

WEST HANTS MUNICIPALITY

Committee of the Whole – Budget Meeting Agenda Amended May 23, 2025

May 22, 2025, 5:00 p.m.

Sanford Council Chambers 76 Morison Dr, Windsor, NS

(also held via virtual via Zoom and YouTube livestreamed)

Agenda is subject to changes up to and including during the meeting



West Hants
something inspiring awaits

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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. 5:00-5:45 Review Follow-Up Items from May 14 Meeting
 7. 5:45-7:00 Discussion & Direction from Council Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 8. 7:00-8:00 Break
 9. **In-Camera MGA 22(2)(a) Contractual Matter**
 10. Motions & Resolutions – Pending Council Discussions
 - a. Budget Approval Motion
 - b. Taxing Resolution
 - c. HMCC Resolution
 - d. Tax Exemption List
 - e. Property Owners Association Resolutions
 - f. Funding Agreement Motions
 11. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment
 - a. Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting TBD

For budget materials not linked above, please reference the linked agenda package from the 2025-05-06 Special COTW Budget Meeting (Operating, Capital and Reserves Budgets)

1. **Call to Order** – Deputy Mayor Francis called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m., noting quorum was achieved.

2. **Attendance**

Council

Abraham Zebian, Mayor

Rupert Jannasch, Councillor Dist. 1

Scott McLean, Councillor Dist. 2 (5:10 p.m.)

Crystal Remme, Councillor Dist. 3

Paul Wheadon, Councillor Dist. 4

Bob Morton, Councillor Dist. 6 (5:08 p.m.)

Debbie Francis, Deputy Mayor Dist. 5

Kayla Leary-Pinch, Councillor Dist. 7 (6:20 p.m.)

Paul Morton, Councillor Dist. 8

John Smith, Councillor Dist. 9

Bonnie Smith, Councillor Dist. 10

Jim Ivey, Councillor Dist. 11

Staff

Mark Phillips, CAO

Carlie Rochon, Dir. Financial Services

Todd Richard, Dir. Public Works

Tim Leslie, Manager Building & Fire

Official

Deanna Snair, Exec. Asst/ Clerk

Karrie Fougere, Dir. Planning and Development

Kathy Kehoe, Dir. Community Development

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

Consensus was to add an In-camera Item (22(2)(a) Contractual Matter, the agenda as amended to reflect the addition was accepted.

4. **Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest** - None

5. **Announcements**

Deputy Mayor Francis 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.

Council and I as Chair are committed to ensuring this meeting and its participants conduct themselves in a respectful and professional manner as outlined in the municipality's Municipal Code of Conduct. Meeting presenters, staff and the public are expected to conduct themselves in an equally respectful manner at all times the meeting is being conducted. I thank you all in advance for your commitment to these important meeting principles.

6. **Review and Follow-up Items from May 14, 2025 meeting.**

Director Rochon reviewed the updated budget adjustments following the direction provided at the May 14th, 2025 meeting. The direction provided was to remove the three (3) proposed staff positions, reduce the unhoused initiative to \$10,000, move the Business Development Societies \$105,000 to the general commercial rate, reduce legal cost to \$10,000, defer capital projects (HFD

– upgrades to engine 12 compartments, HFD – hydraulic jaws of life, WFD – truck bay floor coating, BFD 1 – Civic Centre floor, BFD 2 – epoxy coating for apparatus floor, Gerrish Street electrical), reduce debt servicing from outside operations facility by half, defer an RCMP vehicle, reduction to a maximum 3% change for each fire department, reduce general grants and contributions back to \$100,000.

Based on adjustments made; debt servicing was reduced by \$228,912.05, net expenses were reduced by \$322,632.43 (Recreation and Cultural services - \$29,000, Environmental development services (legal) - \$5,000, Protective Services and General Government services (includes legal as well) - \$288,632.43. Sales of Services were increased by \$5,000 (Swim to survive program), with the change in the commercial rate; Grants in Lieu of taxes increased by \$5,277.77.

Director Rochon reviewed what a penny was worth in each of the different areas (Hantsport, West Hants and Windsor) and how it changed from the previous year.

