

Windsor, Ontario November 18, 2009

A meeting of the **Small Business Advisory Panel** is held this day commencing at 3:00 o'clock p.m. in the Town of Walkerville Meeting Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall, there being present the following members:

Dr. Alfie Morgan, Chair
Councillor Alan Halberstadt
Don Larkin
James Marsh
John Millson
Charlie Regan
Jim Williams

Regrets received from:

Vicky Smith

Guest in attendance:

Sabrina DeMarco, Manager of Small Business Development, Windsor-Essex Development Commission

Also present are the following resource personnel:

Jim Boscariol, Manager of Inspections, Building Department
Michael Chantler, Manager of Business Administration, Licensing & Enforcement
Anna Ciacelli, Council Secretariat
Rose MacLachlan, Business Improvement Area Development Officer
Karen Kadour, Committee Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 3:09 o'clock p.m. and the Committee considers the Agenda being Schedule "A" **attached** hereto, matters which are dealt with as follows:

2. MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Halberstadt, seconded by D. Larkin,
That the minutes of the meeting held October 28, 2009 **BE ADOPTED** as presented.

Carried.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT**

None.

5. **BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

5.1 **Small Business Advisory Panel Subcommittee Report**

Councillor Halberstadt distributes the “City of Windsor Small Business Advisory Panel – Presentation to City of Windsor Council”, **attached** as Appendix “A”. He provides an overview of the document including the following recommendations:

- Bring Windsor’s ratios in line with BMA average for similar municipalities with over 100,000 people
- 1.845 is the commercial ratio average
- Consider providing phased in tax relief to the sectors of the economy that are in dire need of assistance
- Given the change in the status of the local economy, Windsor small businesses need the assistance of the city to lower their tax ratios
- In the end it will be a “win-win” situation. More occupied buildings will stimulate the local economy and allow Windsor to compete.

Councillor Halberstadt advises that the City of London offers tax deferrals to individuals that re-use vacant buildings and he suggests that the City of Windsor adopt the same policy. He notes that the City of Windsor currently charges a 15% penalty to those who are delinquent in their tax payments.

The Chair recommends that a three page report be prepared for City Council that includes best practices of other municipalites relating to small businesses and subsequent tax issues.

The report of the Deputy Treasurer – Taxation and Revenue and the Manager of Treasury and Cash Management dated October 7, 2009 entitled “Property Tax Collection – Guiding Principles and Tax Sales” is **attached** as Appendix “B”.

D. Larkin volunteers to sit on the Small Business Advisory Panel Subcommittee. .

The Chair recommends that the following three reports be provided for City Council:

1. Report regarding incentives (including other cities best practices)
2. Report regarding tax arrears
3. Report regarding tax reduction

Councillor Halberstadt suggests that a letter be sent to the Mayor and Members of Council requesting a research assistant to champion small business issues and to market incentives.

4. **PRESENTATION**

As Mr. Patrick P. Persichilli, Vice President, Windsor-Essex Development Commission (WEDC) is unable to attend the meeting, Sabrina DeMarco, Manager of Small Business Development is in attendance in his stead.

S. DeMarco indicates that the following represents challenges facing small business:

- Existing economic environment – Current recession which impedes cash flow and growth
- Regulatory aspects – Government relations, permits, licenses, taxes place heavy burden on small business
- Access to capital and financing – Personal funds are a major source of capital. There is a need for incentives to attract small business in the downtown core

Councillor Halberstadt leaves the meeting at 4:10 o'clock p.m.

S. DeMarco explains that the Windsor-Essex Development Commission provides on-site consulting services, mentoring programs and strategies for young entrepreneurs.

The Chair asks what should be reported to Council to assist the WEDC to serve small business.

R. MacLachlan questions if there is interest in setting up a booth at the “Business Government Services and You” seminar to be held on Wednesday, November 25, 2009 from 4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. at the Caboto Club. She advises that representatives from more than 20 government organizations will be available to answer questions and to provide information relating to businesses in the Windsor-Essex area. It is suggested that a brochure that provides an overview of the Small Business Advisory Panel be produced and distributed at the seminar.

J. Millson suggests that the WEDC apply for grant programs such as the Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) grant.

J. Williams asks if the WECC has outreach programs to assist local businesses.

The Chair thanks S. DeMarco for her presentation and he requests that she relay the Panel’s questions to the Vice President, WEDC.

5.2 **Small Business Advisory Panel Terms of Reference**

Item not discussed.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

6.1 **City of Windsor Website**

It is generally agreed that the minutes/agendas of the Small Business Advisory Panel be available for public viewing on the City of Windsor website.

The Panel reviews the list of “*future agenda items*”. In response to a question asked by J. Williams regarding the parameters of a small business, the Chair responds that a small business has less than 50 employees and has earnings less than \$5 million annually.

It is generally agreed that a “*small business*” includes the following:

- 100 employees
- Focus on existing business
- New start-up companies
- No cap on earnings
- All sectors of the economy

R. MacLachlan refers to an article in the Windsor Star dated November 14, 2009 relating to the Downtown Windsor Improvement Association and their request for government funding to establish a “business incubator” in the city core and to conduct a labour market and commercial space survey. The article is **attached** as Appendix “C” for information purposes.

7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at 3:00 o’clock p.m. in the Town of Walkerville Meeting Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 5:00 o’clock p.m.

CHAIR

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR

