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Local state of emergency to continue; CAO in charge until end of summer

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Council has voted to keep the local state of emergency going, given the province has extended their own to July 1. They have also voted 8-1 to keep CAO Ron Taylor in charge of the city until the end of summer.

Mayor Andy Letham told council that the local Emergency Operations Centre group made up of the hospital, paramedic service, fire department and police and public health unit all recommended that the local state of emergency be consistent with the province's to avoid confusion.

Letham shared that he has wavered on the issue of keeping it in place locally, hoping that particularly once the province was in Stage 2 of their re-opening plan all states of emergency would be lifted.

Councillor Doug Elmslie was the first to volunteer a position stating, "There is no downside to keeping (it) in place. We need consistency with the province, and we need to be in-sync with the province."

Councillor Ron Ashmore offered what would be the only opposing view.

"I disagree with the statements just made. The goal was to flatten the curve and have hospital beds available. We are there. The economy needs to re-open. Three weeks have become three months" and the state of emergency needs to be lifted, he says.

Councillors Emmett Yeo, Kathleer Seymour-Fagan, Andrew Veale, Tracy Richardson, and Pat Dunn all believed it was best to mirror the province.

In the end, there was no move by council to eliminate the local state of emergency.

Council continues delegation of power to CAO

Ashmore also suggested that it was time for council to end the special powers that have been delegated to CAO Ron Taylor at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ashmore shared, “We have proven that we are able to meet, function and do business. We need to restore 100 per cent of council’s authority to its duly elected members.”

His request sparked a flurry of conversation around the issue.

Yeo reminded those gathered that “this is normally the time of year that we delegate power to the CAO anyway to manage things till fall.”

Elmslie agreed with Yeo adding, “The summer season is upon us when power is normally delegated to the CAO. The state of emergency is still in place. I think this memorandum to end delegation of powers is premature.”

O’Reilly asked Taylor, “If there was an emergency situation would the CAO share it with council?”

Taylor assured council that they would be

kept in the loop and there would be regular discussions as there have been since the beginning of the pandemic.

Letham asked Taylor to share with council what he has done with his delegated powers since mid-March.

Taylor focused on a few very narrow areas including expediting the procurement of material like PPEs for city staff and decisions regarding budgeting and cash flow issues for the city. No real estate transfers have been done and no permanent changes have been made to city staff or the makeup of city committees.

Letham asked Taylor if keeping the delegation of power in place would provide the CAO more flexibility in getting the community moving again economically once the pandemic has waned.

Before council affirmed the CAO would remain in charge until the end of summer Taylor shared there are some time-saving advantages to the delegated authority remaining, since there are only two council meetings in the summer.

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