

OFFICE OF THE COUNCILLORS 2015 – 2018 CAPITAL BUDGET PROGRAM 799-321

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At Budget 2015 – 2018 Council provided sufficient operating funding to each ward equal to the addition of one full time Assistant but referred a request for a capital budget for renovations to accommodate the additional staff to the Coordinating Committee of the Councillors Office (CCCO) to return to Council in Q1 of 2015.

Following consultations with Councillors the CCCO recommends deferring any major capital project relating to accommodation of additional Assistants to Q1 of 2016 and that for 2015 the Office of the Councillors (OC) undertake a pilot project utilizing flex work/flex space solution as a less space, renovation and cost intensive alternative to accommodating additional Assistants.

CCCO RECOMMENDATION

1. Defer a decision on a capital budget for the Office of the Councillors to Q1, 2016 and
2. Direct that Administration return to Council through the CCCO with a revised capital plan and one-time budget request in Q1 of 2016.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

As part of 2015 - 2018 Business Plan and Budget meetings 2014 November 24 – December 05 Council directed that “Administration return to Council through the CCCO with a revised capital plan and one-time budget request in Q1 of 2015.”

BACKGROUND

2014 November 24 Council approved the operating budget of the OC which included an increase to ward accounts sufficient to allow Councillors to hire an additional full-time Assistant effective 2015 January 1. (C2014-0863, Council: Office of the Councillors 2015 – 2018 Operating Budget Program 836).

The OC capital budget proposed funding for major renovations to make space accommodations for 14 additional Assistants. (C2014-0863, Council: Office of the Councillors 2015 – 2018 Capital Budget Program 799-321). The request was in the form of a ‘place-holder’ budget with the intent that several alternatives would be considered by CCCO with a recommendation to Council of the preferred alternative in Q1, 2015.

Council removed the capital budget request and directed that “Administration return to Council through the CCCO with a revised capital plan and one-time budget request in Q1 of 2015.”

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

In order to gauge Councillors attitudes towards alternative methods of accommodating additional staff, the Manager, Office of the Councillors undertook a one-on-one survey with each Councillor.

A key survey question asked Councillors if, over the long term, they were agreeable to adopting an alternative of unassigned work spaces combined with a flexible work style. This alternative envisions some Assistants work some from home, some in the ward and some in the office. These flex Assistants would have access to book unassigned work stations when they were

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planning to work in the office. In this alternative, the Office of the Councillors would add four to six unassigned workstations, in addition to the existing three, for a total of seven to nine unassigned workstations within the current boundaries of the Office of the Councillors.

- Eight Councillors indicated being agreeable to adopting a flex work/flex space approach utilizing seven to nine unassigned work stations within the current boundaries of the Office of the Councillors.
- Three Councillors indicated that are agreeable to adopting this alternative for an extended evaluation period (through to the end of the term was mentioned by two Councillors).
- Three Councillors expressed the view that space should be made for fourteen assigned work stations, one allocated to each ward, and preferable in reasonable proximity to the Councillors

The high level of acceptance to the concept of flex work/flex space by Councillors suggests an opportunity to evaluate this model over the balance of 2015 while other alternatives and associated costs are developed. It is proposed Councillors be canvassed again in late 2015 to establish if the pilot model was successful and if is still agreeable to a majority of Councillors. CCCO would then decide on a space recommendation to Council for the long term based on the post-pilot assessment of Councillors and having regard to the alternatives developed for consideration of the Councillors.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The Manager met with each Councillor for their input on this matter. Assistants have been kept informed of developments in this regard.

Strategic Alignment

Part of Action Plan 2015 – 2018 approved by Council is to find ways to reduce real estate costs through space efficiency. Administrative Leadership Team has approved a Corporate space efficiency target to avoid real estate costs by decreasing 10% of assigned work stations by 2018.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

N/A

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

No impact.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

2015 minor reconfiguration from existing budgets.

2016 – 2018 to be determined following the 2015 flex work/flex space pilot project.

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Risk Assessment

That the space accommodations made for the pilot project will not adequately approximate a fully functional flex work/flex space environment adversely affecting Councillors opinions of the viability of flex work/flex space as a long term alternative.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:

Given that a large number of Councillors are either in favour of flex work/flex space utilizing seven to nine unassigned work stations (8 Councillors) or willing to try this approach over an extended evaluation period (3 Councillors) this report concludes that a pilot project employing flex work/flex space concepts be adopted through 2015 with further evaluation late 2015 to early 2016.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None