



Staff Report

Finance

Report To: COW-Finance, Admin, Fire, Legal, Community Services
Meeting Date: March 13, 2023
Report Number: FAF.23.029
Title: 2023 Draft Budget – Public Comments
Prepared by: Sam Dinsmore, Deputy Treasurer/Manager of Accounting and Budgets

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.23.029, entitled “2023 Draft Budget – Public Comments” for information purposes.

B. Overview

This report outlines the comments from the Public Meeting for the 2023 Draft Budget, which was held on March 7th, 2023, at 9:30 a.m., as well as Staff’s response to these comments.

C. Background

The 2023 Draft Budget has been reviewed by Council and the Public over a series of meetings throughout 2023. On March 7th, 2023, the Town held a Public Meeting to provide the public with the opportunity to review and comment on the 2023 Draft Budget and 2023 Draft Water and Wastewater Budget.

The timeline, as presented to Council, is to bring forward a By-law to adopt the estimates of all sums required for 2023 on March 27th, 2023, for Council’s consideration.

The Town received 45 written comments prior to the Public Meeting and 6 comments during the Public Meeting. Below is a summary of the comments received from the public.

D. Analysis

The following written comments have been received by the public:

Rob Sampson

Mr. Sampson has provided Council and staff with a 22-page list of comments/questions as well as 7 pages of highlights. The general themes are around fiscal restraint, no evidence of zero-based budgeting tools, capital projects generally being over budget and behind schedule,

inappropriate use of water and wastewater rate stabilization fund to limit rate increases and other sidewalk snow clearing options need consideration.

Staff Response – The Town thanks Mr. Sampson for his comments and looks forward to continued engagement with the public and interested groups around enhancements to the annual budget book, in-year financial reporting, and increased transparency and accountability around Town finances.

Andrew Siegwart, President Blue Mountain Village Association

Mr. Siegwart provided Council with a 17-page presentation. The presentation included 5 key points and proposed resolutions on the following items: incomplete infrastructure along Jojo Weider Blvd; the *Village Master Plan* has seen the construction of multiple new residential communities in the past five years yet there are notable deficiencies in infrastructure and certain communities have yet to be assumed but the Town; multiple servicing does align with the four-season destination experience and recreational zoning our communities are built around; the current draft budget does not include investments in parks or greenspaces within the Craighleith/Village areas; there is an opportunity to expand services and mitigate costs through shared services, private and public partnerships and regional collaboration.

Staff Response – The Town looks forward to continued collaboration and communication with the Blue Mountain Village Association on the 5 key points in the presentation.

Steve Seabrooke

Mr. Seabrooke has provided Council with comments regarding the Peel Street North Reconstruction project. Mr. Seabrooke mentioned the impacts to public safety with the surprised delay of the project. This project was funded through the 2021 and 2022 budgets and was set to be completed by Q4 2023. Mr. Seabrooke commented on the email that was sent out by the Town on January 17, 2023, advising the public that due to an increase in costs coupled with the pedestrian bridge, the project would be delayed until late 2024. Due to the safety risks associated with the hill on Peel Street North, Mr. Seabrooke is recommending the project is turned in to a multi-year project starting in 2023 since it is already partially funded to address the immediate safety risks.

Staff Response – The Town thanks Mr. Seabrooke for his comments and looks forward to continued collaboration and public consultation for this capital project and all capital projects.

Stephen Granger

Mr. Granger has provided Council with comments regarding the Craighleith East area. Mr. Granger is presenting a request to establish this budget year, a collaborative working group, with staff resource support and possible funding, so that it can assess and address the Craighleith East and West soft development priorities and infrastructure needs required. Mr. Granger has highlighted some priority concerns for Council's review as noted below.

1. Prioritize the completion of sidewalks, landscaping, and new trail path connections as shown in the development plans along with the maintenance of these.
2. Prioritize a solution for immediate active pedestrian safety (sidewalks) along Jozo Weider, especially near Grey Road 19 along with lighting, graded boulevards and paths going to and from the Blue Mountain Village. This roadway is currently dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists.
3. Investigate the need for park/ playground amenities as in most cases residents need to drive long distances to find these.
4. Investigate active transportation and traffic calming on all roadways to allow for bikes, walking and other forms of recreation while balancing the huge influx of automobile traffic to the Blue Mountain Village area.

Staff Response - The Town looks forward to continued collaboration and communication with the residents in the Craigleith area.

Andrew Siegwart, President Blue Mountain Village Association

Mr. Siegwart provided Council with follow-up comments to the February 1, 2023, Deputation. Mr. Siegwart has made some recommendations for the Village and the Craigleith East residential community for implementation in 2023. They are as follows:

1. Complete enhancements to the east side of Jozo Weider Blvd between the intersections of Grey Road 19 and Wintergreen Place, to include a safe pedestrian pathway and integration of active transportation trails which connect adjacent Village Residential Communities to Jozo Weider Boulevard.
2. Increase funding allocation in the Budget to support a permanent extension of transit operating hours and an increase in frequency.
3. Complete the Crestview Court connecting trail and complete critical safety improvements throughout the remaining trail system.
4. Protect and enhance Jozo Weider and Heritage Parks and commence a community envisioning exercise for Jozo Weider Park.
5. Endorse and direct staff to form a working group comprising key departments that impact resident experience (planning, community services, operations) to work with BMVA and other Craigleith communities to identify and solve operational issues impacting residential services and experience.

Staff Response – The Town looks forward to continued collaboration and communication with the Blue Mountain Village Association on the 5 key points in the presentation.

The following residents submitted written and/or verbal comments supporting the submission submitted by Mr. Siegwart and the Blue Mountain Village Association as included above:

- Glenys Wilkings
- Peter and Sandra McLaughlin
- Jason and Tania Craig

- Tony Vella
- Chris Haslett
- Janet & Dean Rurak
- Debby K. Gerth
- Dan MacKeigan
- Ulana Gorgi
- Denise Anderson
- Tracey and Ryan Peake
- Leslie Girdharry
- Hayley Mitchell
- Monika Stramaglia
- Alec Dinescu
- Jerry Tomczyk
- Gary and Terri Masters
- Barb and John Hannah
- Line and Steven Troster
- Paul Comeau
- Shawna Millman
- David Varriano
- Marlene Soligo Bruce and Cameron Bruce
- Rick Frost and Denise Janssen
- Sam Maduri
- Eric Langford
- Avanthi Goddard
- Dave Phillips
- Linda Granger
- Anna Eliopoulos
- John Relihan – verbal comments received at the March 7th Public Meeting

Staff Response - The Town looks forward to continued collaboration and communication with the residents in the Craighleith area.

Rob Sampson

Mr. Sampson provided Council with follow-up comments to his comments that were recently submitted on January 24, 2023. The general themes are around fiscal restraint, spending vs. revenue issue, no evidence of zero-based budgeting tools, capital projects generally being over budget and behind schedule, inappropriate use of water and wastewater rate stabilization fund to limit rate increases and other sidewalk snow clearing options need consideration.

Staff response - The Town thanks Mr. Sampson for his comments and looks forward to continued engagement with the public and interested groups around enhancements to the annual budget book, in-year financial reporting, and increased transparency and accountability around Town finances.

Jim Torrance, President Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association

Mr. Torrance provided Council with comments around recognizing that Council and staff have taken into account some of the important issues being faced including high levels of inflation, especially construction costs, potential for an economic slowdown, uncertainty surrounding the impacts of the Province's Bill 23 and have shown reasonable constraint in setting the 2023 budget targets. Mr. Torrance included a number of examples of restraint being shown by the Town, and also included in his comments a number of areas where the Town could improve the budget document and management of spending.

Staff Response – The Town looks forward to a continued relationship with the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Associations specifically around publish an annual budget book that meets the needs of the residents.

Jennifer Bisley, Executive Director The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation

Ms. Bisley provided Council with comments regarding attainable housing within the community. Ms. Bisley indicates that the Town has show leadership through the creation of The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation and adoption of strategies and plans, as well as indicates that the 2023 Draft Budget includes at least five distinct initiatives that relate to the supply of attainable housing. Ms. Bisley also indicates that a strategic and coordinated approach to attainable housing that sets out clear goals, targets and approaches that align with external partners working to support and deliver attainable housing is missing. Ms. Bisley makes suggestions that the Town may want to consider as part of existing initiatives in the 2023 Draft Budget.

Staff Response – The Town looks forward to continued collaboration and communication with the Blue Mountain Attainable Housing Corporation.

Pamela Spence

Ms. Spence submitted the following comments regarding the 2023 Budget:

- 1) The backlash from my friends in neighbouring Meaford, Clearview and Collingwood regarding TBM gouging for fees and parking tickets to access hiking trails and parks they have always enjoyed has been visceral. I believe there has been extensive petitions to you to change this. We in TBM should not be expecting our neighbours to be treated differently than the residents are. We count on our neighbours. Please make decisions that keep our invisible boarders invisible.
- 2) Budgeting based on NO change to MPAC assessments is not reasonable. MPAC valuation revisions have not occurred somewhere between the last 5-8 years. There will be a big shift in MPAC soon - how long that will take is not known to me but will represent a big benefit or windfall to TBM. Budgeting should reflect something for this eventuality.

Staff Response - The Town thanks Ms. Spence for her comments and looks forward to continued engagement with the public and interested groups around enhancements to the

annual budget book, in-year financial reporting, and increased transparency and accountable around Town finances.

John Milne

Mr. Milne submitted the following comments regarding the 2023 Budget:

While the Budget Package as presented contains a great deal of detail that represents many hours of staff time, there are a number of omissions that should be addressed before Council can make an informed decision. These include:

1. A detailed explanation of inter-departmental transfers and the reasons for them.
2. A detailed explanation of the accounting changes from the 2022 budget and the reasons for them – part of this should be an apples-to-apples comparison of the 2022 actuals/estimates against the proposed 2023 spends.
3. Costs and explanations of staff time devoted to the BMAHC as well as suggested plans for recovering the monies loaned to the BMAHC in the event of a default in November of this year when those funds come due.
4. As per Schedule B, Paragraph 5 of the MOU between the Town and the BMAHC, “The ED will work in coordination with the Town’s budget planning process to provide information as required to assist the Town in providing a consolidated budget to Council.” No such budget exists in the Package as presented.
5. A schedule detailing all Contract and Part-time Staff and their costs on a per-department and consolidated basis. As it stands, the Budget Package is overestimating the cost of full-time employees and has done so for years.
6. A relabelling of Cell Phone expenses. According to Director Prince, these are currently deemed “Communications.” As above, these Cell Phone costs should be presented on a per-department and consolidated basis.
7. A more accurate accounting of the staff costs associated with the issuance and collection of parking tickets – it is hard to believe that only \$21,000 worth of staff time is required for Parking. An estimate of the Opportunity Cost represented by the Town’s complimentary Parking Passes for residents should also be part of the package if council is to be making a fully-informed decision.
8. The Package would benefit from a summary of the risks associated with the Town failing to achieve the proposed revenues and plans for ameliorating those risks.

Staff Response – The Town thanks Mr. Milne for his comments and looks forward to continued engagement with the public and interested groups around enhancements to the annual budget book, in-year financial reporting, and increased transparency and accountable around Town finances.

David Moss-Cornett

Mr. Moss-Cornett submitted the following comments regarding the 2023 Budget with the specific topic of making the Town more accessible:

- Follow through on the accessibility proposal for Little River Park and the Pier.
- Provide our beach with accessible mats.
- Upgrade Bayview Park so that it becomes accessible to all people.
- Support groups such as the Thornbury – Clarksburg Rotary Club and its proposal to redevelop Moreau Park with a year-round walking path and accessible playground.
- Make a plan to make the storefronts in the Thornbury Core and Clarksburg more readily accessible.
- Work toward paving the Georgian Trail that is in our area. Paving trails allows for increased accessibility, more recreational and social opportunities, better quality of life and less isolation for people with mobility issues. The current limestone makes it more of an effort for pedestrians to walk (especially senior people using walkers or people using strollers.) Paving trails may not be an accessibility requirement but it is a lifesaver. It has become a common practice in many progressive towns.

Staff Response – The Town thanks Mr. Moss-Cornett on his comments and looks forward to working together to make the Town more accessible through expansion, rehabilitation, and replacement capital projects throughout the Town.

Brittany Knight

Ms. Knight submitted the following comments regarding the 2023 Budget with the specific topic of making the Town more accessible:

1. Further development of a fully accessible beach area at Little River, not only including the new washrooms, but a paved path to access the parking lot, pier, beachfront, playground, marina and picnic area. As well, Mobi-Mats to access the water, appropriate parking spaces, and a curb cut in front of the Royal Harbour Resort so people can cross the road to the beach from the safety of the sidewalk.
2. A complete redevelopment of Bayview Park including all accessible features and appropriate parking.
3. Support for the T-C Rotary's vital project to redevelop Moreau Park into a fully accessible and inclusive recreational facility for all, including a 4-season paved trail around the park.
4. Paving of the more 'urban' areas of the Georgian Trail to allow for accessible recreational options in all seasons.
5. Better design and maintenance of sidewalks and curb cuts to facilitate safer access for those with mobility aids (so they are not tipping over when accessing the community.)
6. Professional development for town staff to understand the physical and systemic barriers that people with disabilities face on an everyday basis, in order to take a proactive approach when dealing with town initiatives, repairs and planning events.
7. A proactive plan to address the physical barriers that exist at businesses in the downtown core of Thornbury and Clarksburg, and support initiatives with the BIA to create more accessible storefronts.

8. When considering further development, and attainable housing, include a high number of accessible units and housing options to benefit individuals, families and seniors.

Staff Response - The Town thanks Ms. Knight on her comments and looks forward to working together to make the Town more accessible through expansion, rehabilitation, and replacement capital projects throughout the Town.

Rick Tipping

Mr. Tipping made verbal comments to Council during the March 7th Public Meeting. Mr. Tipping stated that in this economic climate financial restraint was important and the Town should put a focus on maintaining core services to lessen the burden on taxpayers and avoid non-core services such as attainable housing and the campus of care. Mr. Tipping urges the Town to host a referendum around the Campus of Care development to gauge that public's interest in this endeavor.

Mr. Tipping's last point was that Council should halt all development until further details of Bill 23 are known to ensure that growth pays for growth and that the tax base isn't paying for development.

Staff Response - The Town thanks Mr. Tipping for his comments and looks forward to continued engagement with the public and interested groups around enhancements to the annual budget book, in-year financial reporting, and increased transparency and accountability around Town finances.

Councillor June Porter

During the Public Meeting of March 7th Councillor Porter requested that the Blue Mountain Attainable Housing Corporation's (BMAHC) budget be included in the Town's budget book as per Schedule B Section 5 of the Minutes of Understanding (MOU). Section 5 of the MOU reads:

The ED (Executive Director) will work in coordination with the Town's budget planning process to provide information as required to assist the Town in providing a consolidated budget to Council.

Staff Response – The BMAHC is currently funded through the Council approved operating loan that has an expiry date of November 30, 2023. For the purposes of the 2023 budget no additional funds have been requested outside of the \$1,200,000 approved upper limit of the repayable operating loan.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders.

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

N/A

G. Financial Impacts

The Town's 2023 Draft Budget has a tax rate increase of 2.55% over 2022 which equates to an additional \$53 for the average assessment house.

H. In Consultation With

N/A

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has been the subject of a Public Meeting which took place on March 7th, 2023. Those who provided comments at the Public Meeting, including anyone who has asked to receive notice regarding this matter, has been provided notice of this Staff Report.

Any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Sam Dinsmore, Deputy Treasurer/Manager of Accounting and Budgets budgetteam@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. Public Comments

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Dinsmore
Deputy Treasurer/Manager of Accounting and Budgets

Ruth Prince
Director Finance & Information Technology Services

For more information, please contact:
Sam Dinsmore, Deputy Treasurer/Manager of Accounting and Budgets
budgetteam@thebluemountains.ca
519-599-3131 extension 274

Report Approval Details

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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Ruth Prince - Mar 8, 2023 - 4:24 PM