

November 10, 2025 - 2026 Budget Comments		
Date	Comment	Staff Response
9-Oct-25	<p><b>Comment from Jim Torrance:</b> The Town aims to restrict the 2026 property tax increase to 2.5% amid rising costs and uncertainties, requiring contributions from Town staff, Council, and residents. Significant cost increases, such as higher OPP contract rates and waste management fees, necessitate sacrifices across stakeholder groups to achieve this goal.</p> <p>Town staff must utilize the KPMG study's service prioritization framework ("Must Do," "Should Do," "Can Do," "Nice-to-Do") to make budget adjustments. This may involve cutting lower-priority services, adjusting service standards, and possibly reassigning employees or leaving vacancies unfilled. Current measures like charging for garbage collection or holding vacancies are insufficient without more robust decision-making.</p> <p>Council must confront and communicate difficult trade-offs, potentially eliminating valued services. Sharing a detailed service prioritization with residents will aid public debate and garner support for necessary cuts. Residents, meanwhile, need to understand and back these measures, as changes in service provision are inevitable to meet the budget target. The outcome will depend on stakeholder collaboration in the upcoming months.</p>	<p>As part of the 2026 Budget presentations, staff mapped all Town departments and divisions to the KPMG service categorization framework for Council's review. The analysis indicates that only a very small share of Town spending is allocated to "Nice to Do" services, with the vast majority supporting core, mandatory, or essential services. Staff will continue to pursue efficiencies and service improvements to balance community needs and preferences with the impact on taxpayers.</p>
9-Oct-25	<p><b>Comments from Paul John Reale:</b> Mr. Reale requested documents in order to prepare a more fulsome review of the draft budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2025 Reserve &amp; Reserve Fund Statements (with policy targets)</li> <li>- Development Charges Reserve Continuity (by service)</li> <li>- 2025 Debt Schedule (with ARL headroom)</li> <li>- 2026 Capital Plan Export with Funding Splits (Tax/Res/Grant/Debt/DC)</li> <li>- Operating GL by Department (account level)</li> <li>- Outstanding Completed but Unfunded Capital Works</li> </ul>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Responses to requests sent to Mr. Reale on October 24, 2025.</p>
14-Oct-25	<p><b>Comments from Hazel Milne:</b> Concerned about the state of existing reserves and the potential to be in a deficit by 2027.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The Reserve and Reserve Fund forecast shows a declining trajectory relative to the 10 year capital plan, signalling a sustainability risk if left unaddressed. With this now identified, staff—under Council's direction—will implement measures to rebuild and stabilize balances, including increasing Asset Management (pay as you go) transfers and, where appropriate, financing long lived assets with debt within Council policy and Ontario's Annual Repayment Limit (ARL). Staff will also bring forward options to phase project timing, align with external funding (development charges and grants), and calibrate user rate contributions to smooth tax impacts while maintaining service levels.</p>
14-Oct-25	<p><b>Comments from Jarvis Strong:</b> The Escarpment Corridor Alliance (ECA) is a regional South Georgian Bay conservation charity with a focus on connectivity of all forms. The ECA supports investment of \$150,000 for the Urban Tree and Biodiversity Strategy work. The ECA is hopeful that this budget allocation will be approved as it is a critical investment in the Town's future and in the wellness of future generations of TBM residents. The ECA would be pleased to support the Town.</p>	<p>Thank you for you comment. At the October 15th Special Committee of the Whole Meeting Council directed staff to include the Urban Tree and Biodiversity Strategy in the 2026 Draft Budget at a cost of \$150,000. The request is dependent on successfully securing grant funding that will cover 90% of the cost. The remaining 10% will be funded from reserves.</p>

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14-Oct-25	<p><b>Comments from Rick Tipping:</b> Disappointed with the 2026 budget, and proposed increase in taxes. Town should leverage more non-residential revenues from commercial/industrial sectors and look at increased revenues from the tourism sector by repealing the resort condo tax and reclassifying STA's as commercial uses.</p> <p>Need to look at staff efficiencies, town vehicle efficiencies, supports the rejection of the \$4 garbage fee, consider removal of weekend flower watering and garbage receptical pick up. By-law division is showing a large deficit and should not be expected to generate revenue to offset costs, however the shortfall is excessive. Other cost cutting measures include: removing Georgian Trail winter maintenance, reduce winter sidewalk maintenance and ask residents to maintain their frontage, re-evaluation of all services, termination of non-essential memberships, hiring freeze, salary freeze, elimination of COLA, reduce overtime, reduction to grants and donations, eliminate the communications department, eliminate colour printing, remove staff duplication, better manage development, and use the MAT tax revenues to offset the financial impacts resulting from tourism in the town.</p> <p>The private sector is making difficult and significant decisions during this economic period. The Town should mirror this view.