

# Council reaches its boiling point

By **Craig Huckery** - May 9, 2017



City council approved a motion Monday night that asks each major department at city hall to prepare a preliminary budget with no increase in costs for 2017, but it came with heated debate.

The motion put forth by Ward 3 councillor Matthew Shoemaker and seconded by Ward 4 councillor Rick Niro was narrowly approved with a vote of 6-5.



Shoemaker insisted that now is the time in light of the hardship created by Essar Steel Algoma's unpaid tax bill of \$26 million. Shoemaker said its prudent to get the number crunching done so council will have ample time to make a decision come budget deliberations in the fall.

The Mayor questioned the motion saying he believes the city departments are already doing what is being proposed. "the proper time for me is the fall and winter"

During comments, Ward 5 councillor Frank Fata , who supported the motion, complained that the council has become too complacent. Fata believes the current council is not doing enough. That comment didn't sit well with Mayor Christian Provenzano. "it is a real disservice to the community at large, to the people out there to say this body is complacent" The mayor shot back, "I think your characterization is completely inaccurate Councillor Fata and I think it's just simple grand standing"

Provenzano pointed out the difficult decisions this council has made in the last year including child care and the fire realignment.

Shoemaker took offence to comments from Ward 1 councillor Steve Butland. Butland called for a moratorium on Shoemaker's motions (now totaling 81)

"To me I think councillor Butland is talking out of both sides of his mouth" Shoemaker said.

"This gives our staff the time over the course of the year to prepare these options, so come November when they provide us a preliminary budget and we can see what might be on the list"

Shoemaker then made it clear that he has no intention of not bringing forth motions and accused some council members that they vote against them because Shoemaker has brought so many to the table. , "I have 81 so far and I'll bring another 5 next week and if these councillors want to vote against them, just because there's lots, well they can do that, but they have to respond to their constituents" Shoemaker fought back, "it appears to me that people around this table would rather look at a huge tax increase than to direct staff to being in a 1 percent budget decrease"

"I think it would be appropriate if we don't through jabs at each other" Ward 5 councillor Marshy Bruni said referring to Shoemaker's comments.

"We're all here to work as a team, personally I would like to see an apology from councillor Shoemaker to councillor Butland" Bruni said. "I think it's disrespectful ,I don't think we should be calling each other names, I don't think he should be saying things like that, especially to a statesman with the experience that councillor Butland has"

After a few more minutes of back and forth comments, council voted in favour of Shoemaker's motion, including Marchy Bruni. Those against included Provenzano, Butland, Christian, Myers and Lou Turco. Both Ward 6 councillors , Ross Ramano and Joe Krmpotich are in a leave of absence due to both of them running in the Sault Ste. Marie Provincial by-election.

#### **Craig Huckerby**

Craig Huckerby is a seasoned broadcast and media professional with over 35 years in local media. Starting in television, Craig became known as "the weather guy" on local television before pioneering internet media in the Sault. Craig is credited for bringing local television back to the Sault via the internet in 2003 with LTVNEWS.COM and was instrumental in launching SooNews.ca and Local2.ca. Craig is happy to be part of the Sault's newest media team and website, SaultOnline.com

