

Mayor's select Committee for Community Safety

I would like the committee to review where we are at and what we have achieved so far in the Committee. There are several topics that have been tabled and are awaiting "information" to come back from Administration.

One of those topics is the downtown video camera initiative that was taken on by the DBIA and the Chamber of Commerce, yes this was accepted by those parties, but it still crossed our committee table and as such I feel, us as a committee, need to keep and or maintain a progress report on that initiative. Where is it at what progress has been made, have the funds been received, it's still in our wheel house as involving downtown safety, so we have a responsibility to keep up to speed with its progress and any hold-ups that may be preventing this from launching on a test bed basis.

Another topic is the downtown security patrols and the costs of said project, the report submitted to us was, in my opinion, not a comprehensive report and lacked the details needed to truly consider it as an option worthy of further investigation. It was almost dismissed as an additional cost to be downloaded onto the businesses requiring this additional support. Again without further information and further discussion we are left wondering where this is at in our work plan.

Bylaws and the buildings downtown and the condition of properties, be them vacant lots or shuttered buildings, this is a concern in keeping with the broken windows theory. We need to have a hearty discussion about what measures the city is taking with specific properties that pose a risk to public safety. Lipstick and mascara is not going to address the visual and safety issues of the downtown. These are magnets for break-ins and vandalism and we don't want to see a repeat of the occurrence on 3rd and Dominion (building explosion). The City doesn't need to bore the cost of the cleanup of these sites, it's the land owners or developers that need to be held accountable for their specific project and its effect on the surrounding businesses and the visual depression of the downtown as a whole.

Where are we at with the discussions with the Province for the assistance in regards to our folks suffering mental health and addiction issues? Have we any further information in regards to using the former YDC and converting it to a treatment facility capable of housing those directed by the courts to mental health and addictions treatment? In recent weeks we have an influx of additional folks who have not been seen in our downtown core before, clearly these are new arrivals to the City. Where are we sitting in regards to housing and supports for these folks who have come here looking for those services?

Two weeks ago I witnessed an individual who is known by police and the business community, dump cardboard boxes in the alleyway between Quebec and Dominion between 3rd and 4th Aves. He just didn't dump the boxes out of his cart and walk away, he set the bundle on fire, then walked away. I canvassed my neighboring businesses and secured video of his actions, this was submitted to the police and I will be following through with supporting charges of arson.

I would like to ask my fellow committee members to consider and remember we were tasked with the responsibility to look at, and table options and alternatives, to improve the downtown and community safety as a whole. As tax payers, we have all seen the increased costs we bare as residents of the City, we are also being watched by our community, who are looking to us for some solutions to the ongoing and increasing issues with safety and crime in the community.

I would like to suggest we do a recap of where we are at and what is still pending as far as updates for Administration on many of the topics we have covered so far as a committee. We all mutually want to see what's best for the City, but we also need to be mindful of who is responsible for the issues, those parties need to be held to account and we need to ensure that our resources are being best used to address those issues. Those resources being Police, Fire Rescue, Bylaws and the other Provincial agencies tasked with addressing the social and health care issues facing our City.

So moving forward if we can review the topics I have listed here and get updates on the progress Administration is making in responding to the request(s) for information, which would be of great assistance to us.

Respectfully submitted,

John Zukowski, Public Committee member