



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Committee of the Whole Agenda **AMENDED**
May 20, 2020 5:00-8:00 p.m.
Virtual Zoom Presentation

1. Roll Call
2. Call to Order
3. Announcements
4. Approval of Agenda, including additions or deletions
5. 5:00-5:15 Introduction to budgeting process
6. 5:15-6:15 **Capital Budget – UPDATED**
7. 6:15-6:30 Break
8. 6:30-7:45 Discussion & Direction from Council
 - a. **Capital Infrastructure Requests & Priorities - UPDATED**
9. 7:45-8:00 Discussion and overview of the next budget session
 - a. Date of next meeting
10. Adjournment



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Special Committee of the Whole Capital Budget Minutes

May 20, 2020 5:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting – via Zoom

1. Call of Roll

Council Present:

Abraham Zebian, Mayor

Rupert Jannasch, Councillor, District 1

Scott McLean, Councillor, District 2

Mark McLean, Councillor, District 3

Jeff Hartt, Councillor, District 4

Debbie Francis, District 5

Paul Morton, Deputy Mayor, District 8

Bob Morton, Councillor, District 6

Ed Sherman, Councillor, District 7

Richard Murphy, Councillor, District 9

Laurie Murley, Councillor, District 10

Jim Ivey, Councillor, District 11

Staff and Guests Present:

Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

Todd Richard, Dir. Public Works

Kathy Kehoe, Dir. Community
Development

Shelleena Thornton, Administrative
Supervisor

Carlee Rochon, Dir. Financial Services

Rhonda Brown, Municipal Clerk

Madelyn LeMay, Dir. Planning &
Development

Members of the public watched the meeting using Facebook Live.

2. Call to Order

Mayor Zebian called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

3. Announcements

This meeting was to discuss the 2020/21 Capital Budget and next week meetings will be held to discuss the 2020/21 operational budgets. Residents were reminded to stay safe and keep flattening the curve of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Approval of Agenda, including additions or deletions

MOVED by Councillors Ivey and Murphy that the agenda be approved.

Motion Carried.

5. Introduction to budgeting process

Director Rochon informed the budgets of the former Municipality and Town were reviewed as part of the process to help create a budget that was fair to all areas of the West Hants Regional Municipality (WHRM).

The \$21.6 Million Capital Budget being presented balances the replacement of aging infrastructure with new projects. The funding sources identified for the capital projects is what is currently known; however, new grant opportunities may support the budget as they become available. The Departmental Directors have attempted to connect the budget with priorities identified by Council.

6. Capital Budget

Director Rochon informed WHRM recognizes any asset over \$2500 as a capital asset and some funds have restrictions and reporting requirements. Many of the projects that are proposed to use borrowing from the Municipal Finance Corporation were supported by various studies, consolidation or were part of previous projects started, such as the Sports Complex. Each section of the 2020-21 Capital Budget was reviewed.

The total proposed Capital Budget for 2020-21 was \$21,639,982.

Discussion Points:

- To replenish Capital Reserves, Council determines an amount to contribute each year which is then divided up based on the Reserve Policy. Operational Reserves are replenished by operational surpluses each year. Ultimately all funding come from ratepayers.
- Borrowing rates are fixed rates through the Municipal Finance Corporation, these are not affected by changes in bank rates over time.
- Council awards all contracts that are over the CAO's signing authority.
- Gas Tax funding received is base on the previous year, so any current issue due to COVID-19 and less travel will not be seen until next year.
- The \$10,000 for watershed roads would be for minor maintenance and gravel for potholes. The minor repairs would not help water quality issues.
- The Hantsport Willow St. repair and College Rd. projects have been moved to Year 2 and Year 5 respectively in the 5-Year Capital Plan, as there may be future grant opportunities and for fair distribution of projects in WHRM. Public Works staff will do minor maintenance work on Willow St. until next year.
- The Hatch Study identified the former Town Office on King Street as a better administration building for WHRM, but it requires a full renovation that could take a year to complete.
- The Council Chamber upgrades are for IT equipment to be used now, the amount in the budget would be required if current equipment could not be reused.
- Upgrades to the Old Parish Cemetery is Year 2 of a 3-year project. This year the North wall would be repaired.
- Improvements to Meadow Pond include parking, gated trail access points and improved trails. It does not include a washroom which could cost an additional \$12,000.