Capital budget update

Included delaying the small-scale solar project (\$25,000), EV charger for 76 Morison Drive, Council chambers upgrades, HFD upgrades to Engine 12 compartments, HFD hydraulic jaws of lift, WFD truck bay floor coating, BFD1 Civic Centre floor coating, BFD2 epoxy coat for apparatus floor and electrical outlets on Gerrish Street. These delays resulted in an overall net change (reduction) to the Capital budget of \$444,475.00 for the current year. These changes would not change the 5-year Capital budget as the direction was to delay these projects which only pushes them out further.

Reserve budget update

As projects were delayed, there was no withdraw on the Reserves and with these changes additional increases were made to reserves. The Windsor Infrastructure reserve addition was increased by \$6,550.00. The Hantsport Infrastructure reserve addition was increased by \$21,400.00. CCBF expenditure was reduced by \$25,000. Operating expenditure was reduced by \$70,000. Total net change was \$122,950.00.

Proposed General Residential Rate was \$0.8221. Proposed rate for West Hants was and increase of \$0.05, with Hantsport and Windsor being maintained. The current proposed rate was \$1.0223, which was \$0.01 below the pre-consolidation rate.

Proposed Commercial Tax Rate for 2025/26 was \$1.0468 for all areas (Hantsport, West Hants and Windsor).

Discussion Points:

- Based on the direction provided 3% was identified as the maximum amount identified for change within the fire departments budgets based on 2024/25 operating budgets. A rough calculation was done at the previous meeting on what 3% would look like, on the net change for fire and it was \$21,000 (based on 3%).
- The outside operations facility was the Public Works/Community Development depo. Decreasing debt servicing (50%) for the first year due to capacity and the completion time being unknown.

Further direction was for all departments to reduce their operational expenses by half of the proposed percentage increase. An attachment was provided for Council to review prior to making

any of the changes within the budget. Items highlighted in pink would have impacts to service delivery. The green item was a new proposal for consideration; pending direction the Court Houses shortfall could be supplemented with Operating Reserves this year (approximately \$47,000). Blue items indicated accuracy adjustments.

Discussion Points:

- Despite all the changes/reductions made; there was still a reliance on Reserves to supplement/offset the current proposed tax rates. In addition, a little extra was taken from the Operating Reserves (total amount was \$1,195,000) to make the WH tax rate an even \$0.05.
- Reliance on reserves was concerning. Tough conversations and decisions need to be made and need to continue in the future. Deferring projects was not the answer, the same problems would be seen next year and likely worse as they would be compounded by using Reserves this year to supplement the tax rate. The draw on the Reserves would need to be made up as well
- Reduction in hourly staffing would impact program service levels for recreation which was opposite of the discussions Council were having regarding their vision for the region and increasing opportunities for all residents in West Hants.
- The rate increase for the commercial district was going to be difficult for them to accept.
- Dial A Ride has requested to be added as a line item to the budget as well.
- RCMP were able to defer one (1) vehicle out.

There was value in having a recess to provide an opportunity to review the document further. A recess occurred at 5:40 p.m. The meeting resumed at 5:56 p.m.

Director Rochon reviewed the proposed reductions based on items removed from the proposed budget or delayed. The proposed changes resulted in a \$295,000 change (roughly a penny on the tax rate); however, Riverbank and Maplewood cemeteries do not impact the tax rate (these were area rated items), waste, diversion and landfill only impact reserve transfers, sewer only impacts rate payers for sewer users. Consensus was to approve the changes identified in blue as they were related to accuracy changes.

Proposed reductions #1

Training & Development for Financial Services (-\$1,000), Wellness Program (-\$1,000 based on accuracy), Owl camera purchase was a replacement for the one in Council chambers (-\$3,500), Teams phones (-\$8,500), VoIP Phone replacements (-\$4,000), camera system study (-\$6,000), Public wi-fi system study (-\$6,000), complaint tracking system (-\$22,000).

Proposed reductions #2

Further pro-rated reduction of salary based on a vacant position for maternity leave (-\$20,000), reduction in mandated communications based on previous years actuals (-\$2,000), Flood action removal of applicant due to property selling (-\$20,000), Climate Action Committee work plan reduction (not recommended to reduce in this area as it will impact service delivery or strategic plans), removal of a safety dog lift – safety concern (-\$4,500), reduction in general projects for

Riverbank cemetery (-\$1,000), reduction in general projects for Maplewood cemetery (-\$1,000), reduction in grounds maintenance for the Maplewood cemetery (-\$1,000).

Discussion Points:

- Consensus was items should not be removed if there was a safety risk associated with the removal of the item.

Proposed reductions #3

Reduction in emergency response costs as a lot of the time these costs are recouped through government funding (-\$5,000), reduction in mileage and expenses (-\$200.00), training and development expenses (-\$3,050.00), membership fees (-\$700.00), office supplies (-\$4,450.00) and telephone (-\$900.00) all associated with the Building Official position removed from the budget, Reductions within Community Development (not recommended as they impact the ability to maintain current service levels).

Proposed reductions #4 (Pool)

Pool reductions were based on accuracy adjustments related to training and development, building maintenance and program supplies. Parks and Grounds reductions were based on accuracy adjustments related to overtime, training and development, and a reduction of \$7,500 for the Best Key program (same key for all sites). A reduction of \$5,100 for Parks and Grounds snow removal to maintain current services based on last years amount spent, with no increase to service levels. No direction was provided on the above items.

Proposed reductions #5 (Programs)

Removal of two (2) winter programs – hourly term students, an accuracy adjustment for staff identification (staff uniforms and branding related items) for the entire Community Development department, reduction in summer camps supplies, reduction in sports supplies based on the three-year average and a reduction in program contractors (reduction in services).

Discussion Points:

- Preference was not to remove or reduce anything that would impact programming or reduce services in this area.

Proposed reductions #5 (Community Economic Development)

Accuracy adjustments were made for mileage and expenses, operating supplies and services and community and volunteer recognition. \$5,000 reduction for the Brooklyn Civic Centre for maintenance and supplies (only maintain current service levels, no increase in service levels). Windsor Community Centre reduction related to wages, operating supplies and services and building maintenance based on three-year actuals.

Discussion Points:

- Windsor Community Centre wages were looking at tightening up the staffing schedule within the facility.

Proposed reductions #6 (Sports Complex and Facilities)

Removal of summer student (hourly part time), adjustments for accuracy based on three-year averages for branding, communications and advertising, and a reduction of \$5,000 to building

maintenance to maintain current services – no additional services, reduction in staffing at the Welcome Centre, mileage and expenses for 100 King Street and reductions in building maintenance for 100 King, 76 Morison, the Windsor Library and the Hantsport Library – these impact service levels.

Proposed reductions #7 (Roads)

Maintenance and equipment for fleet and small tolls (-\$20,000 deferred), reduction in fleet fuel (-\$5,000), reduction in street, storm and sidewalk maintenance (-\$10,000), reduction in snow and ice control (-\$10,000), reduction in parking lot lease (-\$5,000).

Proposed reductions #8 (Sewer) – does not impact the tax rate.

Reduction in mileage and expenses associated with reduced inspections/supervisor (-\$500.00), reduction in training and development (-\$200.00), reduction in fleet maintenance (-\$8,000.00), reduction in fleet fuel (-\$5,000), reduction for manhole infrastructure (-\$10,000), reduction in lift station maintenance (-\$5,000), reduction in lagoon drive maintenance (-\$2,000.00), reduction in Wentworth maintenance (-\$2,000.00), reduction in Falmouth maintenance (\$4,000.00).

Discussion Points

- Sewer rate was set by Council, any changes made in these areas impact the deficit (more of a deficit or less of a deficit). If there was a surplus, it would be added to the Sewer Capital Reserve.
- Reductions in sewer maintenance was not recommended.
- Parking lot lease was the land at Dufferin place (carpool parking area). It was leased land from the railway.

Proposed reductions #9 (Waste Diversion) – does not impact the tax rate.

Reduction in overtime (-\$130.00), mileage and expenses (-\$365.00), and training and development (-\$275.00).

