



**WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes  
June 3, 2021 5:00 p.m.**

**Virtual Zoom Presentation and Facebook Livestreamed**

1. **Call to Order** – Mayor Zebian called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. **Attendance**

Council Present:

Abraham Zebian, Mayor	Paul Morton, Deputy Mayor, Dist. 8 <i>(joined at 6:20)</i>
Rupert Jannasch, Councillor, Dist. 1	Scott McLean, Councillor, Dist. 2
Bob Morton, Councillor, Dist. 6 <i>(joined at 5:15)</i>	Ed Sherman, Councillor, Dist. 7
Mark McLean, Councillor, Dist. 3	Jeff Hartt, Councillor, Dist. 4
Laurie Murley, Councillor, Dist. 10	Debbie Francis, Councillor, Dist. 5
Jim Ivey, Councillor, Dist. 11	

Staff and Guests Present:

Mark Phillips, CAO	Carlee Rochon, Dir. Financial Services
Todd Richard, Dir. Public Works	Kathy Kehoe, Dir., Community Development
Shelleena Thornton, Adm. Supervisor	Carmen Dewar-Miller, Admin Assistant, Financial Services
Madelyn LeMay, Dir. Planning & Development	Chief Chris Spencer, SFD
Chief Jamie Juteau, WFD	Chief Peter Johnston, HFD & SWHFD
Chief Jamie Cochrane, BFD 1&2	
Chief Danny Patterson, WVFD	

3. **Announcements** – Mayor Zebian mentioned that this was the third straight night of budget meetings. He welcomed the fire chiefs.

4. **Approval of the Agenda**, including additions or deletions

Councillor Francis requested the agenda be amended to add an in-camera session under MGA Section 22., (2), (c), regarding a personnel matter as Item 11(b).

**MOVED BY COUNCILLORS MURLEY AND M. MCLEAN THAT  
THE AGENDA BE APPROVED AS AMENDED. MOTION  
CARRIED.**

5. **Declaration of Conflict of Interest** – There were no declarations.

6. **Fire Protection**

Director Rochon presented a summary overview including details for each Fire Department, then reviewed the departments individually. COVID impacted categories such as training and testing.

Discussion Points:

- Summary spreadsheet was not included in the original budget document.
- Insurance is rising across the board, Municipal Insurance RFP in the works for the coming year.
- Budgets adjusted last year due to COVID. Numbers for the coming year are closer to actuals for a normal year.
- New Hantsport Fire Station figures reviewed
- Water rescue proposal from Walton Fire Department (WVFD) is a key 5yr budget item.
- Request for "Other" actuals and breakout of "Other" in the Windsor Fire Department (WFD) budget (phone system, cable, beverage items, service medals, banquet)
- Discussion with Chiefs Johnston and Juteau regarding rescue boat ask for South West Hants Fire Department (SWHFD). Shortage of trained personnel close by, especially during working hours. Windsor would be the go-to, about 20 minutes from initial page. One call in the last six years.
- Discussion on building up and utilization of the Fire Reserve.

## **7. Department of Public Works**

Director Rochon reviewed the Public Works line items with input from Director Richard.

Discussion Points:

### **Roads & Streets**

- Reallocation of funds based on lane kilometers
- Saving money by not contracting out the plowing / snow removal
- Many questions surrounding new loaders – are two required? 15-year financing, cost sharing (25% Water Utility for main breaks, aggregates, pipe), maintenance costs after five years, general rating vs area rating covering payments, fuel, maintenance - at the discretion / direction of Council.

### **Waste Collection and Disposal**

- substantial decrease on the Windsor side cost-wise

### **Landfill**

- Net zero impact on the tax rate based on the budgeted amount.
- Landfill site maintenance cost increase due to methane gasses, specialized equipment required.

### **Waste Diversion**

- Revenue stream allocated for the administration of Region 6 under the Administration category.

### **Municipal Facilities**

- Budget reflects operation of two buildings – we do not need two. From staff perspective, King is the preferred site.
- Would be general rated.

### **Courthouse**

- is 69 years old. Structure that will need a lot of work.
- Property has been appraised.
- Department of Justice appreciates the security of the one-tenant building.

### **Libraries**

- Moved into a general-rated item.

### **Food Bank**

- managed by our facilities managers.

### **Utilities**

#### **West Hants Sewer**

- Impacted by allocation and union cost increases.
- Increase in depreciation.
- Gets put into reserve fund.
- Operating at a deficit.
- Salary portion looks like an increase but is pretty much a net situation.
- Asset management software, still in implementation state. COVID has slowed us down. It is a cost.
- OT included in salaries.

#### **Windsor Sewer**

- This utility might be due for a rate review. This is the last year for rates within its study.
- Not as complicated as a water rate review, provide notice and internal preparation (staff time) and the cost of a consultant.
- ERT meters were discussed, manual reads cause delay, human error. ERTs are a good thing, especially if more frequent billing comes into play.

## **8. Council Discussion**

CAO Phillips addressed Council to advise of updates and adjustments made to the budget over the last day including some changes as directed by Council. Staff will always promote a stable tax rate and service delivery. Offering another proposal for consideration tonight.

Director Rochon provided an overview of the updated budget.

#### Discussion Points:

- Still concerns with debt ratio, what is debt number from last year, what will it be this year?
- Administration fees broken down last year to this year, some fees cannot be revised.

- Removing administration fees would put them back on the general rate.
- Budget document is not user-friendly.

## 9. Tax Modeling Scenarios

Rate structure was reviewed. Based on the service level survey and tax modeling workshop that Council participated in last winter, Director Rochon presented two tax modelling scenarios. Scenario one – general rating the RCMP; scenario two – general rating everything but cemeteries.

### Discussion Points:

- Interest in seeing things that benefit the whole region. Sidewalks and roads. Came into consolidation to make things fair.
- Debt ratio continues to be a concern as it appears to be increasing; however, still in a healthy position.
- After audit, surplus goes into the Operating Reserve.
- Mention of holding the rates.
- Reserves are healthy.
- Concern as to Provincial money forthcoming due to COVID
- Director Rochon mentions a sewer rebate, will be looking into this in the coming year as policy or By-law.
- Request to reduce the tax rate \$0.02 across the board.
- Concern re the lift on property assessments this year, even if rate goes down, residents could pay more.
- Create a ratio to address rate disparity.

## 10.a) Council Discussion

Mayor Zebian summarized as follows:

- Looking for a decrease across the board.
- Sewer rebate would be good.
- SWHFD watercraft, not for this budget, come back and work with staff on an inflatable, portable option down the road.
- Can staff give us a surplus scenario based on selling one of the municipal complexes. Polled Council, majority agreed.
- Possibly show no decrease in tax rate (hold)?

### Discussion Points:

- What if we do not get the Provincial funding?
- We have pushed projects affected by that funding to Year Two, can be revised. Does not impact the current year.
- More consensus on a residential reduction across the board of \$0.02, keep commercial at \$0.01.
- Resolutions and tax exemptions are bumped to Tues., June 8, 2021, Committee of the Whole and Special Council
- Capital projects within the budget must still be passed by Council.
- Items of concerns include a drone, Sports Complex parking, loader utilization and purchase / leasing options.

- Confirmation of debt servicing percentage.
- Note the post-consolidation utilization in 2021/22 budget.

b) **In-Camera**

**MOVED BY COUNCILLOR MURLEY AND DEPUTY MAYOR MORTON TO MOVE THE MEETING IN CAMERA AT 10:11 P.M TO DISCUSS A PERSONNEL MATTER AS PER THE MGA SECTION 22(2)(C). MOTION CARRIED.**

**MOVED BY COUNCILLORS MURLEY AND SHERMAN TO MOVE THE MEETING IN CAMERA AT 10:55 P.M. MOTION CARRIED.**

11. **Adjournment** – No motion to adjourn at 11pm and no motions made after in-camera as per CAO Phillips. Next meeting is June 8, 2021.

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Mayor Abraham Zebian (Chair)

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Shelleena Thornton, Admin  
Supervisor