



NEWS LOCAL

Council wants more info for project ideas, costs

By Elaine Della-Mattia, Sault Star

Monday, September 11, 2017 9:18:05 EDT PM



A blueprint of various projects that need to be – or could be – incorporated into the city's 2018 capital budget

was presented to council Monday.

And council returned the draft back to staff with a number of suggestions, requests for reports and opinion on the ranking system.

The report, approved by council as information, will be 'tweaked' and various reports will be completed as they requested, said Shelley Schel chief financial officer, following the council meeting.

"I've taken some notes on the various topics they discussed and we'll come back with the reports they requested and then after that fit them into the priority list," she said.

A final capital prioritization list is expected to be presented to city council on Oct. 23 and final approval of the 2018 budget is set for Dec. 4.

"This is a new process and it's going to take time," Schell said.

The corporate capital prioritization process is designed to prioritize the city's capital needs and develop a ranking system as to where its limited resources should be spent annually.

City staff have developed a two-page list and used specific criteria to rank the projects in the order they feel appropriate.

Ward 3 Coun. Matthew Shoemaker questioned the importance of paying for a new ice resurfacer at the cost of \$112,000. City staff argued it can be shared by all the arenas and used where needed.

He also wanted to see an \$8,000 electronic voting system – currently ranked as the lowest of the items – moved up the list in order to increase accountability and transparency of city council.

Ward 6 Coun. Ozzie Grandinetti wanted to know why public works and transportation staff need new hands-free radios in their vehicles at the cost of \$115,000.

He also questioned why the city would pay \$185,000 for an engineering report on developing a park at the east end of the Gateway site when Environmental Assessment has already been done and a park is likely not an option to be funded right now anyways.

However a few councillors agreed they wanted to see the true costs of establishing a land fountain to replace the Millennium Fountain that was eliminated last year.

Ward 2 Coun. Susan Myers and Ward 1 Coun. Steve Butland agreed that they believe the public want to see something erected at Clergue Park and that item – listed at \$450,000 – should be placed higher on the priority list.

"I think we can find an acceptable, respectable fountain at a decent cost and I'd like to see more work done on this to see what the true costs are," Myers said.

She suggested reducing a \$650,000 request for a new snow dump in half and using the other half of the money for a fountain.

Ward 1 Coun. Paul Christian cautioned that council shouldn't be coming forward with their own ideas on priorities but should accept staff's expertise.

"It's up to staff to put out these recommendations and it's up to us to put the final stamp on it," he said.

Mayor Christian Provenzano also weighed in on the discussion.

He said projects that are not ready to move forward shouldn't be put on the list.

He wants to see a phased-in approach to replace the trees on Queen Street that have been affected by the emerald ash borer disease.

The projected \$3.5 million cost has been ranked as a 20th priority and Provenzano said a multi-year plan might see that line item completed a little more quickly.

City staff prioritized various projects according to a matrix that included legislated or mandates required by law, including health and safety items. A focus was also given to maintain the city's assets and extend their life.

Other considerations included service enhancement and growth, considering the need to increase infrastructure capacity to meet deficiencies in service, attract new economies and improve quality of life.

Department leaders also considered whether the projects are grant eligible, are an essential mandated service or part of the city's strategic plan.

The process is designed to give council a more active role in deciding how taxpayer money is spent, but determining the needs first and then finding ways to fund the budget.

A separate list was provided with capital road and sewer work projects for 2018, which were also approved by city council.

The 2018 road work program includes the second phase of the McNabb/Pim stormwater improvement plan, designed to replace and upsize a trunk storm sewer from poplar Park north through easements to the north side of McNabb Street.

The work also includes full reconstruction of Simpson Street from Queen to Wellington Street, and Bruce Street from Queen to Wellington Street.

It's anticipated that application will be made under the Connecting Link funding program for the widening of Black Road between McNabb and Second Line. The application was rejected by the province last year.

That will also pave the way for a reconstruction of Black Road from Second Line to Third Line in a future year. The Environmental Assessment recommends a road widening and wide pave shoulders for active transportation, a report to council states.

City staff also recommend that the Fort Creek Aqueduct (phase six and seven) be completed in 2018.

Various road surfacing projects will also be included on the list, including Bay Street from Andrew to Pim Street.

While council was only presented with a one year plan, Schell said that in future years, longer term forecasts will be added to help budget for multi-years. Various master plans, their priorities and strategies will be incorporated into the larger plan, creating a true corporate capital budg instead of smaller individual departmental budgets.

This Week's Flyers



HOVER FOR FLYER





HOVER FOR FLYER

