



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Via Zoom

MINUTES

November 18, 2021
8:30 am

MEMBERS PRESENT:

C. Lowry, Chair
P. Sweetnam, Vice-Chair
J. Atkinson
E. El-Chantiry
J. Mason
B. King
P. Kehoe
A. Tennant

MEMBERS ABSENT:

J. Atkinson

STAFF PRESENT:

S. McIntyre, General Manager
A. Millar, Treasurer
L. Williams, Recording Secretary

P. Sweetnam called the meeting to order at 08:36 AM.

FAAC11/18/21-1

MOVED BY: J. Mason

SECONDED BY: P. Sweetnam

Resolved, That the Agenda for the November 18, 2021 Finance & Administration Advisory Committee meeting be adopted as amended.

“CARRIED”

BUSINESS:

1. Minutes – Finance & Administration Advisory Committee Meeting – October 12, 2021

FAAC11/18/21-2

MOVED BY: E. El-Chantiry

SECONDED BY: A. Tennant

Resolved, That the minutes of the Mississippi Valley Finance & Administration Advisory Committee meeting held on October 12, 2021 be received and approved as printed.

“CARRIED”

2. Draft 2022 Budget, Report 3178/21

S. McIntyre presented Report 3178 regarding the 2022 Draft Budget.

In reference to the Communications Department budget, B. King sought clarification as to whether the proposed budget reflects the future hiring of a consulting firm, or, if a firm is currently fulfilling the responsibilities of the Communications position. He requested further information regarding the name and selection process of the firm. S. McIntyre confirmed that following the resignation of the Community Relations Coordinator, the consulting firm MediaStyle was retained on a month-to-month basis, which provides the flexibility to rehire a full-time employee if necessary. Pointing to the cost savings, positive past experience with the firm, and to flexible contract terms, S. McIntyre explained that the firm had been sole-sourced.

J. Mason clarified that the \$3,500 EcoTrek annual fee was not intended to impact MVCA budget and instead be offset via money transfer from the Mississippi Valley Conservation Foundation (MVCF). S. McIntyre agreed to pursue the matter at the next MVCF meeting to confirm revenues are available and appropriately dedicated.

E. El-Chantiry expressed concerned about the use and balance of the reserve funds, and sought clarification as to MVCA’s policy regarding the limitations of withdrawing funds from reserves. S. McIntyre informed the Committee that there is no policy regarding making contributions to or withdrawals from reserves. She noted that staff took direction from the Board in October to develop such a policy, however, recognizing the short time frame she explained that the policy could not be completed before the delivery of this year’s budget. S. McIntyre explained the importance of the creation of such a policy and assured the Committee that staff will be working toward this in consultation with MVCA’s auditor.

E. El-Chantiry reiterated his concern regarding using operating reserves to balance the budget; thanked staff for their work on the budget; and excused himself to attend another meeting.

P. Sweetnam sought clarification regarding the objectives of the proposed fundraising campaign with an expenditure of \$15,000. S. McIntyre noted that this expenditure is offset under revenues from Mississippi Valley Conservation Foundation (MVCF). The distribution of funds was explained, noting that the campaign is to fund the Carp Wetland Restoration Project

and the Conservation Area Strategy. Discussion ensued regarding the proposed \$15,000 fundraising campaign, which is planned to be carried out with Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT) and other partners.

P. Sweetnam requested that acronyms used in the budget be defined, particularly for revenue sources.

J. Mason raised the issue of staff using monies from the “Operating Reserve” as opposed to the “Glen Cairn Reserve” as the Board had previously approved. A. Millar explained that staff chose to draw from Operating Reserve because of the lack of restrictions concerning withdrawal permissions.

J. Mason questioned whether or not staff had discussed which proposed discretionary budget items could be removed to alleviate pressures on the Operating Reserve, focusing specifically on items unrelated to the implementation of the Workforce Plan. S. McIntyre explained that most budget pressures are related to the Workforce Plan that includes more staff, which in turn creates a need for higher budgeting in computers, mileage, among other resources. Committee members expressed concerns about the use of reserve funds to support Workforce Plan implementation.

J. Mason suggested that the Finance and Administration Committee consider an allocation of 50% of levies to the Workforce Plan instead of 33% shown in the Draft 2022 Budget. P. Kehoe noted that now is not a good time for municipalities to commit to this expenditure as there are many other expenses being brought forward this year (2021) in particular. Discussion took place regarding allocation of levies. B. King expressed his disapproval of a future increase of levies, suggesting MVCA cut out unnecessary projects. A. Tennant suggested informing municipalities about the proposal before making a formal request, continuing positive relationships between the Conservation Authorities and municipalities.

P. Sweetnam suggested that staff hold back on unnecessary projects. More specifically, for staff to seek expert advice on proposed repair work and timelines related to safety. A. Tennant endorsed the suggestion of P. Sweetnam, adding that construction costs are high at the moment. He reminded the Committee that larger projects MVCA has tried to pursue recently have been met with difficulties due to cost and availability of materials. A. Tennant asked Staff to present a breakdown of construction costs.

The Committee discussed ways in which staff may alleviate pressures on reserve funds such as fundraising cost of minor repair work, raising user fees, and scrutinizing cost centers for operations expenses.

Staff expressed the desire to seek direction on the financial priorities of the Board of Directors.

C. Lowry directed Staff to amend the 2022 Budget to ensure a minimum year-end balance in the Operations Reserve of \$600,000.

FAAC11/18/21-3

MOVED BY: J. Mason

SECONDED BY: P. Sweetnam

Resolved, That the Finance & Administration Advisory Committee recommend the Draft 2022 Budget be revised and brought back to the Finance & Administration Advisory Committee before being brought to the Board of Directors for consideration and circulation to member municipalities for comment.

“CARRIED”

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50AM.

FAAC11/18/21-4

MOVED BY: B. King

SECONDED BY: P. Sweetnam

Resolved, That the Finance and Administration Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

“CARRIED”

“L. Williams, Recording Secretary

C. Lowry, Chair”