

**WEST HANTS MUNICIPALITY**  
**Committee of the Whole – Budget Meeting Agenda**  
**May 13, 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*



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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. 5:15-5:30 Introduction and Overview of 2024-25 Budget  
Mark Phillips & Carlee Rochon
  7. 5:30-6:45 Operating Budget Overview
    - a. General Revenues and Expenses
    - b. Tax Rate Overview
    - c. Debt Services
  8. 6:45-7:30 Reserve Budget Overview
  9. 7:30-8:00 Break
  10. 8:00-9:45 Capital Budget Overview
  11. 9:45-10:00 Discussion & Direction from Council
  12. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment
    - a. Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at 5:15 p.m.

1. **Call to Order** – Deputy Mayor Paul Morton called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m.

2. **Attendance**  
Council

Abraham Zebian, Mayor	Paul Morton, Deputy Mayor Dist. 8
Rupert Jannasch, Councillor Dist. 1	Bob Morton, Councillor Dist. 6 (5:53 p.m.)
Mark McLean, Councillor Dist. 3	Ed Sherman, Councillor Dist. 7
Jeff Hartt, Councillor Dist. 3 (5:21 p.m.)	John Smith, Councillor Dist. 9 (5:23 p.m.)
Debbie Francis, Councillor Dist. 5	Laurie Murley, Councillor Dist. 10
	Jim Ivey, Councillor Dist. 11

Regrets

Scott McLean, Councillor Dist. 2

Staff

Mark Phillips, CAO	Deanna Snair, Exec. Asst/ Clerk
Carlie Rochon, Dir. Financial Services	Sara Poirier, Dir. Planning and Development
Todd Richard, Dir. Public Works	Kevin Bennet, Manager of Parks and Facilities

Regrets:

Shelleena Thornton, Municipal Operations Supervisor  
Kathy Kehoe, Dir. Community Development

3. **Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions (5:20 p.m.)**

**MOVED BY COUNCILLORS FRANCIS AND SHERMAN THAT THE  
2024-05-13 SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BUDGET AGENDA  
BE APPROVED. MOTION CARRIED**

4. **Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest (5:20 p.m.) - None**

5. **Announcements (5:20 p.m.)**

Deputy Mayor P. Morton acknowledged we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and 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.

6. **Introduction and Overview of 2024-25 Budget (5:21 p.m.)**

CAO Phillips and Director Rochon introduced the 2024/25 Budget. Noting the proposed 2024-25 budget presented challenges due to the error last year. The light, orange-coloured cells identified areas impacted by the error made during the 2023/34 budget year. It was also noted new services were being proposed. This meeting would provide an overview of General Revenues and

Expenses, Debt services, Tax overview, the Capital and Reserve budgets (Fire and Water would be discussed separately on a different night). The second meeting would look at individual departmental expenses in greater detail. The third meeting would look at Protective services (RCMP and Fire), water would also be discussed at this meeting.

Director Rochon reviewed the power point presentation and provided highlights.

**Revenue** - Tax revenue up 10.2 % \$2.3 million, reliance on Deed Transfer Tax decreased \$300,000. Bill 340 resulted in an additional \$389,000 in revenue (Municipal Financial Capacity Grant). Overall net changes result in additional savings and revenues totaling \$619,000.

**Expenses** – up by \$2.6 million (8.6%), no proposed decrease in service levels and increased funding for residents and non-profits (\$488,933). Facility cost increases were associated with utility, insurance, and maintenance costs rising.

Five (5) new positions proposed (1 – Administration, 3 - Public Works and 1 - Planning and Development, along with three (3) seasonal positions for Community Development).

**Reserves:**

Contribution to Operating Reserve decreased by \$25,000 (Election year resulting in no contribution to the Election Reserve). Capital Reserve contribution was \$800,000 (slight decrease from 2023/24). Three (3) Special Reserves projected to finish this year. (Safe Restart Fund, Hantsport Smoothing Reserve, and the Sustainable Service Growth Reserve).

**Capital** - \$26,966,872 scheduled in projects (includes carryover from 2023-24), \$9,333,267 funded through long term debt (6.7% decrease in proposed debt spend from 2023-24). The debt service ratio was projected to be 9.2% (green).

**7. Operating Budget Overview - \$33,848,685 operating budget.**

**a. General Revenues and Expenses**

General Government Services includes legislation, administration, financial services, IT services and Municipal buildings.

Protective Services includes RCMP, Fire, By-Law, Courthouse, building inspection and food banks.

Environmental Development Services includes Community and Economic Development.

Environmental Health Services includes sewer, solid waste, waste collection and landfill.

Recreation and Cultural Supports includes Community Development and libraries.

Public Health Services includes cemeteries and the public housing deficit.

Revenues were highlighted (included in tax revenue):

- Residential & Commercial assessments.
- Recreational Forest properties.
- Revenue generated from area rates.
- Sewer revenue.
- Business properties (includes agreements with Bell Aliant, NS Power and the HST rebate-based on 2022-23 spending).
- MT&T revenues increased by \$205, final projections will be updated to reflect this change.
- Deed Transfer tax was reduced by \$300,000.

- Grants in lieu of taxes increase - assessment changes and area rate portions were also included in the line item. Before area rates were in the area rated tax revenue line.
- Services to other governments - host community fees (landfill tipping fees). Increase of 39.1% (from \$431,000 to \$600,000).
- Funding from Dept. of Justice increase was to offset higher operational costs (courthouse). No impact on the budget.
- Sale of services (Community Development & Programming) revenue reduced by (11.4%). A 1% revenue increase was due to windfarm revenue received.
- The remaining variances seen in other revenue from other sources was due to the 2023-24 budget error.
- Unconditional transfers (from the Municipal Financial Capacity grant and Farm property acreage) were determined through the province due to Bill 340.
- The 37.2% increase (maximum cap of \$82,300) under conditional transfers from other local governments was the Kings County percentage paid to Hantsport Fire Department for operations and capital.

Overall total increase in Revenue was \$2.6 million.

Discussion Points:

- Concern was raised that budget-to-budget forecasting was used vs actuals, this was not an accurate comparison and not new. In knowing the error made last year, there was value in having actuals available.
- Wind farm revenues were seen once a tower went online (assessed by NS Power to determine the volume of wattage being produced, plus the CPI based on the Wind Turbine Facilities Municipal Taxation Act). And every year after it gets adjusted by 1%.
- In 2022/23, \$636,000 was received in tipping fees. There will always be a three (3) month difference due to GFL and WHRM having a different year. GFL was a calendar year (Jan-Dec), where as WHRM was (April 1- March 31).
- Several variables (staff's ability to do the journal entries and having all the invoices from vendors, March visa statements, etc. and then the staff pieces that need to occur after all the information was entered) impact the ability to have actuals available for budget deliberations.

*Sources of Expected revenue for 2024/25:* Taxes (84.5%). The water tower grant would show in the water utility budget (Capital budget).

Proposed Expense Highlights:

Transportation (CPI for West Hants Dial-a-Ride was not included in 2023/24). The adjustment resulted in an 18.9% increase (\$5,658). This was the final year of this funding agreement.

Economic Development (Hants Shore Community Health Centre funding (\$50,000) was proposed to continue (original intent was for the funding to be multi year).

Protective Services - Windsor Food Bank funding (\$44,400) was approved until March 31, 2025).

Protective Services - water and hydrant fees increase of 29.6% (\$327,474) per the proposed UARB rules and regulations depending on the UARB hearing. This number may change slightly but would be no higher than \$327,474.

Regional Housing Authority - no increase based on provincial projections; however, based on Bill 10, this will be the last year this expense was seen.

Education (part of uniform assessment) increased by 12.2%. This was also part of the 2023/34 budgeting error.

Transfers to and from Reserves Highlights:

Decreased transfers to Reserves was due to looking at funding within the budget vs transferring from Reserves. The proposed \$780,000 transfer supported the Newport District Rink grant (Operating budget) and the proposed Flood Protection program being discussed as well as other items.

There was a contribution to the Fire Equipment and Boundary Review Reserves.  
\$50,000 withdraw to support the 2024 election.

RCMP Reserve withdrawal to support changes coming in 2024/25 (one of the changes was due to the budget error (\$236,000) in 2023/24).