Proposed reductions #10 (Landfill) – does not impact the tax rate, it was a transfer from the ARO Reserve. Site maintenance reduction (-\$5,700.00).

Proposed reductions #11 (Waste Collection) – most of the costs were fixed due to the new collection contract. Reduction to Green bins for West Hants (-\$5,000.00), Reduction to Green bins for Windsor (-\$2,500.00). Cost associated to buying, replacing bins due to breakage and issuing new bins to new residents in the communities.

7. Discussion and Direction

- Consensus was to move forward with the accuracy adjustments.
- Preference was to not see any reductions for recreation programming or staff supports for the Community Centre.
- Preference was to not see anything pertaining to maintenance or repairs (roads, sewer, equipment) not be deferred. Costs would likely only increase if these items were deferred.

Direction:

- Roads, no cuts, leave in budget.
- Sewer – no cuts, leave in budget.

- Waste Diversion – no cuts, leave in budget.
- Landfill Maintenance – no cuts, leave in budget.
- Waste Collection (Green Bins for Windsor and West Hants) – no cuts, leave in budget.
- Financial Services – training and development – no cuts, leave in budget. Councillor Jannasch was out of the room for the vote.
- IT Services – remove from the budget. Councillor Jannasch was out of the room for the vote. Phones leave in the budget.
- Planning – reduced salary for vacant maternity leave position. Remove it from the budget.
- Climate Action – Flood Action (no impact on tax rate, it reduces transfer from Reserve) – cut from the budget and return funds to the Reserve.
- CAC Work Plan reduction – no cuts, leave in the budget.
- By-Law – no cuts, leave in the budget.
- Emergency Response costs – remove from the budget.
- CD Admin (Branding, communication and advertising) – no cut, leave in budget.
- OT for Parks and Grounds – no cuts, leave in the budget.
- Best key program – remove from the budget.
- Parks and Grounds Snow removal – remove from the budget.
- Hourly Term students and benefits to support winter programs – no cuts, leave in budget.
- Summer camp supplies – no cuts, leave in budget.
- Program contractors - no cuts, leave in budget.
- Building maintenance and supplies (maintain current services for Brooklyn Civic Centre) - no cuts, leave in budget.
- Community Centre wages – remove from the budget.
- Sports Complex removal of summer student - no cuts, leave in budget.
- Sports Complex building maintenance - no cuts, leave in budget.
- Staff reduction for Welcome Centre - no cuts, leave in budget.
- Mileage and expenses for 100 King Street – remove from the budget.
- Reduced service delivery for 100 King Street, 76 Morison, Windsor Library and Hantsport Library - no cuts, leave in budget.
- Transfer from Operating Reserves (\$47,000) to cover the Court House shortfall. If the property were sold, the fund would have to go into a Capital Asset Reserve fund as per the MGA; once that was done Capital Reserves could be used for building maintenance. and other areas to reduce on the back side. Direction would need to come from Council to transfer that money back into the Operating Reserve – remove from the budget.

Consensus was to use the proposed changes (reduced costs) and apply them to reduce the withdrawal on Operating Reserves. There was value in highlighting the total amount based on the direction made and the impact it may have had on the tax rate.

Dial A Ride request – Council had requested information regarding services, number and provisions within the entire municipality but has yet to receive that information. Although this was an important service to have available for residents it was equally important to have all the requested information in order to make an informed decision. It was important that organizations

be able to establish a funding model to be sustainable during the time that they have been supported and not become reliant on one funding mechanism to maintain their business model. Although it was a worthy organization, Dial-A-Ride had received three years of funding from the Municipality and a considerable funding from the Federal government. The Municipality was not in a position to be able to provide funding to all the worthy organizations who have requested funding support. Static from April – September of 2023 was on file. There was no recent ridership data available. No direction was provided on the matter. 9 Lives Cat Rescue has applied for a grant through Grants and Contributions.

