

Town of Edmonston

Addendum to Supplement of Town Council Minutes from May 8, 2019: Section VIII conversation about Council representation in Wards 1 & 2 was transcribed due to the complexities of the discussion. The addendum is italicized to distinguish it from the original supplement.

Council Member Bennett-White: So, there wasn't anything in here about the possibility of having a one-at large member. So, if we have a hearing, is this something that can be brought up at the hearing?

Administrator Barnes: You have to have a public hearing on the whole thing.

Council Member Turberville, (inaudible) Administrator Barnes : You might want to have what the language would be. Council Member Turberville: That was the plan, to have all of us vote on it, right? Yes, you're going to have to vote on it. Council Member Johnson: To have somebody at large? I thought we voted on that before and tentatively voted it down. Administrator Barnes: I think you had a discussion.

Council Member Bennett-White: We didn't vote on it, we had discussed it. I think Suellen said something about I asked about bringing it to the residents. I can't remember all that she said. Administrator Barnes: I'll double check (inaudible). Well, yes you can bring it to the residents I think she indicated.

(inaudible comments)

Council Member Turberville: We have an at-large, the Mayor!

(inaudible comments)

Council Member Bennett-White: But they vote

Mayor Gant: They do vote and one of the issues that I expressed was having us to go to our residents...and how you go to the residents and what you say, even if its written. For residents that are not involved you can just about steer them to sign that petition without them paying attention to what they're signing or voting for so, we have to be clear on what we want for our community. And I know that (Good evening) when Ms. White, I'm sorry when Ms. Bee expressed her feeling about it; her feeling was she wanted an at-large position because Ward 2 didn't have anyone that voted against them. I'm sorry, that would run against them. That was the particular reason, and I don't think that's a reason to go and lobby our citizens to sign a petition to agree for an at-large position. That's not a reason to have an at-large position especially for our size town because no one runs against two Ward members. Maybe they're satisfied with the two Ward members. Even if you're doing a great job people might run against you. But if you're not they're not; then there's no reason to start up or stir up something in order to have people run against you and confuse our constituents. If other Towns are doing it; that's fine that works for their Towns. But we have to do things that work for our Town.

Council Member Bennett White: But if we've never done it, how do we know that it doesn't work in our Town.

Mayor Gant: Because with us communicating and knowing the reasons why we're doing things. We have to do things that are right; not things that would be against each other. We have to do things that are right for our community.

Council Member Bennett-White: Well I understand that but I'm still saying if we go to.....How do we know...that could be our opinion. But how do we know that's the opinion of everybody.

Mayor Gant: Because that's what was said by a Council Member. That the reason that she wants...I don't know if that was just hers or yours and hers. I don't know what your reason is, but her reason was because no one runs against them.

Council Member Bennett-White: No, I think herand I don't want to speak for her because I don't want to put words in her mouth, but it was my understanding...

Mayor Gant: that was one of them.

Council Member Bennett-White: ...that was one of the reasons, but the other reason was to make the process more fair.

Council Member Johnson: What do you mean make the process more fair?

Council Member Bennett-White: If you get out and you campaign then you should have an opportunity to win, if you get out and campaign. That is what I understood her as saying. Now I don't want to speak for her but...

Council Member Turberville: Everybody campaigns.

Mayor Gant: Everybody has the opportunity to get out and campaign.

Council Member Bennett-White: Well if you're running unopposed what are you campaigning?

Council Member Turberville: I campaigned, and I was running unopposed.

Council Member Bennett-White: That's my point. If you're running unopposed, how are you campaigning? If you're not running against anybody.

Council Member Johnson: You're getting out there and showing your face.

Council Member Bennett-White: I got that.

Council Member Turberville: You have to persuade people to vote for you. People could very well have seen my name on the ballot and decided to only cast a single vote for Mr. Johnson. They could have done that. I could have very well have received zero votes, but I didn't because I actually went out and I talked to people.

Council Member Bennett-White: But you voted for yourself and that's one vote and you would win. Is that how it works?

Council Member Turberville: That's how it works in Ward two.

Council Member Bennett-White: I just think that was her reason....

(RECORDING ENDS TAPE 1 SIDE B)

Mayor Gant: I know that when we're campaigning during elections, you get out door to door more often. You might knock on doors then. The work or the time you're are putting in there.....

(The conversation continues in the already transcribed document below)

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 think 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.