

WEST HANTS MUNICIPALITY
Committee of the Whole – Budget Meeting Agenda
May 11, 2022, 5:30 p.m.
Sanford Council Chambers 76 Morison Dr, Windsor, NS
(also held via virtual via Zoom and Facebook livestreamed)
Agenda is subject to changes up to and including during the meeting



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1. Call to Order
 2. Attendance
 3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
 4. Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest
 5. Announcements
 6. 5:30-8:00 Budget Direction – Material Review
 7. 8:00-8:30 Break
 7. 8:30-9:30 Discussion of Council
 9. Public Participation Period
 10. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment
 - a. TBD

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Committee of the Whole Budget - Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.



1. Call to Order - Mayor Zebian called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.
2. Attendance

Council:

Abraham Zebian, Mayor
Rupert Jannasch, Councillor Dist. 1
Scott McLean, Councillor Dist. 2
Mark McLean, Councillor Dist. 3
Jeff Hartt, Councillor Dist. 4
Debbie Francis, Councillor Dist. 5

Paul Morton, Deputy Mayor Dist. 8 (ZOOM)
Bob Morton, Councillor Dist. 6
Ed Sherman, Councillor Dist. 7
John A. Smith, Councillor Dist. 9
Laurie Murley, Councillor Dist. 10
Jim Ivey, Councillor Dist. 11 (ZOOM)

Staff:

Mark Phillips, CAO
Shelleena Thornton, Municipal
Operations Supervisor
Deanna Snair, Exec. Asst/ Clerk
Kathy Kehoe, Dir. Community
Development

Todd Richard, Dir. Public Works
Carlee Rochon, Dir. Financial Services

Madelyn LeMay, Dir. Planning and
Development

3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
Additions: Item: Under discussion of Council Newport & District Rink Commission
Discussion

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

4. Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest – None were declared.
5. Announcements
Mayor Zebian acknowledged that West Hants Regional Municipality recognizes that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. West Hants Regional Municipality also recognizes that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to each other and this land.

Councillor Francis noted she would need to step out at approximately 7:30p.m. Should an item arise that requires discussion, a request was made to accommodate her absence so that she could be part of the discussion.

6. Budget Direction – Material Review

Director Rochon presented an overview of the previous budget sessions related to the general and area rate structures for 2022-2023, the proposed Operating budget as of April 28, 2022, the proposed changes (no change) to the residential tax rates for all of three areas, the proposed \$0.05 commercial tax rate reduction for the Windsor (equates to \$27,022.00 on the area rate) to create some balance between the Windsor and Hantsport rate, the 2022-2023 Capital budget, the projected debt servicing ratios, and the Reserve budget (Operating, Capital and Special).

Discussion Points:

- Police servicing is based on a 70/30 split between West Hants and Windsor.
- Anything within the water utility over the \$250,000.00 threshold requires Utility and Review Board (UARB) approval after Council approval.

Following the direction of Council at the April 28, 2022, meeting Director Rochon provided an updated budget reflecting the 3.5 % reduction (approximately \$1 million dollars) on the Operating expenses and a 5% reduction on the 2022-23 Capital budget.

CAO Phillips reviewed the 2022-2023 Budget information provided in the package as per Councils direction.

Discussion Points:

- The proposed budget was colour coded to reflect the reductions and impacts on service delivery. Green reflects improved accuracy within the numbers. Service levels can be delivered with little or no impact. Red reflects areas (both in Operational and Capital) that pose a risk, there will be impacts to the service level currently being delivered. Staff advise there is a level of caution to consider. There are certain areas that cannot be reduced (gas accounts, education costs that are dictated to the municipality or fixed costs like insurances. Yellow reflects a higher level of accuracy within the numbers. These numbers are near or beyond the comfort level of staff leaving no room for flexibility. This may translate into a deficit (fuel) or could affect a new request or proposal.
- The increased budget for the Avondale Boat Launch is a reflection of a further review of the project, area and plan. Initially the budget contained a high level the class D estimate. This type of project has a level of discretion. There may be government funding available for this project.
- The consensus/comfort level with the Deed Transfer Tax was to set it at \$1.8 million.

Director Rochon gave a high-level review of the proposed reduction changes and impacts on the 2022-23 Operating and Capital budgets.

Discussion Points on areas identified as green:

- There is comfort within the areas identified in the green (Operations) these proposed reductions will not impact service levels. The increased accuracy is a

reflection of actual costs in some areas, a staff vacancy and an inability to hire staff (lack of available staff that meet the requirements/criteria). In this case staff are exploring internal options and building programs around this concern.

Discussion Points on areas coloured yellow:

Fire Department:

- These budgets were lean from the start, concern was raised in reducing the fuel budget.
- The Fire service training ground is a continuation of a project started in the 2021-22 fiscal year. The plans require an engineer's stamp in Nova Scotia and some costs associated with permits.

Landfill:

- The maintenance costs for the West Hants landfill are general rated, but there is a revenue source that is transferred against it. Only the expensed amounts were transferred. It is in this years' budget as the project was not able to be completed due to contractor availability. The intention was to space this project over two (2) years to reduce the costs.

Email Security:

- Email security is a large expense but a valuable resource to have in place.

HMCC:

- The request is for financial support to increase funding to improve staff retention and assist with current workload and capacity.

Discussion Points on areas coloured red:

- The municipal facility maintenance reduction only allows for reactive maintenance.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS B. MORTON AND MURLEY THAT COUNCIL RECOMMENDS ACCEPTING ALL THE GREEN CHANGES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE THREE FIRE DEPARTMENT LINES. MOTION CARRIED. Nays: Mayor Zebian

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS M. MCLEAN AND HARTT THAT COUNCIL APPROVES THE YELLOW REDUCTIONS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FOODBANK, EMAIL SECURITY, THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND THE ELECTRIC CAR CHARGERS.

At 7:08 pm the MOVER and SECONDER withdrew the motion.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS M. MCLEAN AND HARTT THAT COUNCIL ACCEPTS THE NEW YELLOW VALUES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING STATIONS, THE FOODBANK, THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND THE EMAIL SECURITY.

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR P. MORTON AND COUNCILLOR FRANCIS THAT THE MOTION BE AMENDED TO INCLUDE HMCC TO REMAIN IN THE BUDGET. MOTION CARRIED

Full motion as amended:

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS M. MCLEAN AND HARTT THAT COUNCIL ACCEPTS THE NEW YELLOW VALUES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING STATIONS, THE FOODBANK, THE EMAIL SECURITY, THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND HMCC. MOTION CARRIED

Discussion Points on the Full motion as amended:

- Mayor Zebian felt the cuts were a mistake, these changes will be felt by the community.
- CAO reinforced that the items coloured yellow are a level of concern. There may be an impact on operations, leaving no room for extras and will limit flexibility. The position within the Planning Department is a resource that allows capacity and the ability to keep up with development increases and a growing Commercial District coming out of a pandemic.
- There was not a lot of capacity within the expense side to have reductions. Movement has been identified in the green colours. Everything else will have some form of impact on service levels. Staff review as much history as possible (past budgets) to level out what are perceived or seen as peaks and valleys within the budget.
- Flexibility still exists within each Departments full budget to manage individual line items. If there is an area that comes in under budget, those funds could be allocated to another area within that department.
- Council struggled with the motions being made and the unknown impacts that these may have on the rate payers. Mayor Zebian clarified the wording used should have been “ voting on” rather than a motion. Wherever the word motion was used, it was to give direction to staff to provide Council with information on the impacts of those directions so an informed decision could be made.

At 7:24 p.m. both the mover and seconder rescinded the motion.

Each item identified in yellow was reviewed. Direction was given for staff to return after the break with the impacts of the proposed reductions. Areas identified by Council to remain unchanged (not at a reduced budget) were travel assistance, electric lease vehicle, sponsorship in kind, the Planning Department, sewage collection systems pipe maintenance, Windsor Sewer - admin equipment maintenance, sewage treatment and disposal – Lagoon Drive and Wentworth, Hantsport foodbank, email security, any items related to the fire departments and the HMCC grant.

7. Break

At 7:56 p.m. the meeting adjourned for break.

At 8:51 p.m. the meeting resumed.

Director Rochon reviewed the estimated impacts the proposed changes had on the rates. The result was a reduction of \$0.013 on the regional general rate, a \$0.022 (\$1.6377) on the Hantsport rate, a \$0.023 (\$1.8569) reduction on the Windsor rate and no change on the West Hants rate (\$1.0323), the reliance on the reserve to assist with the tax rate was reduced by \$204,000.00 bring the new estimated total to \$121,000.00. There is no change to any of the commercial rates.

The items in red were reviewed. Consensus was for the red to remain at current value except for Planning and Development and the Brooklyn Fire Department. Those items would be increased to reflect the new proposed value.

Capital Budget

Director Rochon reviewed the Capital budget. The same process was followed as per the Operational budget. Items identified as green indicate a low risk. However, some of these reductions may have impacts on operations as the projects do have debt servicing associated with them. The focus was on loan and debt financing to reduce interest expense on operations.

The intention was to reduce debt serving costs. Most of the projects identified are able to be funded through CCBF or Reserves and not affect the tax rate.

Consensus was that all the Fire Department budgets remain unchanged (no reductions). However, when a fire truck comes to council in the future there is a need to have a detailed discussion to determine the need.

Council identified areas where a reduction was proposed.

Discussion Points on the green areas:

- Hobarts beach- the reduced budget is a reflection a review of the scope and capacity of the project. The use will be more in line with recreational vs commercial. There is ability to do some of the work either in house or a reduced cost.
- Sports complex parking – these were excess funds(not borrowed) left over from last year. Would be used to add gravel to the front area for increased parking.
- Municipal complex renovation – there is no effect on the budget if it remains in at current or at a reduced amount.
- Replace 2015 Dodge 3500 vehicle, the reduced amount is a reflection of a change in the equipment. The updated request was for a van vs a truck. It would be used for service work by electrician.

Discussions on the yellow areas. The following proposals were made:

- Old parish cemetery – there is risk associated with the state of the wall and continued deterioration. Failure to do the work this year will result in it needing to be completed next year at a higher cost. Consensus was to complete the repair of

both walls this year. The money comes from CCBF (not borrowed money), the costs will only increase next year. Comes out of CCFB. Proposed new amount was \$637,991.00 to complete the work to both walls.

- Sports Complex upgrades carry over reserves, more welcoming environment – a new reduced rate was proposed.
- Ice control brine – a system not currently in place. The brine sticks to the roads for pre salting , allowing for a more effective clean up. Proposed at the reduced rate.
- Avondale boat launch- proposed at the new increased rate.
- Traffic radar signs – proposed purchasing two.
- Main service repairs- this may impact budget. A repair will still get completed but it many come in over budget at the end of the year.
- Encoder Receiver Transmitter(ERT)– proposed cost of \$150,000.00. There will be another request next year for the remaining amount to complete the project.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS S. MCLEAN AND HARTT THAT THE MEETING BE ADJOURNED TO A NEW DATE AT 10:39 PM.

Discussion Points:

- Consensus was there were only 13 items left to review. If these items were discussed, staff would have direction and be able to return with updated information at the next meeting.

The MOVER and SECONDER withdrew the motion.

With the recent proposed changes made, the Capital budget was reduced by \$1.6 million, meeting the 5% reduction goal.

Discussion Points on the red items. All items remained at current value except for the following items:

- The Community Development Parks and Grounds vehicle was removed in the Operational budget. This will impact service levels.

At 10:43 p.m Councillor Ivey left the meeting.

- The Public Works vehicle was reduced to reflect the new proposed value.
- The Brooklyn rink had a request in the grants and contributions. The proposed approved grant amount did not match the request. There is a need for a new Zamboni and ice resurfacers (this meets CCBF criteria). Staff are still awaiting information that was not received in time for the budget process.

Reserves Discussion points:

- The primary purpose of the exercise was not to reduce the tax rate but to create the ability to have a surplus at the end of the year. There are significant capital expenditures coming in the next two years. Building the capital reserves for significant capital expenditures that are coming and potentially avoid any debt spiraling that could occur.

- Many residents are struggling. Would like to see a reduction for the West Hants area residents. With the proposed reductions there is an estimate of \$121,000.00 that is being used from the West Hants reserves to keep the rate unchanged. More of the reserves could be transferred to reduce the West Hants tax rate if Council wishes to proceed with this option.

There is a special reserve for Windsor and Hantsport both have a special reserve; they have more infrastructure. Council has multiple options that can be explored (\$1.8 million deed transfer tax that just went into reserves) or a uniform reduction for all areas. Windsor and Hantsport will benefit from the balanced being transferred to reserves to continue building for future expenses.

Director Rochon will take the direction given at tonight's meeting. To return with scenarios for Council to consider pertaining to reserves and creating uniformity within the region. Council would like to see a reduction of at least \$0.02 across the board for all or the rate to remain flat.

A doodle poll will be sent out to determine the next meeting date.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

Council will review at their leisure.

9. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – To be determined on budget.

**MOVED BY COUNCILLORS HARTT AND M. MCLEAN THAT AT 11:21 PM,
THE MEETING ADJOURN. MOTION CARRIED**

Mayor Abraham Zebian

Deanna Snair, Exec. Assistant/ Mun. Cl