Splash Pad – The splash pad was currently in the budget. The cost identified in the budget was for the initial installation costs associated with a new splash pad, it did not include the ongoing costs after installation, which would be funded through operations. This item was funded through CCBF funding and was put in the budget to create capacity should the desire to be to move forward with a splash pad in a rural community. Splash Pads take time to construct, there was only one contractor who does this type of work once a location was determined. Approving the Capital budget provides direction for staff, but it does not mean the project is approved. The project would need to be tendered and return to Council for approval. The splash pad was removed from the Capital budget.

Commercial Tax rate Increase – direction was provided to move forward with looking at the Development Societies (\$105,000) to move into the General Commercial Rate and out of the General Residential rate. Consensus was to leave it as presented.

Protective Services position/funding remained in the budget.

Cunnable Creek project (2.5 million) initially identified in the budget was based on designing the whole proposal. The reduced amount (\$250,000) was based on timing as the entire report was not available, and further preliminary studies may need to occur regarding easements and land purchases. It allowed the project to be moved forward and not design the entire project as a whole. The reduced amount would not change the overall 5-year Capital budget, but there would be implications on the proposed budget for the current year. Concern was raised with reducing this project further.

Tregothic Creek Stormwater system upgrades (reduced in year 1) to \$600,000 and carry the remainder over into the next year.

The Case backhoe and sidewalk machine were also delayed.

8. Break

A break occurred at 7:40 p.m. The meeting resumed at 8:35 p.m. Upon resuming the meeting after the break, the meeting moved in-camera.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS P. MORTON AND IVEY THAT THE MEETING MOVE IN-CAMERA AT 8:35 P.M. MOTION CARRIED

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS P. MORTON AND J. SMIRTH THAT THE MEETING MOVE OUT OF IN-CAMERA AT 8:50 P.M. MPTION CARRIED

The break resumed until 9:45 p.m., at which time the regular meeting resumed. Following the break Director Rochon reviewed the updated list of items removed from the budget based on the direction provided from Council. The total adjustments amounted to \$96,400 (approximately half a penny on the tax rate).

Director Rochon reviewed the proposed adjustments and items removed from the budget. Items removed included HFD (upgrades to Engine 12 compartments and Hydraulic jaws of lift), WFD (truck bay floor coating), BFD (epoxy coating for apparatus floor), Electrical outlets on Gerrish Street, Lift Station -dedicated stand by generators, Sidewalk machine to replace unit 68, replacement of the 2011 Case 580 rubber tire backhoe. Total debt servicing proposed in the budget was over \$950,00, with the changes made the new proposed debt servicing was \$448,000. Director Rochon reviewed the budget with all the proposed changes.

The proposed General Residential tax rate was \$0.8007. The 2025/26 proposed rate for West Hants was \$1.0223, for Hantsport it was \$1.3537 and for Windsor it was \$1.6464. There was still a reliance on Reserves to offset the tax rate.

The proposed 2025/26 proposed Commercial tax rate for West Hants was \$1.8468, for Hantsport it was \$3.8168 and for Windsor it was \$3.9168.

9. Motions & Resolutions

Following the updated presentation from Director Rochon, Council discussed their options. Consensus was that Council was not yet ready to move forward with motions regarding the budget. Members wanted to have time to focus on reviewing/digesting the impacts of the changes proposed. Although some progress has been made, the tax rate increase remains a concern. There was consensus that further in-depth review of the budget could help identify additional changes to offset the increase.

Director Rochon reported that the initial budget presented totaled \$38.2 million. Following direction from Council and subsequent reductions, the current draft stands at \$37.4 million. Additionally, staff had already made \$460,000 in reductions prior to the presentation of the original draft.

Concerns were raised regarding the tax increase in the Commercial District, particularly the fairness of distributing development district costs across a geographically limited area. There were also reservations about using reserve funds to offset the tax rate increase, with some members questioning the long-term sustainability of that approach.

Several councillors expressed discomfort with the proposed 5-cent tax rate increase and indicated a need for more time to consider the latest budget changes. It was suggested that each Councillor return at the next meeting with specific proposals or revisions they would like to see included in the budget.

10. Next Meeting Date/Adjournment

The next Special Committee of the Whole Budget meeting to be determined. The next regular meeting will be May 27, 2025 Council, 6 p.m. With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Debbie Francis

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk