

Budget Committee Minutes

Meeting Number 1

November 3, 2020, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Live streamed

Members	Councillor Amanda Collucci, Chair Councillor Andrew Keyes, Vice-Chair Deputy Mayor Don Hamilton Councillor Keith Irish	Councillor Reid McAlpine Councillor Karen Rea Councillor Khalid Usman
Regrets	Mayor Frank Scarpitti (ex-officio)	
Roll Call	Regional Councillor Jack Heath Regional Councillor Jim Jones Councillor Isa Lee Andy Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer Trinela Cane, Commissioner, Corporate Services Arvin Prasad, Commissioner Development Services Claudia Storto, City Solicitor and Director of Human Resources	Joel Lustig, Treasurer Biju Karumanchery, Director of Planning and Urban Design Jay Pak, Senior Financial Analyst Veronica Siu, Senior Business Analyst Richard Fournier, Manager of Parks and Open Space Development Laura Gold, Council and Committee Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Budget Committee convened at 9:03 AM with Councillor Amanda Collucci, Budget Chief in the Chair.

The Budget Chief provided opening remarks on the 2021 Budget.

2. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There was no disclosure of pecuniary interest.

3. BUDGET PRESENTATION

3.1 2021 Budget Overview

Lisa Chen, Senior Manager of Financial Planning & Reporting provided the “2021 Budget Overview” presentation.

Committee provided the following feedback on the “2021 Budget Overview” presentation:

Economic Trends and Legislative Impacts

- Asked for clarification on how Markham’s unemployment rate has changed since 2019;
- Inquired if there were or will be any changes to the Federal Gas Tax Program due to a decrease in demand for gas during the pandemic;
- Inquired if the difference between the Canadian and American dollar has been considered when purchasing large items like the fire pumper trucks.

Capital Budget

- Inquired on the timing of the Markham and Unionville Village Flood Control Environmental Assessment
- Requested that a list of all proposed 2021 Capital Projects that did not make it to the Budget Committee be provided to the Committee.

Operating Budget

- Inquired how funds being allocated to COVID-19 related costs are anticipated to be spent;
- Asked how COVID-19 impacts the projected 2021 supplemental taxes, and assessment growth to be received by the City;
- Inquired if there would be a stormwater management fee in 2021, and for the Committee to discuss at a future meeting;
- Asked if City reserves could be used to help mitigate the budget shortfall;
- Asked if there are funds in the budget for new staff positions;
- Discussed COVID-19 enforcement resources and inquired about available options if additional by-law enforcement is required;
- Asked if the savings derived from staff positions that are vacant is anticipated to increase or decrease in 2021;

- Suggested that staff vacancies be filled on a contract basis during the pandemic;
- Suggested that at some point in the future the City will need to look at the optimal level of by-law enforcement in Markham, noting more By-Law Officers may be required to accommodate growth on local issues, and to temporarily enforce COVID-19 restrictions;
- Sought to ensure that the community's voice is being considered when making decisions regarding by-law enforcement in the 2021 Budget.

Staff provided the following responses to inquiries from the Committee:

Economic Trends and Legislative Impacts

- The unemployment rate has decreased to 9.5% since the onset of the pandemic, but it is still higher than 5.9%, which it was in September 2019;
- Staff have received no indication of any changes to the Federal Gas Tax Program, and the demand for gas has increased since the onset of the pandemic;
- American funds have been secured by the City to protect it against volatility in the American dollar when making large purchases, like the purchase of the fire pumper trucks.

Capital Budget

- Staff balanced providing assistance to the economy with the City's resources, cash flow, and fiscal constraints when preparing and making decision regarding the 2021 Capital Budget.

Operating Budget

- The City has allocated 1.1 million dollars for COVID-19 related costs in 2021 (amount to be monitored and is for all City facilities), which may be used to fund additional cleaning, ITS, or personal protective equipment that is required due to the pandemic;
- Explained the timing and 2020 experience of supplementary taxes and impact to the 2021 assessment growth. Anticipate that the City will receive higher supplemental taxes and lower assessment growth in 2021, and the net impact will be \$430,000 favourable in total funds to be received;

- Explained the \$100 to 127 average household impact did not include the stormwater management fee impact. Based on the existing Council resolution, the stormwater management fee of \$51 will be applied in 2021, unless Council directs otherwise;
- Staff to prepare options to present to the Committee on using City reserves to help mitigate a budget shortfall;
- There are no funds allocated in the 2021 budget for new staff positions;
- The salary gapping amount in the 2021 budget is the same as the 2020 budget.
- Staff vacancies are being filled by re-deployed staff whenever possible, or by hiring a permanent full-time employee or contract employee depending on the nature of the position;
- York Region Police (YRP) is the primary enforcer of COVID-19 related offences, but City staff could be redeployed to help if required.
- In 2020, staff were involved in by-law patrols and COVID-19 enforcement, and collaborated with YRP on enforcement strategies. As we require more effort and focus in 2021, staff will review local needs, YRP's role, parking enforcement activities, and review redeployment of other staff to enforcement activities.
- The number of by-law cases have increased with more people staying at home. By-Law Officers are fully deployed. Staff addressing the backlog of property standard complaints based on the order of priority.

4. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

5. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be held on November 6, 2020 at 9:00 AM.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The Budget Committee adjourned at 10:55 AM.