- The difference in cost for the Falmouth and Windsor water main relocations, due to the Highway 101 twinning, is due to the size and number of pipes at each location. The cost shown is only half; the Province has agreed to pay the other half.
- Sidewalk rehabilitations in the capital budget would be due to new or replacing of sidewalks. None in areas without a municipal road such as Chester Road, which is Provincially owned.
- Playboxes at recreation sites are storage boxes for equipment/toys for public use.
- A Request for Proposal will be issued for best course of action to repair the cement under the pool liner at the Hants Aquatic Center; staff will work with the Hants Aquatic Society who owns the pool.
- The Coach House upgrades are for roof repairs, veranda, and tie in the concrete to create a usable community space.
- There are no plans for work on Underwood Rd, but Underwood Dr is in the 5-Year Capital Plan.
- To help maintain J-Class Roads which are Provincially owned, \$200,000 per year would be ideal; however, to reduce the Capital Budget, \$50,000 was requested to still do some maintenance. These projects are cost-shared with the Province. The Municipality provided a priority list of roads to the Province, but the Province would have final decision on which roads were repaired.
- There will be minor repairs to Hantsport Public Works Garage, funding approved in 2019-20 but not used would be carried over to this year.
- The Pumper/Tanker 1 is for Brooklyn Fire Department, costs have increased since originally proposed in the West Hants 2019-20 budget, due to increased in cost of goods and the low Canadian dollar.
- The Aerial Snorkel for Windsor Fire Department is a quint truck which is a smaller pumper/aerial combo.
- The Landing project has \$12,000 to complete the lighthouse structure and \$100,000 to help with flood protection.
- Some cameras have been used to help illegal dumping or other issues, but it is not enough for legal cases. Staff have been empowered as Special Constables to help enforce watershed and environment regulations.
- The design for the Hantsport Fire Hall will be put out to tender with hopes of more than one bidder. As per a fire service agreement, staff will be working with Kings County on their capital contribution for the project. The building would be tendered this year and built next year.

Director Rochon reviewed the list of previously approved internal loans and the 5-year Capital Plan which showed the total cost and sources of multi-year projects. Not all projects in the 5-Year Capital Plan are in the 2020-21 Capital Budget. Funding sources for these projects may change over time as new funding opportunities are identified. Water and sewer projects are ultimately funded through user rates. The 5-Year Capital budget was \$70.1 Million.

Discussion Points:

- The Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing is still consolidating debt as part of the Consolidation to determine the WHRM's new debt ratio; based on the previous debt ratios there is still capacity. The debt servicing cost are being budgeted for.
- Fire Chief Committee is using the Fire Services Study to standardize equipment and develop a schedule for fire equipment replacement. There is some fire equipment in the operational budget.
- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities prediction of lower tax revenue is not applicable to every municipality due to variations in revenue streams. Property Valuation Services Corporation seems to indicate residential assessments may not be significantly impacted by COVID-19 as properties are still being built or bought. Although commercial property assessment does depend on business revenue, it only comprises 9% of the Municipality's tax base and some businesses may be doing better than others. Businesses in the tourism sector may be affected most. The Operational Budget will show more impacts of COVID-19, however the Provincial message is to continue with business and construction, so the Capital Budget is optimistic.
- Purchased vehicles continue to be used well beyond their expected life, so fleet is aging. The former West Hants vehicle purchases were financed over 5 years so continues to be seen in the budget; the former Town recognized total cost in Year 1.
- Due to size of Municipality it is more economical to purchase specialized vehicles and equipment to be run by trained staff, rather than contracting the services out. The cost of some equipment, such as the vacuum truck/jet rotor, may be split between departments.

Director Rochon reviewed the Gas Tax Funding Summary noting projects using Gas Tax require separate motions and there are limits on ability to stack funding sources. The Gas Tax Reserve does collect interest.

7. Break

The Committee decided not to take a break.

8. Discussion & Direction from Council

a. Capital Infrastructure Request & Priorities

CAO Phillips summarized the proposed Capital Budget noting approximately 40% was from borrowing and 60% from other funding sources. The Co-ordinating Committee had requested post Consolidation funds for infrastructure from the Province, but the Province wanted the new Council to decide on the project

priorities. The CAO presented a revised list of projects for post Consolidation funding that would meet most of the principles set by the Co-ordinating Committee and would benefit both urban and rural residents. Council will need to confirm project priorities by the end of the budget deliberations.

Discussion Points

- Active transportation should also include options for bike routes in rural areas, not just the rails to trails project which run through the core areas.
- If Council re-confirmed the \$3 Million from Gas Tax for rural internet as committed by the former West Hants, then with there could be total of \$5.2 Million with the suggested \$2.2 Million post Consolidation funding.
- Branding and beautification projects could be included on list, but there may be better funding options for the projects or be part of operations.
- Province has not stated a limit for the post Consolidation funding request, additional items could be added to provide options which may also align with Provincial priorities.

9. Discussion and overview of the next budget session

a. Date of next meeting

The next budget meeting would be May 25, 2020 at 5:30 pm to discuss the Reserve and Operational Budgets and would probably continue on May 27, 2020 at 5:30.

10. Adjournment

**MOVED by Councillors Jannasch and Ivey that the meeting adjourn.
Motion Carried.**

The meeting ended at 7:14 pm.

Abraham Zebian, Mayor

Rhonda Brown, Municipal Clerk