Committee of the Whole
MINUTES

1:00 p.m.
March 9, 2009
Albion Room
Hamilton Convention Centre

Present: Mayor F. Eisenberger
Councillors B. Bratina, B. Clark, C. Collins, S. Duvall,
T. Jackson, L. Ferguson, M. McCarthy, B. McHattie,
S. Merulla, B. Morelli, D. Mitchell, R. Pasuta,
M. Pearson, R. Powers

Absent with regrets: Councillor T. Whitehead – City Business

Also Present: C. Murray, City Manager
T. Tollis, Acting General Manager, Finance and
Corporate Services
G. Davis, Acting General Manager, Public Works
J. Kay, General Manager/Chief, Hamilton Emergency
Services
V. Woodcox, Acting General Manager, Community Services
T. McCabe, General Manager, Planning and Economic
Development
P. Barkwell, City Solicitor
M. Gallagher, Co-ordinator, Council and Committee of the
Whole/Budgets

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE REPORTED TO CITY COUNCIL FOR
CONSIDERATION:

1. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

The Clerk noted the following change to the agenda.
Added item respecting US Steel and current economic update which has been suggested be entertained prior to Item 8.1

(Pearson/Pasuta)
That the agenda be adopted as amended. CARRIED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of February 24, 2009

(Powers/McCarthy)
That the Minutes of February 24, 2009 be adopted as presented. CARRIED.

4. CONSENT ITEMS

None

5. DELEGATION REQUESTS

None

6. PRESENTATIONS

None

7. PUBLIC DELEGATIONS

None

Added Item: Update on US Steel and Current Economic Conditions

The Mayor provided an update with respect to ongoing meetings with various members of the Provincial Government to address the recent announcement at US Steel.

Conversations have addressed a number of issues including resources and skills for those affected by the layoffs; US Steel agreements; ensuring EI benefits are received in a timely manner for those affected; reiterated
the interest in SODA, the flowing of Federal monies with respect to infrastructure to help the economy; YMCA providing counseling – crisis intervention – good broad services available and Mohawk College – retraining capacity at Mohawk available - $28,000 from province per individual for retraining.

The Mayor is arranging a meeting with US Steel in Pittsburg to obtain a clear picture of assurances they have been made including pensions

City Manager Chris Murray provided an overview of a Question/Answer which was provided to members of Council. Highlights included the following:

1. Effective and efficient service delivery
2. Investments in infrastructure
3. Support from other levels of government

Committee also addressed the issue of tax arrears with respect to penalties/enforcement for those who received layoff notice with tax department and staff are working on suggested policy changes for review by Council.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1 Motions referred to Committee of the Whole respecting 2009 Transit Division Operating Budget, November 26, 2008

1. Employer Commuter Pass Program (PW08133) (8.1)
   (Ferguson/Jackson)
   That 1(b) be referred back to staff for further clarification and report back to Committee of the Whole. CARRIED.

3. 2009 Transit Operating Budget
   (a) That Council approve the 2009 Transit Division Operating Budget which represents a 0.5% or $213,140 year-over-year increase and an overall 7.5% or $3,125,470 increase inclusive of funding for the transfer of HSR Pension to OMERS as detailed in the Financial section of this report, service level enhancements and an aggressive expenditure mitigation plan as follows:
   (i) That the General Manager of Public Works be authorized and directed to implement a Transit fare increase effective January 1, 2009, as
described in Table 1 of this report and inclusive of increases across all fare types, such that an increase of 5% in the average HSR fare, or $0.10 per trip across major fare types, is achieved;

(ii) That the General Manager of Public Works be authorized to direct DARTS to implement a $0.10 increase in the price of its ticket fare, effective January 1, 2009;

(McHattie/Merulla)

That there be no fare increase in 2009 and subsection (b) be approved

CARRIED ON A RECORDED VOTE:

Yeas: Bratina, Clark, Collins, Duvall, McHattie, Merulla, Morelli, Eisenberger

Total: 8

Nays: Ferguson, Jackson, McCarthy, Pasuta, Mitchell, Pearson, Powers

Total: 7

Absent: Whitehead

Total: 1

(b) That Council direct staff to include consideration of the following Transit service enhancements in the 2010 budget submission, taking into consideration the outcome of the HSR operational review, as follows:

- Harmonization of DARTS fare structure with HSR fare structure;
- Additional annual DARTS service hours to address latent demand;
- Additional HSR Route 5C West Hamilton trips to Meadowlands;
- Increase in the Taxi Scrip Program coupon purchase cap and subsidy;
- Extension of Waterfront Shuttle to provide increased route coverage;
- Fare-optional transit service on Smog days;
- Expansion of transit service to special events programs;
- Additional HSR service coverage to Dundas;
• Expansion of B Line service duration;
• Extension of Route #2 Barton east of Grays Road;
• Realignment of HSR Routes 11 Parkdale and Route 43 Stone Church.”

8.2 Multi-Residential Property Taxation: Staff response to the Multi-Residential Sub-Committee Recommendations (FCS09031) (City Wide)

(Powers/McHattie)
That this item be deferred to allow a meeting of the Multi-Residential Property Taxation Sub-Committee to be held to further address the report. CARRIED

8.3 2009 Tax Policies (FCS09032) (City Wide)
(Jackson/Powers)
a) That the following optional property classes be continued for the 2009 taxation year:
• New Multi-Residential;
• Parking Lot and Vacant Land;
• Large Industrial;

b) That staff report back on the final tax ratios to be established for the 2009 taxation year, pending final approval of the 2009 budget, and that these final tax ratios ensure:

(i) That, subject to the Provincial Levy Restriction, the maximum allowable (50%) of the 2009 budgetary increase be passed onto the Commercial and Industrial property classes;

(ii) That, the Farm tax ratio be reduced such that the final average total tax impact for the Farm property classes equals that of the final average total tax impact for the Residential property class;

c) That the following tax reductions be established for the 2009 taxation year:
• Vacant units and excess land subclass (residual commercial) 30%
• Vacant units and excess land subclass (residual industrial) 30%
• Vacant units and excess land subclass (large industrial) 30%
• Farmland awaiting development (1st subclass) 25%
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- Farmland awaiting development (2nd subclass) 0%

d) That the existing property tax relief deferral program for low-income seniors and disabled persons be continued for the 2009 taxation year;

e) That the existing 40% tax rebate for eligible charities and similar organizations be continued for the 2009 taxation year;

f) That the existing provincially mandated vacancy rebate for eligible commercial and industrial properties be continued for the 2009 taxation year;

g) That the existing 100% tax rebate for Veteran’s Clubhouses and Legion Halls be continued for an additional three years (2009-2011 taxation years), and that the definition of an “eligible property” be expanded to include all property classes;

h) That staff be directed to further review the Heritage Tax Rebate Program after the 2009 budget process;

i) That the existing Senior’s (65+) Tax Rebate Program be continued, with the following criteria updated for the 2009 taxation year:

   (i) **Income threshold (150% of GIS couple)** increased to $31,030 ($30,170 in 2008);

   (ii) **Assessment cap (120% of city-wide average)** increased to $283,300 ($266,300 in 2008);

   (iii) **Rebate** increased by the CPI index to $160 ($156 in 2008); and

j) That the City Solicitor & Corporate Counsel be authorized and directed to prepare all necessary by-laws, for Council approval, for the purposes of establishing the tax policies for the 2009 taxation year. CARRIED.

9. MOTIONS

None

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

None
11. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

None

12. ADJOURNMENT

(Powers/Pearson)
There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor F. Eisenberger

M. Gallagher, Co-ordinator
Council, Committee of the Whole