

7.5% salary bump in store for next Council

By Brock Weir

Candidates looking to fill one of six Council seats in the 2018 Municipal Election can anticipate a salary boost of 7.5 per cent over today's incumbents.

Council, sitting at the Committee level last week, approved several recommendations brought forward by the citizen-led Governance Review Committee last Tuesday. Chief among their recommendations is a significant salary boost to Council members ? excluding the Mayor.

The changes are expected to be ratified at Council this Tuesday.

In an analysis of their counterparts, the Committee found Council's current salary of \$29,488 (with a third of that tax free) per year was on the low end of the spectrum and inconsistent with experiencing such rapid growth as Aurora.

It had already been decided that the tax free portion of the salary would be eliminated, and the Committee's recommended raise would bring this up to a fully taxable \$36,000.

?At the outset of our review, the Committee developed some guiding principles as we moved forward, including that an individual who stands for public office provides a vital public service for which they should be fairly compensated; that any increase in compensation should be first justifiable to us as a committee and then be seen as fair by residents,? said Committee chair Anita Moore.

In their report to Council, they said there were many factors to be considered, including the view that the workload of an individual Councillor can vary depending on the amount of time each elected member has available to them. This time factor can influence whether or not they can participate on certain boards, organizations, and even attend various community events.

These, they noted, were not duties placed on a Councillor under the tenets of the Municipal Act.

?The Committee's intent is not to be critical of members who have chosen to commit more time but to identify that the issue of varied time commitment did form a large part of the discussion as we reviewed Council remuneration,? read the report.

In coming to their recommendations, they found that the Mayor currently receives ?appropriate? compensation, but part-time Councillors ? and the Committee agrees these should remain part-time roles ? have seen an increase in their workload over the last few years.

?With staff's assistance, we examined a number of compensational comparison models,? said Ms. Moore. ?It appeared that while the Mayor was being adequately compensated, Councillor salaries were generally lower. Given those findings, and that some kind of adjustment was likely appropriate, the Committee is recommending to Council that Councillor salaries be increased to \$36,000 per year beginning with the next term.

?While we are not recommending any change to the Mayor's salary, we have recommended an end of service transition program beginning in the next term. It is important that individuals with a diverse range of skills and experience be encouraged to stand for public office and we believe our recommendations represent a fair value for the work that is expected to be done by those elected officials on behalf of our community as a whole.?

Following Ms. Moore's presentation, the Committee's recommendations were carried with very little discussion aside from thanking the citizens for their review.

While Councillor Wendy Gaertner has been a long-time advocate for having Aurora's part-time Council positions converted into full time jobs with an appropriate change in composition, something the Committee opted not to recommend, she said, ?The Committee worked hard, they did their research, they had the help of staff, they have provided their results and I appreciate their work.?