

EX6.1.6

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Regarding item #2019.EX6.1

The staff report on having a plan (now) to deal with the Quayside Waterfront Toronto/Sidewalk Labs coming proposal indeed covers many significant actions that are a must. Having this plan now for City of Toronto staff and, by default, citizens of Toronto is critical and should not be delayed.

I do encourage, however, the specific addition of charging your Open Data team within the City **to have a significant leadership role in this process.**

As the former Open Data Lead with this team, I can't state enough how much political optics and hierarchy tend to over-ride specific staff who have the proper knowledge base(s) to be intimately involved. Often this lends itself to risk free edited reports and recommendations that are actually detrimental to outcomes. Too many times, bodies were (are) appointed to take action on complex issues without being up-to-speed on the complexity of the same issues. In this case, and when it comes to the data realm, you have an existing team who demonstrate both experience and high exposure to citizens and the tech community alike. And this experience — and being able to get off the ground running — is absolutely essential in this particular debate.

I would argue that the City is coming late to discussing these issues, let alone actioning any decision making that is necessary for any smart city outcomes to actually happen. You do not have much time to effectively navigate all of the issues surrounding this proposal. You would be much better off at the starting gate to leverage the experience in house and not find yourselves appointing individuals who may have significant titles in the organization but do not have the knowledge to know what is pro and con and nuance.

I say this reminded that there are many talented persons working for the City who are no doubt capable of leading and facilitating the work but very few have the understanding needed to do the job most efficiently. Because the Open Data team tends to be less exposed than many other teams within the city, I make this request knowing that it is unlikely to be articulated by the various team masters or the team itself.

The Exec Committee and, ultimately, City of Toronto Council, should, by now, at least be aware of the activity and mandate of this team (having approved the Open Data Master plan) and heard many depositions from the community around data issues. It would be a great oversight to not involve this group at this time. I suggest involvement at the table is not the same as having authority for leadership at the table. This is a significant distinction. Naming this group in the plan ensures they will be directly involved in a leadership role.

I implore all who sit on the Exec Committee to adopt this plan but make every effort to ensure the Open Data group (under the I&T division) be given a leadership position.

Thank you,

Keith McDonald
The Open News Network
June 5, 2019