



**FIRST MEETING OF THE
2012 BUDGET COMMUNITY CONSULTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
THORNHILL COMMUNITY CENTRE, NORTH HALL
October 7, 2011**

MINUTES

Attendance:

Councillors Present: Deputy Mayor Heath (ex-officio) Regional Councillor Jim Jones Councillor Valerie Burke Councillor Alan Ho Councillor Logan Kanapathi Councillor Howard Shore	Staff Present: Jim Baird, Commissioner of Development Services Stephen Chait, Director of Economic Development Dennis Flaherty, Director of Communications & Community Relations Paul Ingham, General Manager of Operations Brenda Librecz, Commissioner of Community & Fire Services Karen Liu, Senior Financial Analyst Andrea Tang, Manager of Financial Planning Andy Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer Mark Visser, Senior Manager of Financial Strategy & Investments Paul Wealleans, Director of Taxation Alison Yu, Senior Financial Analyst Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator
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The 2012 Budget Sub-Committee Community Consultation meeting convened at 7:10 p.m. with Councillor Logan Kanapathi presiding as the Chair.

1. OPENING REMARKS

Councillor Howard Shore and Councillor Valerie Burke welcomed residents to the 2012 Budget Community Consultation Meeting.

The Chair highlighted the projects completed in 2011.

2. 2012 BUDGET COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MEETING

Ms. Andrea Tang, Manager of Financial Planning, presented the preliminary 2012 Budget to the residents. The presentation included a review of the 2012 budget process; the economic trends and fiscal scan; a review of the preliminary 2012 capital budget; an overview of the water and waste water reserve and rate approval process; a review of the preliminary 2012 operating budget; an overview of assessment & property taxes; future budget challenges; the 2012 budget highlights; and the highlights of current major capital projects.

3. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

There was a question regarding when improvements will be made to the stormwater management sewers on Yonge Street. It was reported that a report will be brought forward to Council this fall on Markham's stormwater management and that funds are being allocated to improving the stormwater sewers in West Thornhill.

It was recommended that a picture of a Thornhill landmark be used at future community consultation meetings being held in Wards one (1) & two (2).

It was noted that the residents appreciated the additional flowers placed on Yonge Street in 2011.

It was recommended that funds be allocated to creating more bicycle lanes on Thornhill roads. Staff advised that Markham has a Cycling & Pedestrian Plan and that funds are being allocated towards the implementation of the plan.

It was suggested that a mural be painted on the bridge at Henderson Avenue and Proctor Avenue for beautification purposes. Funds were also requested to be allocated towards improving the public realm and towards rehabilitating existing parks in Thornhill. Staff advised that they would consider these requests and that funds are being allocated towards a rehabilitation strategy for existing parks in Markham.

A request was made to purchase two (2) solar radar speed boards that can be used both in Thornhill and in other Wards in Markham.

A resident inquired what the anticipated growth rate is for Markham. It was reported that Markham is anticipated to grow by approximately 10,000 residents per annum until 2021.

There was a discussion on the re-development of the Canac Kitchen property. It was reported that there is currently no development application for the property. Although, a conditional offer to purchase the property has been made, noting interest has been expressed in converting the land use from employment to residential. Staff confirmed that property taxes are less for vacant land. Residents were assured that Markham is taking steps to revitalize the area. The Thornhill Revitalization Committee, comprised of residents and businesses in the area, has been established to make recommendations to Council on the revitalization of the area.

A Resident questioned if additional revenue could be raised from existing facilities (e.g. installing solar energy panels on the roof of Markham facilities and selling the energy back to the grid). Staff advised this is already being done at Markham Civic Centre and that additional opportunities to install solar panels on other Town facilities are being explored. It was noted that Markham also owns on hundred percent (100%) of the shares of Markham District Energy.

There was inquiry if more detailed budget information could be placed on the Markham's website. It was noted that this information can be obtained through the Town's Finance Department.

Concern was expressed regarding the Town's schedule for paving roads, as some roads seem to be repaved before they require fixing. Staff advised that Markham has established a pavement management program that reduces the amount of funds required to be placed in the Lifecycle Reserve Fund by one (1) million dollars per year. The program focuses on preservation and is being benchmarked by other municipalities.

A resident questioned how the Town will control its costs going forward and if the millions of dollars being spent on the Pan Am Games is a worthwhile investment. It was reported that 56% of the projects cost is being funded by other levels of government. Council's decision to build these facilities stems from the benefits they will bring to the community after the Pan Am Games are complete, noting that it is anticipated that the facilities will attract more development charges and the legacy facilities will be available for the community to use. The facilities will attract tourism and will be a focal part of Markham. Staff advised that Markham is known for being a very efficient organization, but that it is important to investment in infrastructure, as good infrastructure drives the economy.

A resident inquired what was being done regarding a water tank located on John Street. Staff advised that it is being scheduled for demolition, noting this may take sometime, as environmental concerns due to the lead paint first need to be resolved.

There was an inquiry regarding how user fees are increased. Staff advised that user fees are increased based on the consumer price index.

A request was made to exempt pool owners from the wastewater charge. Staff advised that currently the Town has a flat water and wastewater rate, but will be reviewing alternate ways of charging for water and wastewater. Residents were advised they could join a focus group on this matter.

There was an inquiry how parking ticket revenue is collected from the Region. Staff advised there is a model used to collect revenue from the Region.

A resident expressed their concern that a swimming program has been moved from Thornlea Pool to the Therapeutic Pool at the Thornhill Community Centre. The change of location has reduced the number of spots and made it challenging to obtain a spot in the program. It was

noted that there are also too few accessible parking spots at Thornhill Community Centre and that the spots are not strategically located.

The resident also expressed concern regarding the Town not having a snow removal program for windrows. It was noted that the Town is investigating options for providing a windrow service, noting it is very expensive.

Concern was expressed regarding the maintenance of the school yards in the summer months.

There was a question regarding the re-surfacing of playgrounds. It was noted that safety standards do not require playgrounds to be resurfaced. However, the Town is looking into refreshing some of Markham's existing parks in 2012. This will include a review of the Town's drinking fountain strategy.

There was a question regarding what is being done for animal services in Markham. It was noted that a feasibility study considering all options for animal care and wild life services in Markham is being conducted in 2012. It was reported that Markham will be officially opening its first off leash dog park in Thornhill in 2012.

There was a request to allocate funds towards erosion in the Pomona Valley and German Mills (e.g. Pomona Mills and German Mills Ravines). This included adding more garbage cans and managing the erosion of the natural environment. It was also noted that the garbage cans are overfilling at Simonston Park and that the drinking fountains do not work.

Residents advised that they would like to have designated places where registered ratepayer groups can meet free of charge.

Concern was expressed regarding the water & wastewater rate increase. It was explained that Markham purchases its water from the Region of York and the Region purchases water from the City of Toronto and the Region of Peel. The cost of purchasing water has increased due to aging infrastructure. There will be a public meeting on the water & wastewater rate increase on October 25, 2011.

A resident noted their concern regarding the management of hog weed and poison ivy.

Councillor Valerie Burke and Councillor Howard Shore thanked residents for attending the Budget Community Consultation meeting.

The Budget Community Consultation meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.