

# ST. JOHN'S

## Minutes of Committee of the Whole - City Council

Council Chambers, 4th Floor, City Hall

May 4, 2022, 9:30 a.m.

Present:	Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary Councillor Maggie Burton Councillor Ron Ellsworth Councillor Sandy Hickman Councillor Debbie Hanlon Councillor Jill Bruce Councillor Jamie Korab Councillor Ian Froude
Regrets:	Mayor Danny Breen Councillor Ophelia Ravencroft Councillor Carl Ridgeley
Staff:	Derek Coffey, Deputy City Manager of Finance & Administration Tanya Haywood, Deputy City Manager of Community Services Lynnann Winsor, Deputy City Manager of Public Works Cheryl Mullett, City Solicitor Ken O'Brien, Chief Municipal Planner Karen Chafe, City Clerk Jennifer Squires, Legislative Assistant
Others	Kelly Maguire, Supervisor, Marketing & Communications Andrew Niblock, Director, Environmental Services

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### 1. Call to Order

As Mayor Breen was absent, Deputy Mayor O'Leary called the meeting to order.

2. **Approval of the Agenda**

Recommendation

**Moved By** Councillor Froude

**Seconded By** Councillor Hanlon

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

For (8): Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillor Burton, Councillor Ellsworth, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Hanlon, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Korab, and Councillor Froude

**MOTION CARRIED (8 to 0)**

3. **Adoption of the Minutes**

3.1 **Adoption of Minutes - April 6, 2022**

Recommendation

**Moved By** Councillor Ellsworth

**Seconded By** Councillor Bruce

That the minutes of April 6, 2022, be adopted as presented.

For (8): Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillor Burton, Councillor Ellsworth, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Hanlon, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Korab, and Councillor Froude

**MOTION CARRIED (8 to 0)**

4. **Presentations/Delegations**

5. **Finance & Administration - Councillor Ron Ellsworth**

6. **Public Works - Councillor Sandy Hickman**

6.1 **Securing Blue Bags**

The Deputy City Manager of Public Works informed Council on the options available for securing blue bags on recycling days. With the introduction of clear bags in January 2022, there has been an increase in the participation rate, as well as in the volume, of recycling. This is causing an issue on windy days if bags are left unsecured. Staff have determined

some possible solutions and are looking for direction from Council as to how to proceed. The Deputy City Manager noted that an option would be to amend the Sanitary Regulations to include a requirement for households to secure blue bags when placing them on the curb, similar to the net requirement prior to the implementation of the automated garbage program. Staff have also provided information on the cost to provide nets or carts to residents to secure their recycling. The cost for providing nets is estimated at \$1.5 million, and the cost for carts is estimated to be \$4 million. Both options have their concerns, as nets can cause issues for winter snow clearing operations, and carts are not a viable solution for homes without access to storage and would also limit the amount of recycling.

Councillor Burton suggested that the cost of the nets or bins be subsidized, similarly to the [City's composting program](#). This would permit residents to choose to purchase either nets or carts through the City depending on what they would require. She warned that the issue of recycling bags blowing in the wind would continue to worsen, as wind speeds are predicted to increase. The Deputy City Manager advised that many households already have bins and nets readily available. She also stated that a recycling sticker for bins could be provided by calling 311. Councillor Bruce agreed with Councillor Burton's suggestion, noting that constituents do not expect their carts or nets to be provided at no cost.

Deputy Mayor O'Leary and Councillor Korab were weary of reintroducing blankets and nets as a means to secure bags. Deputy Mayor O'Leary recommended a systemic option to encourage recycling and composting. She asked Staff to look at other jurisdictions to find a solution and remarked that the frequency of recycling collection is intertwined with the issue, as it would reduce the amount of recycling placed on the curb. Councillor Hanlon stated that this was a worldwide issue and would require a combined effort between residents and the City to succeed. She and Councillor Korab were in favour of a subsidized program.

Councillor Ellsworth was in support of using bins with the understanding that there is an opportunity for residents to use nets as required. He also noted that the cost of implementing the program would be the major concern, and that neighbouring municipalities charge an annual fee to recoup the cost of garbage bins over a period of time. The Deputy City Manager responded that when St. John's and surrounding municipalities moved to automated garbage, Council decided to incorporate the fee into property tax as opposed to keeping it as a separate fee. Councillor

Ellsworth felt that it may be of benefit to isolate the fees, similarly to the water tax, and then have the funding dedicated to waste removal and eliminated once the cost was recouped.

The importance of education and personal responsibility was then discussed, and Councillor Hickman recommended that the utilization of existing bins and nets should be better promoted. Councillor Froude was uncertain that the cost of implementing the solution justified the scale of the problem and warned of the environmental impact of requiring 40,000 to 50,000 large plastic bins. Councillor Burton agreed that while litter and blowing debris are a very visual and available symbol of waste and pollution, the production of the plastic bins should be considered. She was in support of residents reusing existing bins and nets to reduce the footprint of plastic production. The Deputy Mayor reminded Council that the federal government has made a commitment to reduce plastic waste, and that a suitable balance would be required to minimize the waste required to implement the solution as well as the litter created by unsecured recycling.

Councillor Hickman inquired if the proposal to have residents donate surplus nets to the City for reuse had any uptake for implementation, and Staff advised that the issue was discussed, and it was determined to be a liability. The Deputy City Manager informed Council that they have been working with Communications to increase use of City's [Curb It app](#) which provides information for both the recycling and garbage disposal programs. Council did not wish to make a recommendation on the Sanitation Regulations at this time. Staff will continue to investigate the best approach to mitigate the issue and will return to Council with an update.

## **6.2 Weekly Recycling Collection**

Councillor Hickman provided Council with an overview on the implications of increasing the frequency of recycling collection from bi-weekly to weekly. He advised that increasing the frequency would require double the resources, resulting in a \$2.2 million increase to the annual budget. Members of Council were uncertain that the volume of recycling warranted an increase in collection, and Deputy Mayor O'Leary stated that the goal should be to move towards having less waste overall. Councillor Korab asked that Staff provide an update on the volume of recycling in 6 months to a year to determine if an increase in frequency would be necessary. He

further noted that the addition of bins, as discussed in the previous item, would alleviate the issue.

Councillor Burton stated that education is key when it comes to looking at ways to reduce waste, and that there is an overabundance of plastic packaging at point of purchase. She recommended that Staff undertake a public education initiative to demonstrate how to reduce the consumption of single-use plastics and the volume of recycling. This information could be circulated via the City Guide. Councillor Ellsworth felt that adding the second shift would be counterintuitive, as the additional vehicles would have negative environmental impacts. He further noted that it is difficult to determine if waste diversion initiatives are adding value to environmental protection, as the handling, processing, and transporting of waste is harmful to the environment. He was supportive of education, noting that if residents are limited to how much can be recycled on a bi-weekly basis, this would result in a reduction of the volume of recycling curbside.

Deputy Mayor O'Leary requested that the Acting City Manager send a letter on behalf of Council to the local MP to inquire on the status of the [federal government's committed ban on plastics](#).

7. **Community Services - Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary**
8. **Special Events - Councillor Debbie Hanlon**
9. **Housing - Councillor Ophelia Ravencroft**
10. **Economic Development, Tourism & Immigration - Mayor Danny Breen**
11. **Arts & Culture - Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary**
  - 11.1 "Come Home 2022" Mural Project
12. **Governance & Strategic Priorities - Mayor Danny Breen**
13. **Planning - Councillor Ian Froude**
14. **Development - Councillor Jamie Korab**
15. **Transportation and Regulatory Services - Councillor Maggie Burton**
16. **Sustainability - Councillor Maggie Burton & Councillor Ian Froude**
17. **Other Business**
18. **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

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Mayor