

Four complaints fielded by Integrity Commissioner between 2019 and 2020

Aurora's Integrity Commissioner evaluated four separate complaints against members of Council and municipal staff between 2019 and 2020.

The details were presented to Council last week, sitting at the Committee level, after lawmakers this past winter asked that further information on the nature of the complaints be made public.

The first complaint in this time period, according to the report from Principles Integrity, was lodged in August of 2019 alleging that a member of Council had improperly interfered in a bylaw enforcement issue and had disclosed the identity of the bylaw complainant.

A resolution on the allegation, however, was not included in the report.

A second complaint came that October with an allegation a member of Council was in a conflict of interest in participating in consideration of certain matters before Council as a result of the member's family members being involved in an industry which might potentially benefit from increased business opportunities.

The nature of the matter up for discussion was not disclosed, but a resolution was found.

Following a review of the relevant considerations involved in determining whether a conflict of interest exists, we were satisfied that no such conflict of interest existed, said the consultants.

A month later, a third complaint was lodged against the whole of Council had improperly interfered in operational matters including bylaw enforcement and licensing; had failed to encourage respect for Town bylaws; had improperly invoked police intervention; bribed an individual; directed bylaw enforcement activities for improper purposes in order to benefit friends; and alleging incomplete campaign election filings.

In thoroughly reviewing each allegation, we determined that most matters related specifically to operational decisions which had been appropriately taken and that the remainder were well beyond our jurisdiction or significantly out of time, arising from facts occurring well before our appointment as Integrity Commissioner, they said.

The fourth complaint, brought forward in August of last year, was related to staff alleging conduct issues by operational staff.

We provided an explanatory disposition letter re-directing the complainant to the appropriate administrative staff, they said.

Services provided by the Integrity Commissioners went beyond complaints lodged against Council, individual elected members and municipal staff. They also served on a consultancy basis fielding questions from lawmakers on the right path forward.

We provided written advice to a member of Council regarding the role a member of Council may play in soliciting financial sponsorships from builder businesses and others in the community in support of a local community event, the Aurora Food and Cultural Festival [sic], while ensuring compliance with the Code of Conduct, they said, referring to rules involving members of Council becoming involved in fundraising for charitable, not-for-profit and community-based groups.

In reviewing the expectations established around involvement in fundraising, including solicitations of donations in support of community events, we provided advice that the member should avoid soliciting donations from organizations or individuals who have any matter before Council, or who may be engaged in the Town's procurement process, they said. We further advised that the member should have no role in handling funds or in directing how funds are received or spent.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter