

Town of Edmonston

Supplement to the Minutes of Work Session held Wednesday, May 10, 2019. Approved by Town Council June 12, 2019.

Section VIII conversation about Council representation in Wards 1 & 2 was transcribed due to the complexities of the discussion.

Mayor Gant: To change our charter ordinance based on the fact that no one is running against you.... (Council Member Layne Bee joins meeting) We're talking about our election procedures and the comment that you made last month about no one running against Ward 2. I'm saying that that it is not a reason to change our ordinance based on no one running against you another ward. I asked Council Member White her reasoning and I ask your reasoning?

Council Member Layne Bee: It is just to get the more qualified candidates rather than somebody who gets re-elected continuously because there is no competition. This is not against anybody; I am just saying because Ward 1 tends to be highly contested. And it makes us get out there and really think as to why you are running and take it seriously. If you just put your name on the ballot and just get re-elected; it kind of weakens the whole political process. So that was one factor. Ward 1, not that somebody's not getting contested in a certain Ward but just to get the best candidates to serve the community.

Mayor Gant: And you know I can honestly say that this last election was probably the first time that I can remember ward 1 having someone run against you when you first came into office.

Council Member Layne Bee : Last two (elections) for me. The last two I've had to go out and campaign.

Mayor Gant: There wasn't anyone running against (you) the first time.

Council Member Layne Bee : The last two. This is my third term. Because it was (Betsy) both times and then... yeah. I just feel as though, just for you to have that thought of ok, you're not just going to just do it. You know, you have to really think, 'do I really want to put in', like today... I really, I mean there's so many obligations I have going on; but I have to honor my commitment to the meeting. So, you know, it is not something that should be taken, you know, without thought.

Council Member Turberville: (Inaudible 3:11 - 3:20) I wasn't considering it was something done without thought. To me it's clearly an attempt to change the rules of the game, because you don't like the outcome. And so, I think... (Council Member Layne Bee interjects No, No,)

Council Member Turberville : Let me finish. And secondly, I think that even though both of us are running unopposed, Mr. Johnson is well-known in this community. He does a lot around here and people vote for him because they know him and they know what he does for the community. And while no one, it's just the two of us running, I also went door to door and in the streets and introduced myself and talked with people. And I told them, you know, why I was running for office and what I did. And I'll make a judgement next year as to whether or not it's a good thing for me to run again. But I think that it's, I just find it a bit curious that we would be suggesting we need at large council members because

we're running unopposed. So, I think that it's a pretty good argument that people who run unopposed are satisfying those they represent.

Council Member Layne Bee: Not necessarily. It's just the demographics, it's just the way how it's made up. On this side of the bridge there are stakeholders, there are people who actually own homes. And on the other side there are people that, and no disrespect to them, there tends to be a turnover in Fountain Park because a lot of people... (interrupted)

Council Member Turberville: I find that

Council Member Layne Bee : No, let me finish so the same respect is afforded. And in most apartment communities, they're renters and a lot of times, especially the history of that apartment. A lot of immigrants come, and they might stay maybe a year and then move on, to maybe a better home or something different. And just because of the way it's made up, yes there's a lot of people on one side who feel committed to serve the community. And the other side, they are just residents who are temporary because they are renters. They have no desire to set down roots or get involved in politics because it's just a temporary residence for them. So, and if you look at the way those are divided, that's the way, it is mainly apartments and some homes. But, on the other side it's all homes.

Council Member Turberville: I would say that that description alone is a good explanation as to why we need for two different Wards. Because you have a perception of Ward 2 as people being less engaged and care less about their community.

Council Member Layne Bee: Stop putting words in my mouth.

Council Member Turberville: I'm sorry, I was paraphrasing. But that they are less engaged, who are only here temporarily; who are immigrants; who, you know are not homeowners. And I think to suggest that those individuals don't have some stake in this community is inaccurate.

Council Member Layne Bee : Well, obviously not because nobody runs in that Ward.

Council Member Turberville: And, he (Mr. Johnson) lives in Fountain Park and understands the needs of Fountain Park and the people who live in that community better than any of us sitting here. So, I think it's right that there be a Ward 2 and a Ward 1 because we are distinct, and we are different in some respect. And that's why you have district-wide representation like that: you have a Ward 1 and a Ward 2, in order to ensure that those differences are accounted for in representation.

Council Member Layne Bee : I beg to differ.

Council Member Bennett-White: And so, the suggestion was to have in each Ward an at large person so that you still have the representation in Ward 1 and that you still have the representation in Ward 2. I still feel that it should be brought to our residents, and I don't feel like residents can't make a sound decision on something like that; because it does affect everybody. So, I don't feel like they are uninformed enough to make a sound decision on that.

Council Member Layne Bee: And I agree with taking it to the residents because ultimately, we serve them and if they agree to keep it how it is, that's fine. But I think it's time; the same way as we explore

different options over time; I think it's worth exploring. And as Ms. Bennet-White said, there is a representation in Ward 1 and there is a representation in Ward 2, it's just the opportunity to have somebody who is not tied to a Ward, also serve.

Town Administrator Barnes: (explains to Attorney Ferguson just arriving) So, before you... I ask a question about the process. Our Charter Resolution requires a public hearing, and a notice goes out about that public hearing. So, if the residents wanted to have an at large representation in the ordinance or resolution, do they come to that hearing and express that?

Council Member Bennett-White: The question is not here anywhere. Does it need to be?

Attorney Ferguson: It doesn't need to be in there because once you introduce something, then you have the public hearing with this and the public is on notice that you're exploring this area. And if it's something that can come up, and of course it would because that's one of the sections you're looking at; then that could be discussed also. And then at that point you can ask, and you can decide that you wanted to do something about it or not do something about it. Put it off for a bit so that everyone, everyone would know that there has been a change or that we can make a change. You can always wait to adopt too, so that there's full publicity about what's being added.

Administrator Barnes: So, this would go out in the newsletter to everybody as a proposed draft that there's a public hearing we can either have the next meeting date or set a special night just for that.

Attorney Ferguson: So, it must be 21 days' notice before the public hearing.

Council Member Layne Bee : Ok. I residents deserve the opportunity to express how they feel.

Council Member Turberville: I don't think anyone is suggesting that but I'm questioning the motivation.

Council Member Layne Bee; Well, I find that strange you are questioning the motivation.

Mayor Gant: Alright. So, we're going to look at this another time and adjourn our work session. We went over just a tad bit. And take about a 3-minute break and then enter our regular meeting.

Work session ends.