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NEWS LOCAL

Hollingsworth wants finance committee expanded

By Elaine Della-Mattia, Sault Star

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Sandra Hollingsworth

Sandra Hollingsworth wants to grow the finance committee's role to ensure that the city is meeting its long term strategic financial goals.

But the move to expand the terms of reference for the committee won't put the decision making process into the hands of a select few, she said.

Instead, her goal is to better allow city staff and the committee to work together to ensure that city hall is running efficiently, all potential revenue generating ideas are explored and all cost saving measures are implemented.

"We are trying to make city hall more efficient and we have updated a number of policies and our budget process to do that and I believe this is a natural next step," Hollingsworth said. "I think that at this time, it makes perfect sense to look at the finance committee and the terms of reference and make sure that they are more than an audit committee."

"This is a common practice in the business world and it should be a priority at city hall," Hollingsworth said.

Currently, councillors Matthew Shoemaker, Marchy Bruni and Rick Niro sit on the finance committee. Mayor Christian Provenzano and city CAO Al Horsman serve as ex-officio. Treasurer Shelley Schell and manager of audits and capital planning Jacob Bruzas serve as city staff resources.

Similar ideas about charging the committee with initial budget reviews and recommendations and expanding terms of reference have been raised in the past but defeated by city council.

Several years ago a similar motion to update the finance committee's terms of reference failed, mainly because members of council feared that city council would lose control on setting the city's budget.

"That couldn't be further from the truth or where I want to see this go," Hollingsworth said.

"We need to create a business atmosphere and the (current) terms of reference are too narrow in scope to do that," she said.

City clerk Malcolm White said that if the role of the committee changes too much, it could in effect become a standing committee – something many municipalities are trending against.

At one time standing committees grouped corporate operations into various areas where members 'specialized' in those areas, conducting the reviews, legwork and debate on the majority of items before bringing recommendations back to a full council for final approval.

The problem, White said, is with issues that creates a divergence of opinion, the debate is usually held twice – at the committee level and at a full council meeting – creating greater bureaucracy and repetition of arguments.

"In the past, the apprehension has been that if you start expanding guidelines then in effect, you can create a standing committee and that begs the question 'is that what council really wants?'" White said.

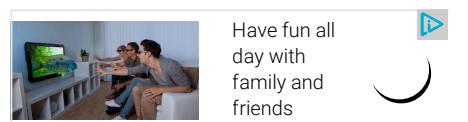
Hollingsworth said transparency in the process is important. Quarterly budget updates are being presented to council in the public forum and something she'd like to see expanded to even greater frequency.

The city is responsible to ensure that the fundamentals of effective financial management are practiced and upheld and Hollingsworth believes revising the terms of reference for the finance committee can improve those principles.

City staff have been asked to revise the terms of reference to consider developing and implementing the city's long-term strategic financial plan, setting budget policy and budget monitoring and setting tax policies. It should also examine reviewing revenue and expenditures and comparing them to budget projections and work with staff to make final budget recommendations.

"We are responsible with what we are spending. It's not that I don't have faith in our staff, because I do, but I think we can work a little more closely with them to uphold council's responsibilities and explore new ideas and options," she said.

Schell said it's premature to speculate what, if any recommendations will be made to council on the terms of reference. Research for the report has not yet begun.



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This Week's Flyers

The image features the RONA logo at the top left. Below it is a large blue rectangular banner with white text. The banner reads "4 DAYS ONLY" in large letters, followed by "THURSDAY TO SUNDAY, MARCH 9 TO 12" and "BUY ONE AND GET ONE FREE" in smaller letters. To the left of the banner are three cans of SICO paint: a black can labeled "Collection", a green can labeled "ECO RECYCLED PAINT", and a blue can labeled "SICO". Below the banner is a large white word "FREE". At the bottom center is the text "HOVER FOR FLYER".

The image shows a Home Depot flyer with a white background. At the top left, there's a large orange 'HOME DEPOT' logo with 'SAVING' written above it. The main headline 'POWER UP FOR GREAT DEALS' is in bold black letters at the top center. Below the headline, there are several product categories with their respective prices:

- A cordless drill with a red case is labeled '\$299'.
- A circular saw is labeled '\$799'.
- A ladder is labeled '\$149'.
- A portable generator is labeled '\$149'.
- A step ladder is labeled '\$34'.
- A two-tier shelving unit is labeled '\$149'.
- A large tubular shelving unit is labeled '\$43'.
- A small shelving unit is labeled '\$49'.
- A toilet tank is labeled '\$49'.
- A sink is labeled '\$49'.
- A faucet is labeled '\$49'.

There are also sections for 'FREE BATTERIES & CHARGER' and 'FREE TOOLS'. A 'HARVEY' logo is visible near the bottom left. The bottom of the page features a large 'HOVER FOR FLYER' callout with a cursor icon pointing towards the text.