

Meetings with Mayor issue sparks Councillors? walk-out

Two Council members walked out of last week's meeting after debate erupted on how local lawmakers are kept informed on matters in their wards.

At issue at the March 25 Council meeting were efforts to accommodate the cars of residents at the condo building at 180 Civic Square Gate that will be displaced due to construction work in their underground parking garage.

180 Civic Square Gate, a stone's throw from Town Hall, is in Ward 5 which is represented by Councillor John Gallo. Gallo brought forward a motion to find parking around the complex, including spaces at Town Hall at certain hours, only to be informed that municipal staff have already started work on the file.

?Staff have been working on this with the residents and the condo board as well,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas following Councillor Gallo's motion. ?I thank Councillor Gallo for putting this in writing and we can solidify it as a direction from Council as well. I am also having a conversation with the management team over at the Canadian Tire plaza (an entrance for which is off nearby Hollidge Boulevard) to see if there is any ability for them to alleviate parking for the condo as well and they can help out.

?We're looking at all avenues.?

Councillor Gallo said while the initial request was brought forward in December of 2024, he was ?only made aware last week.?

?We should really try to expedite these things as quickly as possible,? said the Councillor. ?It shouldn't take December, January, February, to the end of March to come up with something and I know staff have been working on it and there is lots of back and forth. I would also like to request, not just for me but for other members of Council and their wards, if items like this come up, I think it would be beneficial to us, as representing the wards, they're made aware of these issues right at the beginning and involved in it.

?It's our job, it's what we're here for, I only found out last week? luckily it's in time and we're able to support this and it worked out. Just a note in the future [for] staff to bring us into the loop.?

The Mayor's response was short, ?We do hold one-on-ones so we can have these discussions on a monthly basis.?

The comment prompted Councillor Gallo to call a Point of Personal Privilege, stating, ?Your accusations that I don't get involved in ward issues as a result of me not having meetings with you. Would you like to explain what that has to do with staff bringing me into the loop in terms of what's happening in the ward???

?All I said is we have these discussions one-on-one,? the Mayor replied. ?If you want to take it a certain way?that's your prerogative.?

Gallo subsequently asked the Mayor to apologize, with Mayor Mrakas declining as ?there is no apology for something I did not do.?

A similar back-and-forth continued and, as just before the meeting was formally brought to a close, both Councillor Gallo and Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner packed up their things and left the Council Chamber.

By Brock Weir