

Meeting Minutes

Subject: Lydia Smith's Letter on Parks & Recreation Staffing
Date: November 12, 2015
9 am
Location: Victoria Hall, Cobourg ON
Attendees: Stephen Peacock, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Cobourg
Ian Davey, Treasurer, Town of Cobourg
Melissa Henke, Human Resources Officer, Town of Cobourg
Lydia Smith, President, Cobourg Taxpayers Association
Paul Pagnuelo, Treasurer, Cobourg Taxpayers Association
Dennis Nabieszko, Secretary, Cobourg Taxpayers Association

Opening remarks were that we would publish minutes on our web site for our supporters.

Lydia Smith sent a letter, as a private citizen, with regards to the significant increase in Parks & Recreation staffing from 2010 and 2014. The letter was sent first to the Town Clerk, Lorraine Brace, and was then sent to Councillor Theresa Rickerby, asking that the letter be read aloud in Council and discussed publicly. The Mayor replied that the letter contained erroneous information and would not be read aloud.

Here is the Parks & Recreation staffing and payroll from the F.I.R. referred to in Lydia Smith's letter.

	Full Time	Part Time	Seasonal	Total
2010	14	0	20	34
2014	32	0	44	76

	31-Dec-10	31-Dec-14	\$ Increase	% Increase
Salaries and Wages	\$12,428,867	\$15,989,254	\$3,560,387	28.6%
Employee Benefits	\$2,821,277	\$3,927,431	\$1,106,154	39.2%
Total	\$15,250,144	\$19,916,685	\$4,666,541	30.6%

Stephen Peacock agreed that these numbers were correct and not erroneous.

Lydia Smith identified the following key points:

- She wanted the letter to be read aloud and discussed in public
- Mayor wrote back that the letter contained erroneous information and would not be read and asked that she meet with town staff privately.
- No opportunity was provided to publicly discuss the content of the letter.

Mr. Peacock and Mr. Davey provided the following information:

- The issue with the FIR number is that it is very general in nature and does not provide enough information to draw meaningful analysis and conclusions on program spending.
- Part time, seasonal and casual staff are broadly defined in the FIR guidelines but these definitions are not published on the government web site and thus the public does not have access to it.
- Union contracts define part time, casual, and seasonal. These are different for each municipality because each union contract defines them differently.

- Over the years, there have been different town staff inputting to the FIR and their interpretation may have been different.
- FIR deadline of May 31 not met because audited financial statements need to be completed to submit FIR. FIR must be submitted by September 30 in order for town to receive funding from the province.
- CAO report is based upon number of T4 slips and the numbers are confirmed as correct. If someone is on disability and someone else is brought on board, they are both counted.
- In the last 13 years, Ian Davey has only had the Ontario government ask him one question with regards to the town's FIR submission. The CTA is the only other one to ask about the FIR input.
- Half of the salary increases from 2013 to 2014 were due to police services with a large amount due to contract settlements.
- The annual audited financial statements fulfil the town's commitment to ratepayers on how their tax money was spent.
- Ian Davey is already keeping track of the type of staffing (full time. Part time, etc.) on an Excel spreadsheet.
- Council approves funds for all hiring
- Ian Davey advised that the best way to see if taxes are going up is for a taxpayer to look at their own tax bill year to year.

Summary

- Lydia Smith's letter did not contain erroneous information. The issue with the FIR number is that it is very general in nature and does not provide enough information to draw meaningful analysis and conclusions on program spending.
- The staffing increase was mostly due to the opening of the CCC with all budgets for new staff hired approved by Council.
- The differences in how staffing is reported between the FIR report and the CAO report was explained. Most of this is due to how the staffing categories are defined for FIR reporting (broad definitions) defined versus the how the Town reports (union contract definitions).
- To read a letter out loud will require a delegation to Council
- Issues should go to the Councillor responsible for that department who will either respond or refer the requestor to town staff. If issue not resolved satisfactorily, requestor can do a delegation to Council.

We would like to thank Stephen Peacock, Ian Davey, and Melissa Henke for meeting with us and providing us with this background information. They were able answer all of the questions to the satisfaction of the CTA.