

Roodenburg defends overspending on travel budget

Published: February 10, 2011 3:00 PM

Updated: February 10, 2011 3:22 PM

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Quesnel city council has directed staff to create a policy on travel budgets, after concerns were raised over Coun. Laurey-Anne Roodenburg's exceeding her allotted travel expense budget.

Coun. Roodenburg was compensated by acting city manager Jack Marsh for \$1,100, for travel costs, despite having already used the \$4,000 budget allocated to each city councillor.

Coun. Sushil Thapar stated he did not understand why Roodenburg "went over budget by 30 per cent" or "why it didn't come to council for pre-approval."

Coun. Roodenburg replied that she didn't try to hide anything and that she does put a lot of her own funds into representing the city.

"We do not, as a council, have the funds needed to truly represent the community the way it should be represented," she said.

The city did have a large enough amount within their budget to cover the costs.

"There were sufficient funds in place," city manager Jack Stecyk said.

However Thapar wasn't convinced.

"The city provides you with a stipend," he said.

"I wouldn't blame council for my over spending."

Roodenburg said she is all for a policy, but felt the issue was long drawn out.

"Enough is enough, let's get back to important city business," she said.

"I made a motion that this goes back to staff to create a policy to deal with those questions that haven't been answered – what do we do if there's left over money that a councillor hasn't used?"

She pointed out the money is there for councillors to use and if council isn't "out there representing itself, it's not doing its job."

Roodenburg reiterated she had no hidden agenda, adding the issue was not meant to be a long drawn out affair.

“I think we need to refocus on working on the budget,” she said.

“This has now gone back to staff and they will be looking for input from council on setting up a policy that deals with council travel and council funds.” Her input on the policy?

“My main point when we have a budget [is] getting the maximum flexibility we can get,” she said.

“Having the opportunity to use what other council members can’t use.”

Roodenburg further stressed the importance of attending conventions and meetings.

“If we don’t get to these meetings, [we aren’t] getting the community’s face out there and sometimes things don’t happen for your community.”