

Janzen, Heather

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Email - Request to Speak - Keith Moen - NSBA - Saskatoons Business Association - 2024-2025 Business Plan and Budget - File CK 1700-1
Attachments: NSBA Submission Regarding 2024_2025 City Budget.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 4:37 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Request to Speak - Keith Moen - NSBA - Saskatoons Business Association - 2024-2025 Business Plan and Budget - File CK 1700-1

--- Replies to this email will go to keith.moen@nsbasask.com ---

Submitted on Friday, November 24, 2023 - 16:31

Submitted by user: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Friday, November 24, 2023

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Keith

Last Name: Moen

Phone Number : [3062423060](tel:3062423060)

Email: keith.moen@nsbasask.com

Address: 190-833 45 Street West

City: Saskatoon

Province: Saskatchewan

Postal Code: S7L5X2

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): NSBA - Saskatoon's Business Association

What do you wish to do ?: Request to Speak

If speaking will you be attending in person or remotely: In person

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: NOVEMBER 28 CITY COUNCIL BUDGET MEETING

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 2024-2025 Business Plan and Budget

Comments:

Good afternoon,

Please see attached the NSBA's submission regarding the 2024/2025 city budget. Also, would like to put in a request to speak to this item.

Thanks,

Daniel

Attachments:

- [NSBA Submission Regarding 2024_2025 City Budget.pdf](#) 275.36 KB

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No

November 27, 2023

His Worship the Mayor and City Council
233 3rd Ave N.
Saskatoon, SK
S7K 0J5

Re: 2024/2025 Preliminary Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget

Dear Mayor Clark and Members of Council,

The NSBA would like to extend its appreciation to City Council and Administration for the work and efforts put into this budget. As we recognize the magnitude of this project, the NSBA is pleased to assist the City of Saskatoon by submitting comments and recommendations regarding the City's 2024/2025 Preliminary Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget.

As we transition from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been positive recovery in certain sectors. However, many businesses, in particular small businesses, continue to struggle in the aftermath and are now facing substantial inflationary pressures and higher interest rates. While we understand the City's perspective, the proposed tax increases impose additional financial pressure on businesses during this already difficult time. Given these challenges, we encourage City Council and Administration to think like business owners by striving for improved efficiency and cost savings throughout every business line and by focusing its efforts on providing the core services that are essential for community well-being.

To assist City Council with the 2024/2025 Preliminary Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget, the NSBA Taxation Committee has reviewed the budget document and its 14 business lines. Our Committee acknowledges the City's need for revenue to present a balanced budget but urges a cautious approach in imposing additional financial burdens on businesses. Our Committee's feedback emphasizes the importance of aligning the City's financial needs with the current economic climate, taking into account the shared goal of recovery for all. We encourage City Council to consider these observations during their deliberations, promoting a collaborative effort to strike a balance between the City's financial needs and the imperative to support local businesses in their path to recovery.

NSBA Comments on Specific Business Lines:

Corporate Governance and Finance

- A significant amount has been invested and will continue to be invested in technology and automation of certain functions. We encourage the City to continue to explore areas in which technology could be leveraged to improve operational efficiency and to ensure these improvements are adequately taken into account when making decisions regarding future staffing requirements. Investing in technology to automate routine tasks and streamline processes should ultimately decrease the number of FTEs required in certain departments or allow the City to generate additional value per existing FTE.

- The budget document does not provide details on any specific return on investment targets the City has for the significant investments being made in technology and automation. Further, the budget document does not provide details of any key performance indicators established by the City to measure the effectiveness of its technology implementations and process improvements. The City should regularly assess and report on the impact of its investments in technology on operational efficiency and cost savings and use these assessments to guide future decisions on technology investments and staffing levels.

Saskatoon Police and Fire

- The NSBA consistently advocates for additional front-line services, endorsing any necessary increase in FTEs for both the police and fire departments. Recognizing the importance of community safety, we firmly support additional officers and fire personnel to ensure the well-being of our residents and the effective functioning of emergency response services. Therefore, we are pleased with the police and fire budget as presented.

Environmental Health

- In terms of the City's carbon emissions and environmental footprint, it is apparent that the targets do not match the current reality. Therefore, we recommend that the City readjust its goals past 2025 to reflect a more realistic scenario.
- We also recommend that the City taper its goals in this area to minimize expenses and adapt to the current budget restrictions. This is an area that can be deferred until the City is in a better financial position to pursue.

Urban Planning and Development

- Although planning is important to the development for the City, long range planning can be difficult and should be categorized as something that is nice to have but may not be necessary right now. Therefore, we encourage the City to re-evaluate the FTE requirement for this department at this time.

Saskatoon Public Library

- Regarding the Saskatoon Public Library, our messaging remains the same, which is, we recognize the need for a new downtown library; however, we do not support the additional funding requested by the library board. Based on our survey findings to our members and non-members, we believe that a new library can be built with the existing funds, provided the library board revisit their plans.
- While we understand that the additional funds being requested for 2024/2025 may seem relatively modest, incremental request like these accumulate over time.

Land Development

- \$4.6 million is being allocated for reserves and we suggest looking in this area to defer some of that spending.

Arts, Culture and Event Venues

- In this business line, we noticed significant increases in the operating budgets for SaskTel Centre and the Remai Arts Gallery due to inflationary pressures. While we recognize the reasons behind the rise in the operating budget, we seek clarification on the potential impact on services should the request for an increase be denied.
- The business line also highlights the addition of four new FTEs, yet no clear explanation was provided to justify the necessity of these additional positions.

Community Supports

- We commend the City for the progress made in this business line. However, we question the need for spending \$55,000 in 2024 and \$250,000 in 2025 in this budget cycle to accommodate space for scattering cremains.

Transportation

- With a deficit of \$44 million, clearly there is a great deal of concern around the City's transportation line, specifically related to transit services.
- Transit needs to be reliable, on time and affordable to optimize usage and to in turn minimize the subsidy provided. With a new director to be hired in 2024, this is an opportune time for a holistic review of this service.

General observations

- **Realistic Revenue Projections:** We urge the City to ensure it is adopting realistic revenue projections, which consider changing economic dynamics, the impacts of inflation, and evolving spending patterns. We emphasize the need to adjust budgetary expectations, recognizing that revenues may not quickly return to pre-pandemic levels. By incorporating this awareness into financial planning, the City can proactively mitigate further financial strain.
- **Focus on providing core services:** The City should focus on providing core services that are essential for community well-being. Recent examples of non-essential services that the City should not be providing going forward include dog training, compost coaching, and bike coaching.
- **Mitigate additional FTE requests:** by reassigning existing FTE's from other areas/departments whenever possible. Don't rush to fill FTE's that are retiring or taking a job elsewhere. See if it's possible to do more with less. Take advantage of technological advancements to keep expenses in check.
- **Now is the time for tough decision-making and bold leadership:** We are coming out of the most challenging economic times in generations, and now is not the time for significant tax increases. To accommodate the necessary reductions, tough decisions will have to be made. We stress, however, that these decisions should not come at the expense of front-line (taxpayer-facing) workers.

As always, we appreciate the time and effort Administration has put into the budget, and the time spent by Mayor and Council deliberating and approving the final budget. This is a significant undertaking, and we are happy to help provide insight where we can.

Sincerely,



Keith Moen
Executive Director