</p>	<p>Thank you for your detailed feedback. Staff are continuously pursuing efficiencies and cost avoidance through process improvements, procurement, technology, fleet right sizing, and vacancy management. At the same time, most municipal costs support legislated, safety critical, or core services; broad reductions will affect service levels. Any cost saving options will therefore be brought to Council with the associated service, risk, and community impacts clearly identified before decisions are made.</p> <p>On revenues, property assessment and classification (including any treatment of short term accommodations or resort condominiums) are determined by MPAC under provincial legislation, and tax ratios are set at the County level—not unilaterally by the Town. While we cannot simply reclassify properties to increase non residential taxes, we will continue to leverage the tools available to us—user fee alignment, cost recovery where appropriate, partnerships, and the portion of Municipal Accommodation Tax that the Town is permitted to use—to help offset tourism related pressures.</p> <p>Regarding specific reduction ideas (e.g., weekend horticulture and litter collection, winter maintenance of trails and sidewalks, by law resourcing, communications), many would lower service standards and may raise safety, accessibility, cleanliness, and liability concerns. By law services are compliance driven and fines are provincially regulated; they are not designed to fully fund operations. Proposals such as hiring or salary freezes must also respect collective agreements and market competitiveness to maintain essential service delivery. Staff will continue identifying efficiencies and will present Council with balanced options that weigh savings against service and risk, so decisions can be made transparently and with full information.</p>
26-Oct-25	<p><b>Comments from Rick Tipping:</b> The critique highlights significant concerns regarding the council's decision to fill vacancies automatically, despite ongoing budget discussions and the commitment to zero-based budgeting. The decision appears misaligned with the economic challenges such as escalating living costs and appears as a failure to manage excessive spending. This concern is compounded by a perception that council and staff are disconnected from community needs, particularly in financial management and accountability.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. As part of the 2026 Budget deliberations Council has directed staff to delay the hiring of several vacant positions in light of the current economic conditions. By delaying the hiring of these positions Council has reduced levy pressure in 2026. In addition this delay provides staff the opportunity to assess the need of the respective positions.</p>
10-Nov-25	<p><b>Preregistered Speaker - Pamela Spence - Craigleith Community Working Group</b> Request to include the \$25,000 for Craigleith Community Visioning Workshops in the Town's Budget and not fund the project through MAT.</p> <p>CCWG requests that Council support the prioritization of the following projects in the Town's 2026 work plan and budget and requests that staff bring back a report detailing how each of these projects will be incorporated into the respective departmental 2026 work plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning - Secondary Plan review,</li> <li>• Operations - Crosswinds Blvd Opening communication plan and follow-up,</li> <li>• Operations – Hiring of Traffic Coordinator for Crosswinds and Grey Rd 19/21 communication,</li> <li>• Community Services – Along with Urban Tree Coordinator prepare revitalization plan for Georgian Trail in Craigleith as well as advance trails and park planning,</li> <li>• Community Services - Immediate resident engagement for Craigleith Community Park design,</li> <li>• Community Services -Engaging residents in design and installation of parks and trails in Craigleith;</li> <li>• By-law Division – Engagement with Craigleith residents in parking strategy and well as signage and Parking By-law review.</li> </ul>	<p>Thank you for your presentation.</p> <p>In the 2026 Draft Budget, the \$25,000 for the Craigleith Community Visioning Workshops is funded from Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) funds. Should Council wish to fund this item from the 2026 tax levy instead, Council may provide direction to staff to amend the funding source.</p> <p>Staff will maintain close collaboration with the Craigleith Community Working Group to prioritize the projects and initiatives proposed by the Group. Implementation of these items will be carefully considered within the context of the broader needs of the Town of The Blue Mountains.</p> <p>A subsequent staff report will be brought forward detailing how/if the projects will be incorporated into the 2026 work plans.</p>
10-Nov-25	<p><b>Preregistered Speaker - Vince Rogers and Tony Ha-Roy - Meaford Hospital Foundation</b> The Meaford Hospital Foundation is seeking a financial contribution in the amount of \$25,000 - Current Fiscal Year Ending December 2025; \$50,000 - Fiscal year ending December 2026. The purpose of the contribution is to support emergency care equipment at Brightshores Health System - Meaford Hospital, 24/7 access to urgent care services for TBM residents and to strengthen local healthcare capacity in partnership with the Foundation.</p>	<p>Thank you for your presentation.</p> <p>\$25,000 has been budgeted in both 2025 and 2026 for the Meaford Hospital Foundation. The 2025 contribution is being considered for MAT funding.</p>