

Integrity commissioner suggests a few changes

By CHRIS CLAY
Staff

The City of Mississauga's new integrity commissioner is suggesting a few minor tweaks to his role and the Code of Conduct, including a recommendation for a moratorium on complaints during election years.

Robert Swayze, who this past summer was named the City's integrity commissioner for a five-year term, presented his first report to the municipality's Governance Committee on Monday afternoon.

He made six recommendations for the committee's consideration, including a suggestion to place a moratorium on his office accepting complaints filed against councillors who are seeking re-election in election years. Swayze said it's to stop frivolous and politically-motivated complaints when people are running for office.

During an election, Swayze said, complaints usually hit the press quickly and his proposal would help keep everything fair. He said it's common practice in other municipalities.

A timeline for exactly when the moratorium would come into effect needs to be determined and the committee voted to defer the matter for further study.

Swayze also resisted the idea of the integrity commissioner investigating City staff. He said his role is primarily that of being an adviser to councillors on interpretation of the Code and any complaints about staff should be dealt with by the municipality.

As well, all of his reports are public and employer/employee information should be kept confidential.

He also wants to change the procedural bylaw that deems when a councillor refuses to vote on a matter, it be officially recorded as a negative vote. Under his

proposal, the same would happen unless a councillor declares a conflict beforehand. It sounds of little importance, but Swayze said it means Council will still be able to vote appropriately when sensitive subjects come up.

Swayze told the committee there's two simple questions a councillor should ask themselves before voting on an issue where they could have a possible conflict of interest. Firstly, could they be impartial and, secondly, will other people think they can be impartial.

Much confusion surrounds the section in the Code relating to gifts. Several councillors who sit on the committee had questions about it and Swayze said he'd look

into the policy further and report back with recommendations.

Mayor Hazel McCallion said that, in the past, some councillors refused to answer questions posed to them by the integrity commissioner. Swayze said he has no power to force them to comply.

Ward 9 Councillor Pat Saito said there are still recommendations stemming from the Mississauga Judicial Inquiry the committee has discussed that haven't been implemented in the Code.

A further report from Swayze is expected.

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