

ST. JOHN'S

Report - Committee of the Whole - City Council Council Chambers, 4th Floor, City Hall

March 31, 2026, 3:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Danny Breen
Deputy Mayor Ron Ellsworth
Councillor Kate Cadigan
Councillor Lynn Hammond
Councillor Sandy Hickman
Councillor Nikita Ryall
Councillor Jill Bruce
Councillor Brenda Halley
Councillor Greg Noseworthy
Councillor Tom Davis
Councillor Donnie Earle

Staff: Derek Coffey, City Manager
Jason Sinyard, Deputy City Manager of Planning, Engineering & Regulatory Services
Lynnann Winsor, Deputy City Manager of Public Works
Cheryl Mullett, City Solicitor
Karen Sherriffs, Deputy City Manager, Community Services
Ken O'Brien, Chief Municipal Planner
Theresa Walsh, City Clerk
Jackie O'Brien, Manager of Corporate Communications
Christine Carter, Legislative Assistant

1. Strategic Plan Report 2025 and Action Plan 2026

The City Manager provided an overview of the 2025 Strategic Plan Report and the Action Plan for 2026. There are four strategic directions - Sustainability, City that Moves, Connected City and Effective City, and 12 goals that direct the annual action planning process. The plan also considers the City's continuous improvement efforts and links to other plans and strategies.

As part of the regular review conducted with each new Council term, staff consulted with Council, senior staff, and other plan owners to determine whether updates to the plan structure and goals were needed. There were no changes recommended.

Improvements have been made to initiatives to improve reporting, including Asset Management and Digital Strategy. These were broken down into more meaningful goals that will increase the ability to report and track these goals.

To date, 47 initiatives were completed, bringing the total number of initiatives completed to 235, which is 76% of the plan's goals. For 2026, 48 new initiatives have been identified, bringing the total in the plan to 357.

The City Manager advised that full details are contained in the report.

Councillor Bruce thanked Staff for the very detailed report and their work on these initiatives. Two were highlighted, including the retrofit of City-owned buildings and facilities and the automated onboard stop announcement system for Metrobus, which is expected to be installed in the very near future.

Councillor Davis encouraged residents to review the report and highlighted two great initiatives including e-permitting which is to be launched in June and the landfill gas to energy feasibility study that had been completed which showed great promise.

Councillor Halley added that it is great to see the possible reassessments and traffic studies for some roadways in the City and inquired how the resident survey is to be conducted. The City Manager advised that the survey is conducted by telephone, through a third party.

Recommendation

Moved By Deputy Mayor Ellsworth

Seconded By Councillor Earle

That Council approve the 2026 draft action plan and table the report at a regular meeting of Council.

For (11): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor Ellsworth, Councillor Cadigan, Councillor Hammond, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Ryall, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Halley, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Earle

MOTION CARRIED (11 to 0)

2. Bulrush Avenue Play Space Proposal

Councillor Earle presented the Decision Note to Council for the Bulrush Avenue Play Space Proposal and thanked his predecessor for the work that had been done to attain this play space for the residents of this area in Ward 5.

The issue of the use of pea gravel as the surface for the play space and whether there should be an accessible walkway incorporated into the plan was raised. The Deputy City Manager of Public Works advised Council that when Council has approved the funding those items would be reviewed during the detailed design stage.

Members of Council voiced their support for this play space, noting the importance of having areas for such spaces for youth, and the cooperation of the

developer to provide a larger area for this play space. It was also noted that the funding for this is from the Open Space Reserve.

Councillor Earle was commended for continuing the work on this initiative making it a reality for the residents Diamond Marsh in Ward 5.

Recommendation

Moved By Councillor Earle

Seconded By Councillor Hickman

That Council consider approval of approximately \$300,000 for the supply and installation of the play space equipment at #21 Bulrush Avenue from resources within the Open Space Reserve.

For (11): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor Ellsworth, Councillor Cadigan, Councillor Hammond, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Ryall, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Halley, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Earle

MOTION CARRIED (11 to 0)

3. Commemorative Program Fee Adjustment

Councillor Noseworthy provided an overview of the Commemorative Program and the current fees. The program allows residents to honour loved ones, celebrate special occasions, and support the City's natural environment through the donation of a tree or the installation of a bench in a public park.

The current fee for a commemorative tree is set at \$350, which covers the cost of nursery stock and program administration. Fees for community and commemorative benches are set at \$1,600 and \$5,000, respectively, reflecting the model selected.

A review of best practices from comparable and larger municipalities has determined that the current fees for commemorative trees and benches no longer reflect the full cost of materials, installation, and ongoing maintenance.

Adjusting the fees ensures the program remains sustainable, affordable, and meaningful for the community.

Recommendation

Moved By Councillor Noseworthy

Seconded By Councillor Bruce

That Council increase the fees for the Commemorative program as follows:

- Trees increase from \$350 to \$800
- Community benches increase from \$1,600 to \$2,000.

For (11): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor Ellsworth, Councillor Cadigan, Councillor Hammond, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Ryall, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Halley, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Earle

MOTION CARRIED (11 to 0)

4. 59 Duckworth Street – St. John’s Heritage By-Law – Amendment Requests

Councillor Davis reviewed the Decision Note regarding a request for Council to consider an amendment to the St. John's Heritage By-Law, Schedule D-Heritage Design Standards, to allow a proposed exterior alteration to 59 Duckworth Street.

The applicant submitted a request to amend the Heritage By-Law to enable further exterior changes to 59 Duckworth Street. The change requested is to the dormer section of the Heritage Design Standards to allow a vertical extension of the bay window on the rear wall. Extending the bay window up another storey would require the removal of an original hooded dormer window (a small window with a rounded top). For a designated Heritage Building like this, the Heritage Design Standards require the original dormer shape, size, and proportion to be maintained, even on a rear wall that does not face a street, and there is no discretion for Council or staff.

The Built Heritage Experts Panel recommends that Council maintain the Heritage Design Standards and reject the amendment request.

Heritage NL were consulted on the request to remove the dormer window. Heritage NL holds an easement covenant agreement on the property, which restricts the removal of features without their written approval. Their letter on this request states that the “restoration of the dormer windows at the rear and ensuring retention/repair of their original trims and detailing, are conditions of the property’s revitalization grant as approved by [the Heritage NL] Board, June 2025, and referenced in the active grant contract signed by the current property owner.” Heritage NL has stated that the dormer windows on the rear of the building are important to its architectural character and are to remain. This means that if Council wishes to amend the Heritage By-Law, then the requested change to 59 Duckworth Street will not be supported by Heritage NL.

Members of Council discussed the requested amendment, including the effects on the property owner if the amendment is not approved; whether a deck can be installed without the change to the dormer window, and the importance of, and need, to adhere to the City's Heritage Design Standards.

The advice of the Built Heritage Experts Panel and the restrictions on the property as communicated by Heritage NL were also reiterated.

Recommendation

Moved By Councillor Davis

Seconded By Deputy Mayor Ellsworth

That Council reject the request to amend the St. John's Heritage By-Law, Schedule D – Heritage Design Standards to allow the removal of an original dormer window at 59 Duckworth Street.

For (9): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor Ellsworth, Councillor Cadigan, Councillor Hammond, Councillor Ryall, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Halley, Councillor Noseworthy, and Councillor Earle

Against (2): Councillor Hickman, and Councillor Davis

MOTION CARRIED (9 to 2)