Housing Accelerator funding (funds the additional planner and operational items, and the costs associated with waving secondary suites fees).

Consolidation Reserve funded some operational pieces within the budget (Municipal Planning Strategy).

Capital fund contribution (\$800,000) to support the building, road infrastructure and transportation reserves.

Asset Retirement Obligation Reserve was a PSAB required transfer every year.

Hantsport - Smoothing Reserve ends this year. Transfer of \$204,150 into the Hantsport Infrastructure Reserve (reduces debt servicing for projects associated with road infrastructure).

Transfer to the Operating Reserve. Pension liability ceased this year.

Windsor - Contributions to the Operating and Infrastructure Reserves (\$197,000 – Windsor Road rehabilitation to reduce debt servicing).

Expected expenses for 2024/25 were \$33,848,685. General Government (13.1%), Protective Services (31.4%) and Education (16.6%).

b. Tax Rate Overview (based on the increase in property tax assessment value) – 10.1% increase. Increase in residential and resource properties (\$167,095,700) based on net taxable assessment – PVSC role, less appeals, with any grants in lieu of taxes, less any capped amounts).

11.1% increase in commercial properties (\$15,586,500) based on net commercial assessment - PVSC role, less appeals, with any grants in lieu of taxes, less any capped amounts).

Tax revenue generated through current rates compared to revenue from 2023/24.

2023/24's total was \$21700,717. 2024/25 was expected to be \$424,040,071, resulting in an increase of \$2.3 million in revenue. Area rates were decreasing, and General rates were increasing.

A penny was worth:

General Rate (Residential) – increase of 10.1% (\$181,778.42), (Commercial) – increase of 11% (\$15,723.81)

West Hants Rate (Residential) – increase of 10.7% (\$158,332.40), (Commercial) – increase of 37.4% (\$9,515.79) – associated to 2023/24 budget error.

Windsor Rate (Residential) – increase of 6.6% (\$23,446.02), (Commercial) – increase of 9.1% (\$6,208.02).

Hantsport Rate (Residential) – increase of 6.6% (\$7,997.71), (Commercial) - increased by 3.9% (\$1,629.30)

Discussion Points:

- Transfers to Reserves and from Reserves were netted together. Transfers from Reserves went from \$1,456,376 down to \$415,607. This was the largest variance within the \$1.7 million and resulted from transferring more out of Reserves into the Operating budget vs transferring from the Operating budget to Reserves.
- Concern was raised that by doing a budget over budget forecast, \$1 million dollars was already spent. It was concerning that the \$1 million dollars was not being taken into account.
- The totality of the March 31, 2024 projections based on February actuals projected that the year would end with \$32,181,000. This year's budget was about \$33,000,000. Some of the variance was attributed to the errors made last year.

Proposed Tax Rate for 2024/25 – Proposing no change to Residential or Commercial Tax rates.

Mandatory Contributions (public housing deficit, Department of Transportation for roads, Prosecuting Attorney, Regional Library and Regional School Board). Equates to 43.1% of the General rate or \$0.3028 on the Residential rate.

RCMP Rates - area rated based on the number of officers prior to consolidation (70/30 split). 70 % West Hants (81.3%) and 30% Windsor (44.7%). Total expense was built into the current rates.

Proposed Residential Tax rate that fund Municipal Activities (rates payable to other organizations were removed – mandatory payments to the province, RCMP and PVSC).

44.6% within West Hants go towards municipal services, 60.1% within Hantsport go towards municipal services and 55.1% within Windsor go towards municipal services.

Proposed Commercial Tax rate that funds Municipal Activities

38.4% of the West Hants rate go towards municipal services, 70.8% of the Hantsport rate go towards municipal services and 55.1% of the Windsor rate go towards municipal services.

Director Rochon provided an overview of the estimated increases to average properties based on the 3.2% change in CAP. Based on PVSC alone, average property owners will see an increase in their tax bill.

Director Rochon provided an overview of the last ten (10) years of tax sales (5 years pre-consolidation and 5 years post consolidation), noting taxes were starting to decline since consolidation.

c. Debt Services

Debts Maturing

Windsor (\$427,3854 in annual debt) - Wiley (pav/curb/sidewalk), Paving and WB Stephens Roof Replacement.

Regional (\$139,638) – Traffic Control lights at Wentworth and Cole Drive.

Director Rochon reviewed the proposed 2024/25 Capital spends totaling \$1,614,523. With retired debt, the change in debt was \$133,651.

Borrowing by Departments - approximately half (\$4.7 million) of the proposed \$9.3 million spend was associated with water.

#### Debt Ratios

2022/21 – 9.4% (set, it was reviewed by Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing (DMA).

2021/22 – 6.4% and 2022/23 - 7.8% were currently under review with DMA.

2023/24 – 9.2% projected based on last years budget.

Based on the 2023 audited statements, the outstanding debt (not including water) was estimated to be approximately \$11.8 million.

#### Estimated Debt Servicing Forecast

**With Cunnable Creek:** 2024/25 (9.25%), 2025/26 (11.40%), 2026/27 (13.19%) and 2027/28 (14.46%) and 2027/28 (15.11%).

**Without Cunnable Creek:** 2024/25 (9.25%), 2025/26 (11.20%), 2026/27 (12.54%) and 2027/28 (12.59%) and 2027/28 (13.12%).

#### Discussion Points:

- Estimated 50% (\$13.7 million over the 5-year Capital budget – debt portion) of Cunnabel Creek would be funded by WHRM. \$13.5 million was estimated to be funded through grants.
- Tregothic Creek (\$16.2 million over the 5-year Capital budget – debt portion) storm water system was another significant project and also impacted the costs presented. No funding sources were forecasted for Tregothic.
- Water budgets were required to be presented separately as the hearing has not occurred. Depending on the direction order from the UARB, the two utilities may be consolidated mid year. Within both the operating and capital budgets both utilities were treated as nonconsolidated during the entire 12-month term until told otherwise by the UARB.
- Sewer was consolidated within the current budget.

#### Operating Budget

##### Non-departmental expenses

- 49.4% of debt servicing related to Fire Services.
- Proposed debt servicing would add \$0.0230 to the general tax rate.
- Debt servicing costs (including area rated debt servicing) made up 8.7% (\$2,949,854) of the total budget.
- Wentworth and Payzant traffic controls were removed (streetlights added) and Riverview Road - Hantsport Road Rehabilitation deferred to next year.
- Police protection would be discussed at an upcoming meeting.
- Transportation (Dial-A-Ride) increase (\$5,658) was associated with CPI. Dial-A-Ride must provide audited financial statements and meet deliverables identified within the agreement before funding is dispersed. This was the last year for the funding agreement.  
\*Need to follow up and confirm CPI was included in the approved funding motion\*

- Fire Protection included water increase (29.6%) for Fire protection. Detailed Operational and Capital budgets would be discussed at a later meeting.
- No changes proposed for Public Safety grants (impacted by the budget error).
- West Hants GSAR proposing an increase in their operational grant and a Capital request. \*Previous funding was through a grant (\$8,500) and in the previous budget they were allotted an additional \$20,000 for uniforms, this year they have some additional requests associated to service levels (operational and capital asks) \*
- Last year for Housing, no changes were being proposed.
- Community Economic Development (VREN, VCFN, Climate Action Committee and Hants Shore Health Centre funding – which was being proposed to continue). The 386.5% increase for the Climate Action committee included the \$400,000 proposed spend being considered which also correlates with a withdrawal from Reserves to fund the ask. It will have no impact on tax rates.
- Decreases noted within Industrial Parks was associated with power usage.
- Cultural buildings and facilities (libraries) increase (6.2%) was due to last years budge error.
- School board funding increase of 12.2% (uniform assessment increases) and represented \$0.2755 on the general tax rate.

*Area Rate Debts* – as per dissolution and consolidation agreements former debt remains with the former entities. Two (2) within the former Hantsport area will retire in the next two (2) years resulting in all debts completed). Six (6) within the former Windsor area will retire within the next two (2) years, leaving one debt remaining (2032). Three (3) within the former West Hnats area will retire in the next 203 years but the bulk of debt retires in later years.

Other Services (Hantsport and Windsor Food bank) increases were associated with higher facility costs (maintenance, power, water and insurance) and the additional funding approved for the Windsor Food bank.

## **8. Reserve Budget Overview**

Operating Reserve reduced by \$25,000 (no contribution to the election reserve). Capital Reserves reduced by \$18,519. Special Reserves decreased by \$98,850.

Within the Special Reserve (\$410,150), \$197,000 was going in the Windsor Infrastructure Reserve and \$204,150 going into the Hantsport Infrastructure Reserve.

Within the Operating Reserve (\$62,250), \$50,000 going to the Fire Equipment Reserve and \$12,250 going to the Boundary Reserve.

Percentage of Reserves by category (water = 7%, Operating = 31%, Capital = 18%, Special = 44%). Operating Reserves were projected to end at \$5.1 million (\$2.7 million spend of which \$1.4 million was in additions). No operating surplus was projected for this year (end with a deficit, currently projecting around \$300,000). The projected \$5.1 million was over the Reserve Policy threshold by \$1.8 million.

Carry over Reserve included debt serving projects that were not completed (reduce borrowing in future years).

\$746,000 transferred from RCMP Reserves, it was hoped a \$5-\$600,00 surplus (as per the original draft) would be received.

A \$50,000 contribution to the Fire Reserve. As per policy Fire Reserves receive 2% of the asset value, this was under the normal amount and can be changed at the direction of Council.

Capital Reserves saw the largest change (consolidation of Sewer Reserves). As per the dissolution and consolidation agreements, the former Reserves were required to be shown within the former areas and fund any capital projects. Any new contributions will go into a consolidated sewer reserve.

The proposed spending for the overall sewer reserve was \$220,000, \$146,000 for the West Hants Reserve and \$489,132 for the Windsor Reserve and proposed addition of \$526,000 for Capital Reserves.

Building (addition of \$114,000), roads (addition of \$457,000) and vehicle (addition of \$228,000) reserves (funded through Operating budget contributions) for a total contribution of \$800,000. These reserves were based on the policy as per asset values (56% of budgeted contribution).

Reserve spending (\$2 million) was associated with Capital projects with about \$1.3 million being contributed. It was projected the Capital balance was projected to end at \$3 million.

#### Discussion Points

- \$98,000 identified for Windsor was associated with the building reserve.
- The sewer reserve and public works reserve for the Town of Windsor and West Hants transportation reserves finished this year.

Special Reserves (associated with a specific purpose and only used for specific items – has criteria and recording criteria associated with it) make up the majority of the funding due to funding increases associated with dissolution and consolidation agreements, grants (including the Housing Accelerator Fund), gas tax received, the safe restart program and the Sustainability Growth Reserve created last year. Funding identified with Hantsport, Hants West or Windsor can only be used in those areas.

Special Reserves were projected to end with \$7.4 million, a projected spend of \$5.8 million (\$1.8 in additions). CCBF (estimated it will remain the same) information would be coming from the province; however, there has been no indication this will change).

It was expected the remaining \$51,000 from the safe restart fund would be utilized this year.

\$146,000 was being contributed to the Asset Retirement Obligation Reserve, of which \$53,000 was being removed to support the landfill.

\$246,194 addition was from the Housing Accelerator Fund (1 of 4 installments). The funding was frontloaded to allow for projects to start sooner. At present there was a negative balance (will owe another reserve) until funding was received.

The Sustainable Services Growth Fund was required to be used for Active transportation or for building capacity within sewer and water and must be used by March 31, 2025. There was a remaining balance of \$13,002 which will be used to offset any overages for identified projects. Any funds not used will need to be refunded to the province.

Total projected balance was \$21,656,105, with a proposed spend of \$10,685,851, a proposed addition of \$4,688,309 and an ending balance of \$15,708,561.

#### Discussion Points:

- A common practice within fund accounting was for one (1) fund to owe another fund.

- The difference noted within the CCBF was impacted by projects that proceeded (possibly a 2023 project did not proceed, or the grants were estimated lower than what was actually received resulting in the overall change). A requirement for CCBF was that projects need to be approved each year; they were not automatically carried over.

## 9. Break

A break occurred at 7:12 p.m. The meeting resumed at 7:48 p.m.

## 10. Capital Budget Overview (7:48 p.m.)

Amounted to \$136,944,852, average spending of \$27.3 million/year (Utilities = 25% and fire = 5.7% over the five (5) years (depreciation and fire protection charges were operational). Fire and water capitals will be reviewed at a later meeting (20% noted for Fire was related to capital only). Of the Capital budget 25.1% was funded through provincial/federal grants, 4.9% from CCBF, 13.5% from Reserves, 0.1% from General Reserves, 0.3% from users, 54.1% from long term debt and 2.1% from consolidation funding.

Five Year for Capital for IT, Community Development and By-Law – projected spend of \$7.3 million. 27.2% was from prov/federal grants, 42.4% from CCBF, 24.1% from reserves, 2.3% from consolidation funds, 3.9% from long term debt and general operations of 0.1%.

The 5-year Capital was created using the proposed UARB study based off of the 5-year Capital approved in 2023/24 by Council.

Director Rochon reviewed the projects identified in the 5-year Capital budget.

### Discussion Points:

- The small-scale solar project funding motion was tied to the approval and award of a grant application, for which WHRM was unsuccessful. Due to the project being funded through CCBF, project approval was required each year.
- Council upgrades (\$42,000) were related to TV's, sound, voting and camera systems, furniture components related to the municipal complex.
- MPS was a carryover (funded through consolidation funding and approved last year), work has started on this project.
- Sports Complex upgrades included the addition of a 24'x24' storage building, carrying an inventory of ongoing supplies needed vs purchasing one at a time, continued acoustic improvements, continued interactive monitoring through advertising and furnishing upgrades, hallway flooring upgrades due to deterioration.
- The heat exchanger was for the Sports Complex. The original design for the mechanical system included an HRV unit but it was pulled from the project during the build. Provides the ability to run ice more effectively in summer months and provides the ability to cool the building to host events during summer months.
- LED sign was a carryover. The delay in the project was associated with an existing sign and usage of land owned by the Agricultural Society. An alternative location may be a quicker option for signage.
- Community Centre foundation repairs were part of the insurance claim, not funded through DFA. \*Helpful to know breakout costs associated with maintenance vs repairs associated to damages\*

- The recovery piece (insurance proceeds) or flood protection for the Community Centre (foundation repairs, engineering or building upgrades) was not captured in the Capital budget. The breakdown included: 2024-25 captured foundation repairs, engineering or building upgrades, 2025-26 identified windows and door replacements, heat pump systems, 2026-27 identified repairs to the flat roof and shingling the roof, kitchen upgrades, in 2027-28 central heat and cooling system install and in 2028-29 identified main floor design/layout and gender-neutral washroom upgrades.
- Part 2 of the Community Centre looked at flood improvements and water diversion options that looked at ways to protect repairs completed from the flood (windowsills were rotten, foundation was split, stormwater chamber added for water diversion).
- An action item identified with the Housing Accelerator Fund was to upgrade permit software that accepts applications and payments online to expedite the process.
- Another action was to promote infill development and have an architect create designs for smaller lots that people can pick off the shelf, as a starting point.
- The Windsor Coyotes started playing in Shamrock field last year and expect to continue this year along with potentially Kentville Minor Baseball was looking to outreach.
- Windsor skate park extension was an approved project and discussions around it were tabled. In the 2025/26 proposed budget, ground assessment, ramp extension and some landscaping were being proposed.
- 2025/26 identifies the installation of a paved accessible ramp near the bridge on the Windsor side, and in 2067/27 resurfacing and replacement of trail (as needed) was identified for the Causeway trail. The trail was deteriorating and posed safety concerns for walkers, there was value in the trail being looked at sooner as it would be funded through CCBF funding.
- Falmouth Mini Park, Burgess Crescent Park and Newport Landing Park identified accessible playground equipment.
- Tremaine Crescent Ball Field parking lot upgrades. The property owner expressed concerns about after hour activities that were occurring. The owner was supportive of the parking lot being used but has requested some assistance/support with signage and gates to help control the after-hours activities.
- A site visit was conducted at the ballfield; however, with the area being landlocked, there was no ability to expand. The project was status quo.
- Canoe Club structural components related to the repairs following the July flood as well as some additional improvements. All work was funded through insurance proceeds (\$109,000). The finished product would result in dry storage on the lower level. Any remediation done was dealt with through insurance and not part of the \$109,000 payout received.

Five Year Capital for Sewer – was consolidated and made up 12% of the five-year plan (\$16,367,310). 25.5% was funded through provincial/federal grants, 30.8% funded through Reserves, 0.2% from General Operations, 0.6% for the users and 42.9% funded through long term debt.

Within the five-year capital budget for the sewer system, some expenses were still broken up by communities, this was done to easily identify funding sources, if needed. Director Rochon reviewed the breakdown.

Discussion Points:

- Laterals have capitalization as part of the process. The fees shown are deposits paid in deferred revenue and are recognized upon completion of the project in the investment in the Capital Asset Fund account. This was not part of general operations, it all flows through the Capital fund.

Five-year Capital Plan for Public Works – Stormwater (Cunnabel Creek and Tregothic) was captured in this plan. The five-year plan represented 56.5% of the five-year Capital plan. Public works consists of roads, stormwater, facilities, vehicles and equipment. The total proposed five year spend was \$77,343,951 (26.6 % funded from prov/federal grants, 6.3% from CCBF, 11.3% from Reserves, 53.4% from long term debt, and 2.4% from consolidation funding).

Director Rochon reviewed the detailed budget for the five years.

Discussion Points:

- J-Class Roads were in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of their 3-year cycle/program. WHRM wanted to opt in at that time; however, there wasn't an opportunity. The \$500,000 was carried over for this year (which is the beginning of a new cycle).
- Chester Road sidewalk was identified in 2026/27. There was value in moving this item up sooner.
- Riverview Road in Hantsport was designed and ready to be tendered. The plan was to start the project this year.
- Main Street in Hantsport was being pushed out another year. The intent was to have it completed at once (shave and pave) right to the bridge.
- There have been several instances of small sink holes developing around culverts and areas where water flows on Halewood Drive. Limestone and gypsum were present in the area, testing and drilling was being proposed to help identify what work was needing to be done to address the sinkholes.
- Tregothic Creek (everything east of O'Brien and King Street, Fort Edward, Wentworth Road and all the way to Wentworth Creek and includes Payzant Drive) stormwater system upgrade encompassed a lot of ditching, a lot of culvert replacement, upsizing culverts to meet the climate change predictions (2090) and possibly some storage and a pump as the area was influenced by tides. There were approximately 30+ culverts that needed to be upsized. Some in-house ditching has begun on the ballfield side.
- There were 19 Marsh bodies within WHRM, five or six of those were within the service area, Martock and Tregothic were the main Marsh bodies.
- Centennial culvert that was identified as an emergency replacement (\$8-900,000) and due to be replaced was re-evaluated to buy some time to complete Centennial upgrades all at once as one project (sewer, water main and replace the cross culvert). No capacity issues were identified with this culvert.

Equipment – Director Rochon reviewed the equipment, fleet and facility list.

Discussion Points:

- The expandable blade for the loader was for the second loader, WHRM has one currently and it is used a lot.
- The vac truck funding was being split between the water and sewer utilities and roads, as it would be used in all areas.
- A schedule is being developed for the street sweeper; some areas will be completed at night.
- If supported the Jet rudder was estimated to have a 60% cost savings over 10 years. Due to demands, it was not always possible to have a jet rudder on site and provide the level of service or maintenance needed. The expected delivery time would be 3-4 months.
- Proposed Public Works personnel (3) were not associated directly with Capital work in the plan. An extra labourer was being proposed, some of the hours would be associated with the street sweeper and vac truck (if approved).

Director Rochon reviewed the five (5) year Road Rehabilitation plan. Areas were broken out by community.

Discussion Points:

- Concern was raised that Stannus Street was not specifically identified as being a priority or in the cue. Stannus, Victoria and the other streets were encompassed in the Cunnabel Creek diversion plan and identified in the 5-year Capital plan, still waiting for an engineered solution to progress the project.
- Street renewal included sidewalks; the projects included all in costs. Any new municipal street must be built to the new standards and requires a concrete sidewalk.
- Shaving meant grinding off the surface and paving over the surface for a clean finish.
- The Payzant to King Street connection was forecasted based on the proposed development agreement.
- Normally shut off valves were placed close to property lines, just outside of a sidewalk so they were not hit by plows.

2024/25 Capital Budget – Proposed spending of \$26,966,872 (Utilities represented 44.4% and Fire represented 3.9%). Director Rochon reviewed the funding for the total Capital budget.

2024/25 Funding IT/Community Development/Planning/By-Law represented 14% of the 2024/25 Capital Budget (proposed borrow of \$210,249).

2024/25 Funding Sewer Utilities represented 8.6% of the 2024/25 Capital Budget (proposed borrow of \$605,849).

2024/25 Funding Public Works represented 29.1% of the 2024/25 Capital Budget (proposed borrowing of \$2,455,273).

Director Rochon reviewed the detailed budget.

Discussion Points:

- E-bikes was an expansion of the loan equipment program. Concern was noted with the risk and liability associated with E-bikes. The intent was to make the community comfortable with E-bikes and look towards the future and get people moving.
- Community Beautification – 2024/25 had the community highway identification signage, the Acadian signage, and the beautification initiatives. More beautification initiatives were included in each year moving forward. \*Follow up required\*

- AT Trails (upgrades/culverts) – associated with the DAR Rail line. The costs noted references the next phase of the project to address upgrades associated with the narrowing of the trail (widening the trail, culverts, etc.), this was outside of the repairs associated with the July flood and the work would be scoped out and tendered. Trail repairs were broken down into 4 sections: a) washout resulting from the flood (flood remediation – 100% funded through DFA), b) trail culverts and repairs (flood remediation – 100% funded through DFA), c) the bridge (recreation property upgrades and trail upgrades being done as part of the active transportation piece (grants).
- Camera system – part of the phase 3 fibre extension. The fibre extension component has been completed, the \$18,000 was associated with the electrical installation of the cameras (it was carried over from the previous year).

Sewer System – 8.6% of the total budget. Director Rochon highlighted the funding sources for each project identified in the % year Capital plan.

Public Works – Director Rochon reviewed road projects and identified their funding sources.

- With respect to the vac truck, the sewer portion cost for the truck would be funded through the sewer rate (this portion was not funded through the General tax rate). The cost portion associated with water would also be separate and would show up on the water utility budgets after the item was purchased. The costs associated with roads would be General rated.
- Outside Operations Facility – would be for both Community Development and Public Works. Staff for both departments have outgrown their current spaces (maintenance and storage of equipment, lunchroom, locker room, washrooms, etc.). The \$234,000 identified in the budget was for the award of a design. A report will be presented to Council for consideration.
- The Hantsport Public Works depo was still required for heated storage, salt, sand and storage of sidewalk machines. Upgrades were associated with siding repairs. The roof was completed last year.
- The dump truck was added to the budget as it may not be able to be sourced or delivered for a year or more.

## 11. Discussion & Direction from Council

Items to bring back to discuss at the next meeting:

- Would like to see sidewalks on Chester Road moved up within the budget. The area would benefit greatly from having a sidewalk.
- Causeway trail needs to be addressed. WHRM does have a standing offer with a paving contractor, it was possible to look at patching or an overlay. There was support to see this completed soon.
- Industrial Parks revenue (there were two different tax rates for the Industrial Park). There was value in knowing the overall difference (variance) between West Hants rate compared to the Windsor rate with respect to behind Centennial Drive area. Director Rochon

referenced there was an Industrial Park Act (through the province) in place that dictated what was charged and where it was charged. The only way to balance the tax rate would be to work with PVSC to identify the Industrial Park area, create a separate code and calculate the expenses (similar to an area rate) for that piece. The concern was the West Hants and Windsor rates would remain in place as the former debts have to remain with those areas. This change would need to occur over a few years. Director Rochon will provide the variance at the next meeting.

- Confirmation as it relates to CPI and Dial-A-Ride.

**12. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment**

Next regular meeting will be May 28, 2024 Council, 6 p.m. The next Special Committee of the Whole Budget meeting will be Wednesday, May 21, 2024, at 5:15 p.m.

**MOVED BY COUNCILORS SHERMAN AND M. MCLEAN THAT THE MEETING ADJOURN AT 10:06 P.M. MOTION CARRIED**

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Deputy Mayor Paul Morton

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Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk