

WEST HANTS MUNICIPALITY

Committee of the Whole – Budget Meeting Agenda Amended

May 15, 2024, 5:15 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



-
1. Call to Order
 2. Attendance
 3. Announcements
 4. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
 5. Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest
 6. 5:15-5:30 Review Follow-Up Items from May 13 Meeting
 7. 5:30-5:45 Council Discussion & Direction from May 13 Meeting
 8. 5:45-6:30 General Government Services Overview
 - a. Administration and Governance
 - b. Financial Services
 9. 6:30-7:15 Planning and Development Overview
 - a. Planning and Development
 - b. Building Inspection
 - c. By-Law Enforcement
 - d. Climate Action
 10. 7:15-7:45 Break
 11. 7:45-9:00 Community Development Overview
 - a. Administration
 - b. Program
 - c. Parks & Grounds
 - d. Facilities
 - e. Community Economic Development
 - f. Cemeteries

12. 9:00-9:45 Public Works Overview
 - a. Facilities
 - b. Roads
 - c. Solid Waste

13. 9:45-10:00 ~~a. Discussion & Direction from Council~~
 - b. MGA 22(2)(a) Legal Matter

14. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment
 - a. Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 5:15 p.m.

1. **Call to Order** – Mayor Zebian called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

2. **Attendance**

Council

Abraham Zebian, Mayor	Paul Morton, Deputy Mayor Dist. 8 (6:05 p.m.)
Rupert Jannasch, Councillor Dist. 1	
Scott McLean, Councillor Dist. 2	Ed Sherman, Councillor Dist. 7
Mark McLean, Councillor Dist. 3 (5:18 p.m.)	John Smith, Councillor Dist. 9
Jeff Hartt, Councillor Dist. 4 (5:22 p.m.)	Laurie Murley, Councillor Dist. 10
Debbie Francis, Councillor Dist. 5	Jim Ivey, Councillor Dist. 11

Regrets:

Bob Morton, Councillor Dist. 6

Staff

Mark Phillips, CAO	Deanna Snair, Exec. Asst/ Clerk
Todd Richard, Dir. Public Works	Sara Poirier, Dir. Planning and Development
Carlie Rochon, Dir. Financial Services	Kathy Kehoe, Dir. Community Development

Regrets:

Shelleena Thornton, Municipal Operations Supervisor

3. **Announcements**

Mayor Zebian acknowledged that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and that this land is governed by the treaties of Peace and Friendship signed in 1726. West Hants Regional Municipality also recognizes that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to this land and each other. West Hants Regional Municipality also recognizes African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose history, legacies, and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

A reminder that all meetings are recorded and livestreamed on Facebook for viewing purposes, as per policy and out of respect of those in attendance in the gallery; video/audio recordings are not permitted.

4. **Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions (6:02p.m.)**

Voting occurred by a show of hands.

Additions:

- Item 13 (b) MGA 22(2)(a) Legal Matter

**MOVED BY COUNCILLORS FRANCIS AND SHERMAN THAT THE
2024-05-15 SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AGENDA BE
APPROVED AS AMENDED. MOTION CARRIED**

5. Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest - None

6. Review and Follow up items from May 13th meeting

Dial-A-Ride

The excerpt from the February 22, 2022 Council meeting regarding Dial-A-Ride was shared. A three (3) year funding agreement (\$30,000 through the transportation budget) and adjusted annually for the consumer price index (CPI) as part of budget deliberations. The amount would be disbursed in two payments dependent on mandated reporting requirements. The annual reporting triggered the first installment, and the biannual reporting triggered the second installment.

Concern was raised that 19% for CPI was a large percentage. It was noted that many agreements had different dates for CPI to be added.

Discussion Points:

- No cost-of-living (CPI) increase was applied in the first year (2022-23 = \$30,000)
- In 2023/24 it should have been adjusted by CPI and the final installment should have also been adjusted by CPI.
- CPI was based on a cumulation (amount that should have been applied last year – December and cost of living for the current year).
- In the first year 7.7% for CPI was needed to be applied, the second year 3.4% for CPI had to be applied.

Industrial Park

The Act to Authorize the Levying of a Uniform Tax Rate on Property within the Windsor-West Hants Industrial Park covered Morison Drive, Cole Drive, Sanford Drive, Ivet Lane, Nelson Street and the beginning of Wentworth Road from the Highway into West Hants). The net revenue from the billing difference was \$38,000.

The former Town of Windsor assessment role had ten (10) properties within that were applicable to the Act. Five (5) of those properties were at the West Hants Commercial rate and five (5) were at the Windsor Commercial rate.

The West Hants assessment role has twenty-eight (28) properties, four (54) of which were exempt, two (2) were grants in lieu and three (3-) properties charged the Windsor rate.

In summary there are 26 properties charged the West Hants Commercial Rate, and eight charged the Windsor Commercial Rate.

In order to blend the commercial rates, collaboration would be required with Provincial counterparts to change any part of the Act. The additional challenge was the consolidation and dissolution agreements. These agreements require all debts from the former entities to remain with those entities as defined by the assessment role. Those debts would need to be paid off before the option of blending could be considered if provincial counterparts agreed.

The majority within Morison Drive would pay the West-Hants Commercial rate, within the Coe Drive/McDonalds areas; those properties would be the Windsor Commercial rate except areas past the Super 8; that would be West Hants Commercial rate. Centennial was the Windsor

Commercial rate and not part of the original identified areas within the Industrial Act. The Industrial Act only impacted properties listed within the Act.

To get to a Regional Commercial rate, PVSC would need to identify the area that WHRM was identifying as an Industrial Park outside of what was previously identified, provincial counterparts would need to help with changing the Act component and then Council would need to discuss how the fees associated to the Industrial Park would be determined.

There was value in investigating the process further. After budget deliberations a report will be brought forward to begin discussions.

Windsor's debts mature in 2032 and West Hants debts mature in 2036.

7. Council Discussion & Direction from May 13 Meeting – See above.

8. General Government Services Overview

a) Administration and Governance

Highlights:

- Bulk of legislative changes were associated to the 2024 Municipal Election, (renumeration and Council orientation). Increases also within meeting and committee related expenses.
- Administration Department increases were associated to having a full staff compliment and the proposed additional Communication Specialist (main increase in salary and training development costs).
- Decrease in professional services, legal fees associated to specific departments were reallocated to those areas.
- Changes related to area rates associated with former town CAO pensions were associated with CPI, no changes were projected.

Other General Administrative Services – office supplies, postage, shredding, printing services and other office related expenses.

Highlights:

- IT operation increases were associated to the addition of a cyber security assessment, new council equipment for incoming Council as well as the proposed financial system module.
- Fees associated to various subscriptions have increased.
- Elections budget will be updated based on Councils motion to reflect increased accuracy.
- Increase seen in the new insurance approved by Council.
- The cyber security insurance was also being proposed.
- The “other” category represented staff appreciation, occupational health and safety, other staff committees and other general services including geotechnical, land surveys and accessibility programming. The increase was associated with the addition of land matters and professional services.
- The new rebates (bulk water and sewer rebate) also attributed to the increase in this area.
- Additional resources to support wellness programming as well as an increase for employee training.
- PVSC increases due to their changes (up over \$6,652 from last year).

Discussion Points:

- Cyber security insurance quotes for \$2 million in coverages equated to \$20,000, and for \$1 million in coverage it was quoted to cost \$14,000. Report will be coming to Council for further direction (increase or decrease). There were pros and cons with going through cyber security insurance, the report would also highlight this information.
- The cyber security assessment and educational training for staff was within the \$298,000 noted on the insurance line.
- The sewer and bulk water rebates were proposed to be funded through General Operations, similar to other grants, rebates or assistance programs. The proposed rebates would flow through Finance and be simplified and user friendly by having one application for property tax, bulk water and sewer rebates.

b) Financial Services – not much change.

The biggest change was within salaries and benefits and attributed to having a full staff compliment.

Discussions:

18.25% change noted in benefits and deductions was a lot of the variance within most of salary and benefits. Legislative, WCB, Health and Benefits plan and CRA requirements increased this year. The health plan did not change, the driving force impacting the increase was based usage of the plan (% allocated per department), which fluctuates yearly. WHRM was in their own pool and funded the claims.

Taxation – tax exemptions, recreational components, tax sale expense, day care reduction expenses, low-income property tax assistance rebate program.

Increases seen here were mostly attributed to the motions made during the 2022/23 budget year. The low-income property tax assistance rebate was very successful, more than what was originally anticipated (as communicated in the financial updates). Additional increases may result from assessment changes. The budget was updated to reflect the applications received last year.

Uncollected taxes – although it is not utilized often, there was a requirement to budget for it. This line item was also one of the areas impacted by the 2023/34 budget error (\$5,000 was not added in the overall calculation for the budget).

Discussion Points:

- Forest Lakes has outstanding receivables; no taxes have been written off. If there was a large change, Council would be notified and updated based on legal advice received from the solicitor.
- Low-income property tax rebate program increased by 216%.
- Areas highlighted in orange impacted the budget differently, either through an estimation, calculation or presentation. The September report highlighted everything within the calculation error.

9. Planning and Development Overview

a) Planning and Development Highlights:

- The largest variance was associated with the additional 2-year term position for a planner to support the Housing Action plan. This position was 100% funded through the Housing Accelerator fund.
- Some changes in benefits and cost of living.
- Increase in professional services was reallocated to better represent the department for which the expense occurred (increases in legal reviews, requests for legal comments and applications).
- The MPS was also added to accommodate public engagement sessions (some of this was also funded through consolidation funding). This also increased the line-item amount.

b) Building Inspection Highlights:

- Increases seen in salaries and benefits.
- Increases seen in staff development, staff were now able to and required to attend training and conferences.
- Fleet lease included as well as the pre-approved vehicle expected to arrive in 2024.

c) By-Law Enforcement Highlights:

- Changes associated with cost of living and benefits.
- The legal budget was added to the departmental expenses (previously coded in the CAO's office).
- Increases in protectives services were associated with prosecuting attorney's fees from the NS Prosecuting Services (impacted by the 2023/24 estimation error). A credit was also received that year which compounded the error.

Discussion Points:

- Overtime was included in last year's budget but was lumped in with the salary line. This year overtime was broken out for each department in the budget presented this year to better represent the additional demands on staff.

d) Climate Action

Currently being impacted by discussions occurring related to the Home Flood Protection program. This was also the first year where the full-time position was fully funded by WHRM.

11. Community Development Overview

General Rated Revenue

- Two (2) largest impacts in revenue were attributed to general and summer programming decreases and revenue for Kings Edgehill aquatic program.
- The swimming pool was expected to decrease (expected staff shortages will continue).
- Decline in Parks and Grounds associated to less rentals at the St. Croix ball field.
- The welcome centre increased slightly due to provincial funding (summer work placement grant).

- No changes expected within Community Economic Development for community/business support for local events (Garlic Fest was the major contributor).
- Ice and Field house (down 42.9%) rentals decreased at the Sports Complex. Last year was a slow start, starting in January, the rentals did start to increase. There may also be journal entries that were overlooked and need to be added to better reflect usage. Based on the three-year average, budget goals have yet to be met.
- Public skating fees decrease (down 34.2%).

Area Rated Revenue – HMCC – only change here was based on CPI.

Expenses

- Increases in salaries and benefits. Operationally, all facility costs increased due to power (9% increase), insurance (20% increase), fuel, water, sewer as well as increases in costs associated with maintenance.
- Mileage increases associated with serving the region and providing community programming.
- Programming expense increases were attributed to the Inspire West Hants fund and the grant subsidy expense that covers 75% of general and summer dry land programs for all. Grants were also included in this area. As per policy, grants should not exceed 1.5% of the taxes for general purposes, which equates to \$215,557 in 2024/25. There was also two (2) multi year grants proposed (GFL Newport Rink at \$150,000 for another 4 years (\$150,000 was transferred from Operating Reserves to show no impact on the tax rate) and the request from Landmark East School for a five (5) year commitment of \$10,000/year.

Discussion Points:

- \$2,500 School bursary was previously incorporated into other lines, it is now a separate line item.
- Numbers for day skates decreased despite the costs. The walking track was free, there was support to see the \$2 fee associated with day skating removed.
- Questions arose around supporting Landmark East School (it was in a different county and a for profit school). This will be discussed further during the discussion period.

Parks and Grounds Expense

- The 36.4% variance in Parks and Grounds was attributed to the proposed lease for the additional mower, the addition of 18 new planters as part of the beautification strategy and the addition of the three (3) seasonal positions to support maintenance due to increased service levels and offset ongoing seasonal labour shortages.

Discussion Points:

- Three seasonal positions would start mid-April and work through for approximately 8 months to support Parks and Grounds. It was hoped the same people would return each April and support the Parks and Grounds summer team.

Pool

- Water, power, sewer and maintenance costs increased.
- The pool passes were removed in lieu of getting families involved in the Inspire fund.

Discussion Points:

- It was understood the pool lining was holding up, the work that was done was still holding. The top hole was not replaced, and work could be completed there.

Windsor Community Centre Expenses

- Maintenance and building costs increasing to reflect maintenance occurring this year as well as part time salary costs (including a casual staff to support summer needs) and facility costs.

Brooklyn Community Centre Expenses

- Maintenance and building costs associated with power increases.

Sports Complex

- Increased expenses associated with a longer proposed ice season, which will also be offset by increased revenue.
- Plant maintenance, snow removal and ground maintenance costs also increased based on 2023/24 snow removal tender amounts received.

Discussion Points:

- Rink and Field house electricity costs were not broken down, there was only one metre at the site. Power increased when the ice plant came online. Staff will follow up with month-to-month power costs for comparisons. If the facility was running ice season it ranged from \$24,000-\$28,000.
- The ice plant was new when the facility was constructed. The lifespan would be looked at when considering when Council would like to look at starting a Reserve fund for replacement (this would be funded through the Operating Reserves). Life expectancy could be added to OMS.

Windsor Township Business Association – includes the proposed second year for support for the township employee and increased support for additional festivals, events and trade shows.

Discussion Points:

- The person in the position for the WTBA has changed, there was support to hear more about the program before committing to future funding.

HMCC (through the area rate policy) – a recreational director and CPI adjustment (year to year) was added. The increase here was associated with the CPI adjustment.

Part of the area rate policy allowable costs related to the splash pad, the dog park and all the facilities and grounds maintenances (based on former agreements with Hantsport)

Discussion Points:

- HMCC gets a water bill from WHRM for the splash pad and then HMCC submits a claim to WHRM to get reimbursed (allowable cost under the area rate). Possible to explore a water recovery tank with a filter.
- As per the UARB, water usage has to be charged. The pool and other facilities in Windsor get charged for water, they are considered customers to the utility. The only difference was that HMCC received reimbursement. If a pipe was left open, it was charged through

taxes. The pipe (dead end) at the Public Works depo was metered and gets charged to the shop. Water has a shelf life and requires flushing; this was the end of the line and flowed into a catch basin. This was accounted for, non-revenue water.

- Hantsport has the largest number of dead ends, Windsor water mains were looped whenever possible. Need to follow up with this number.

Cemeteries – not a lot of change in either cemetery.

Riverbank - includes one (1) caretaker (30%) and a seasonal worker. Increase also seen associated with utilities and insurance costs. Considered an area rated item (Hantsport) but sales of lots reduce the amount funded through the area rate. Staff were still treating the cemetery for grubs.

Maplewood - includes one (1) caretaker (70%) and two (2) summer students.

Considered an area rated item (Windsor) but sales of lots reduce the amount funded through the area rate.

Depending on individual agreements, a percentage for perpetual care was kept in a separate fund. There was value in having a more detailed discussion around cemeteries post budget.

10. A break occurred at 6:55 p.m. The meeting resumed at 7:27 p.m. Mayor Zebian was absent.

12. Public Works

Three (3) new positions were being proposed (a mechanic, a labourer and a certified engineering technician. These positions will impact various salaries as they will also support the water utilities.

- a) Facilities (maintenance, utilities, cleaning and insurance were the driving factors for the increases). Percentages of salaries were allocated to each facility and CPI was also included.
 - Revenue increases were associated with increased office rentals (based on square footage). Cost of fire services was billed out to 100 King.
 - King Street expenses increased by 11.8% and Morison Drive increased by 13.4%.

King Street Discussion Points:

- Salary at 62% was a better reflection of staffing allocation based on repairs, maintenance, service calls (site supervisor, custodians, part time work and overall management).
- Fire costs were shown to provide awareness of the allocation of costs associated to the building. All the other departments have fire station related costs. When doing comparisons, it provided a level ground to compare each department.
- Scotian web lease (tower leased for communications and components within the server room that was also leased). Not a cell phone tower lease.

Libraries – General rated

Increased were associated with building maintenance, utilities and cleaning costs. Salary and benefits for these facilities were allocated from the Public Works department based on where staff time was allocated and anticipated work expected to occur.

Mayor Zebian arrived at 7:35 p.m.

Courthouse – no impact on the tax rate. Operations were fully funded through the Department of Justice And pay 50% of any Capital work (improve the longevity of the building) mutually agreed upon. Largest contributing factors for increases was fuel for the boilers and power costs. Every day maintenance was 100% funded through the Department of Justice as well.

Discussion Points

- Should think about divesting the facility, will be brought back for a discussion.

b) Roads – all roads were general rated during the 2023/24 budget process. For comparison purposes they were shown separately for each community.

General Roads – biggest contributor to this area was associated with fleet costs as well as the provincial road costs (up 2.9% since last budget).

Roads by Community – fluctuations based on where staff time was allocated and anticipated work.
West Hants

c) Solid Waste – area rated based on current collection contracts.

- Host fees were captured in the Revenue section.
- Salary and benefits in both Windsor and West Hants cover multiple staff, percentages were allocated based on staffing allocations.
- WHRM paid for collection of organics and also the tipping fees. Fees and volume were increasing. Same was occurring with recycling.
- WHRM receives host community fees (approximately \$600,000 in 2023/24). WHRM also gets reduced tipping fees. There would be cost savings alone in the tipping fees, if WHRM used a different landfill.
- Based on the current agreement, WHRM receives a portion of the tipping fees on anything that crosses the scale.
- Looking for total number of solid waste that West Hants generates.
- WHRM receives diversion credits from Region 6 Solid Waste management.

Landfill (retired) – no anticipated changes. No impact on the tax rate, it was a transfer from the Asset Retirement Obligation Reserve.

Discussion Points:

- WHRM was required through the PSAB accounting requirements to make contributions to the Asset Retirement obligation every year. A transfer occurs from the Operating budget.
- Fracflow Consulting does the testing on the old landfill.
- Longevity will be for a few more generations, no concerns at this time.

Waste Diversion – programming, education and communications related to diverting waste and recycling. Funded through the diversion credits received from Region 6. The changes seen were based on expenses as well as salary and benefits. The biggest change was associated with mileage and expenses.

Discussion Points:

- Revenue and expenses net zero. Acts similar to the landfill, WHRM only takes what is used.

- Admin fee (\$10,900) was through the administrative revenue presented previously.
- Salary allocation was a percentage based on staff time spent.

13. In-Camera

- a) Discussion and Direction from Council – did not occur. Council chose to move in-camera.
- b) MGA 22 (a) Legal Matter

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR FRANCIS THAT THE MEETING ADJOURN AT 8:03 P.M. MOTION CARRIED

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS FRANCIS AND SMITH THAT THE MEETING MOVE OUT OF IN-CAMERA AT 8:31 P.M. MOTION CARRIED

- 14. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment** – Next meeting will be May 21, 2024 Special Committee of the Whole Budget meeting at 5:15 p.m.

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR FRANCIS THAT THE MEETING ADJOURN AT 8:32 P.M. MOTION CARRIED

Deputy Mayor Paul Morton

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk