

Legislation Text

File #: 21-A-012, Version: 1

DEPUTATIONS REGARDING MOTION 21-G-005 CONCERNING THE 2021 BUSINESS PLAN - BARRIE POLICE SERVICES BOARD

The following Deputations were provided concerning motion 21-G-005 concerning the 2021 Business Plan - Barrie Police Services (BPS) Board:

1. Michael Speers provided his concerns associated to the 2021 BPS Board Budget request. He advised that in his opinion policing has failed society, particularly black and indigenous people. Mr. Speers noted that he feels that most calls received by the BPS are non-criminal and non-emergency, that changes need to be made to completely rethink policing, that they are coming up short when it comes to creating this new vision and the City can do better now by defunding the police. He discussed the valuable initiatives and the good that will come from the Anti-Racism Task Force. Mr. Speers provided examples of people wanting to see change noting that last summer's gatherings of hundreds of people in the streets of Barrie demanding action with not just one, but two massive rallies and the community comments to reduce the police budget found in the City's online Budget Allocator tool. He commented that the exact opposite of what the community is calling for and the status quo has failed, and Council is getting exactly what they are wanting but not the residents.

Mr. Speers provided his opinion related to the current policing system that he felt is better designed to create crime and label people are criminals; is rooted in racism and settler colonialism; has an elevation of one class over communities; protects property, not people; is not a true system of justice as a true system of justice would be doing the exact opposite; and is over policed and there is over incarceration that make communities less safe and taking resources away from programs and services that prevent crime.

Mr. Speers provided his suggestions for a better system that included Council to begin creating a shift immediately by defunding the police; a goal of complete abolition of the system is the solution; reallocation of money is not enough and needs to be seen as a human rights issue; prioritize services as a society and how we treat each other; communities that everybody is supported and police and prisons are unnecessary; make massive investments in social housing and community programs; care for people experiencing homelessness; better the lives of seniors; offer free transit; and invest in the future to fight climate change.

In conclusion, Mr. Speers thanked Council for support in the \$3 million commitment for social housing and he asked that Council reconsider and decrease the police budget as now is the time to act.

2. Amber Beckett thanked members of Council for working together as a team, and for their dedication and diligence in making the tough decisions associated to this year's budget.

Ms. Beckett advised that she was disappointed in Council for not holding the police budget request to the same standard as the other partner organizations at a 1.95% increase. She commented that in her opinion the police are untouchable, and that Council will give them whatever money they request. She noted that she hoped this was not the case, but it is impression she was given. Ms. Beckett commented on the City as a Corporation and as a Corporation they should be able to go to a

department that they oversee and have them come back with 5 to 10% decrease in funding. She noted her concern that Council did not even ask the police to come back with a decrease to their budget request.

Ms. Beckett discussed the City's option for taxpayers to share what is important to them for 2021 Business Plan and Budget with the online Budget Allocator tool. She provided an analogy illustrating the frustration of providing your input and not having your comments considered. Ms. Beckett advised that hundreds of people have asked that the police decrease their budget and she noted that Council has done the opposite with an increase. She commented that the police budget in 2011 was just under \$42 million and the proposed budget this year is \$57 million, being a 7% increase in the last 10 years. Ms. Beckett advised that she does not believe the City's population growth over the last 10 years matches the 7% increase.

Ms. Beckett commended Council's support over the last few months in supporting social and health services, however she noted that other than the \$3 million for the housing initiative, she felt that there was no other support for these services in the budget. She questioned what has been done to relieve the pressure on the police with all the calls they are facing, as she felt that the majority are not criminal in nature and are non-emergencies. Ms. Beckett suggested having By-law Officers 24/7, 365 days a year to handle some of the non-emergency calls such as noise complaints given that during the winter months, they give out parking tickets for cars parked on the road overnight. She commented that she believes it could help with the mental health response and would be another good place to start.

In conclusion, Ms. Beckett commented that if the police budget is left unchecked it will continue to balloon and cut off necessary flow of resources to other organizations, and that by reducing the police budget, money could be given to organizations to relieve pressures off police. She asked that as one of Council's strategic priorities to offer innovative and citizen-driven services and that they take this opportunity to put the money in the right place for community.

Mayor Lehman asked a question to Ms. Beckett and received a response.

Councillor, G. Harvey declared that to remain in compliance with his statutory obligations under Section 17(3) of the *Police Services Act* he was unable to participate in the discussions or vote on the foregoing matter. He left the virtual Council meeting.

Councillor N. Harris stated that that in consultation with the Integrity Commissioner regarding her Code obligations, including those that arise under the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*. Although, Councillor, N. Harris did not have a pecuniary interest in the matter that required her to abstain from voting on this matter, in accordance with her obligations under the Council and Committee Code of Conduct and upon advice of the Integrity Commissioner, she did not participate or vote on the foregoing matter. She left the virtual Council meeting.