as they see fit within the mandate outlined.

Having to ask for 60 dollars for a flower pot is a waste of council's time, the total amount is fixed anyway, when it's gone it's gone.

I think this might speed things up and allow each community to experiment a bit and take some things off of your agenda. In the scheme of things this is a minor amount. It could be reviewed in year's time to see how it has worked. We need to be more innovative if we are going to be more efficient.

Sincerely

Hank Beekhuis

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