

2016 Budget

Additional Budget Comments Received

This section contains additional comments received regarding the budget. Staff have classified the comments into three categories - Under Advisement which may have future possibilities for reductions or savings; Uncontrollable by the Municipality; and, Administrative.

FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

The following comments were received and have been taken under advisement for investigation in future years if Council so directs. Staff comments are shown in italics.

- 1 I have noted the sidewalk snow plow for the past year makes far too many passes on my street and for that matter the whole town. On Dec 19 there was a sprinkle of snow yet the plow made at least one completely unnecessary pass. Each time the plow passes it drops more sand. This was on a Saturday and probably on overtime. Last year the plow went down the streets all April when the sidewalks were completely dry and free from ice and at times when the temperature was in excess of 10°C. Other neighbours have commented on the waste and I would like to see this extensive coverage reduced to a more reasonable level with the \$ savings back to the taxpayers of Collingwood. Every hour the equipment is used is wear and tear and repairs which could be reduced. I doubt if the safety of our residents would be compromised.

The number of slip and fall claims has risen in the past few years. The Town must maintain the sidewalks at a minimum level in order to be protected from any claims. In the shoulder seasons, as noted above, there are occasions where the snow melts onto the sidewalks during the day and freezes at night. This creates a slip hazard that must be mitigated. This may not happen on every street but the operator must travel over the route to ensure that there are no areas of concern. The Town must provide proper due diligence with sidewalk maintenance considering the issues we now face in terms of potential claims.

- 2 Reduce Department Managers work week to 35 hours if it is not already in place.

PRC - assuming that a reduction in the hours of the department managers whose salary is based on 40 hours would also yield a reduction in their salary, this is a question for HR. I'm not sure of the implications of this from that perspective. Operationally, if there are Supervisory positions under each Manager who match hours to those expected of front-line staff (i.e. 40 hours), this shift is possible.

PW – All staff in the public works, engineering, sewer and water departments work a 40 hour week. Reducing the managers hours to 35 per work would mean that staff would be unsupervised for 5 hours per work. This is not advisable from a health and safety perspective and would be counterproductive from an effective and efficient work team aspect.

Department heads and some senior managers are paid a salary based on a 35 hour work week. All staff in this category work much more than the 35 hour salary base and do not receive overtime for their efforts. There are no potential savings to be realized by reducing the hours for this group of employees.

- 3 Is there an opportunity to reduce electricity costs by joining the LAS group?

The data and analysis would take some time to compile and review. Council can direct staff to investigate the LAS program and report back on potential savings commencing with the 2017 fiscal year.

The following suggestions were received but are either covered under collective agreement, contracted service agreements or other legislation. Staff comments are shown in italics.

1 The Fire Department, we have 30 full time firemen, we could cut that in half and use volunteer firemen just like every other municipality around us.

2 Fire Service:

Does Council have data for how effective the service is? How many calls are made? How many calls are for fire related issues? Should Fire personnel be sent out for traffic accidents and other non-fire related calls vs. Paramedics?

Is the staffing level correct? DO we have the correct level of junior vs. senior firefighters, and their management? How de we compare with other municipalities? What savings and efficiencies has the Fire Chief suggested?

Do neighbouring municipalities have the same issues? Could there be a sharing of expensive resources implemented? I think all the above data should be published by council, so residents can fully understand one of the most costly items in the budget.

3 Police Services:

Does Council have data regarding crime rates and staffing level correlation?

What are the Police staffing levels? What mix of junior vs. senior officers do we have? Are there too many "managers"? I think all the above data should be published by council, so residents can fully understand one of the most costly items in the budget.

Crime statistics are provided to Council through the Police Services Board. In terms of staffing levels, this is not under the control of Council however, each time the contract comes up for renewal, the OPP provide a presentation to Council that clearly outlines the staffing methodology and costing of the services provided.

4 The Library has 13 full time and 10 part time employees, for a small town this is ridiculous. The salaries for a year are 1 million and 127 thousand dollars, Wasaga Beach's salaries are 330 thousand. We have to monitor people that use the Library and cut hours, thus cutting employees and saving money.

The number of staff members working at the library has actually decreased since 2010, when the new facility opened. In 2010, the library had 15 full-time staff and 14 part-time. Today, as your correspondence has pointed out, we have 13 full-time and 11 part-time—that's 5 fewer positions. It should be noted too that 6 of the part-time staff are students who are paid student wages, so not terribly expensive to employ. In 2016, we will be losing one more full-time position, so we will be down to 12 full-time and 11 part-time employees. Any further reductions in staff will result in reductions in service and fewer opening hours. We could do that, but it wouldn't make much sense. In 2015 we averaged 667 people entering the library each day, making it the busiest municipal building in the Town of Collingwood. I can't speak for Wasaga Beach, but I can point out that many residents from the surrounding municipalities pay to join the Collingwood Public Library each year because we are larger and are open seven days a week. I would like to point out too that the people who most benefit from public library service are the poorest members of our community, those who don't have computers at home, for example, and who use the public workstations at the library to type a resume or search for a job. Cutting back on library service only harms the people who are most vulnerable in our community.

UNCONTROLLABLE

The following items are more of an administrative nature and not relevant to the direction given however, we have included them for information. Staff comments are shown in italics.

- 1 Apply a portion of the 2015 surplus to 2016 justifiable increase requirements and the remainder of the surplus would be placed in the Asset Management Plan reserves.
This suggestion is a temporary one. In essence what is being suggested is that the 2016 tax rate be bought down through the use of any 2015 surplus that may be generated. There are downsides to this suggestion:
 - *It is contingent on having a surplus;*
 - *The surplus is of sufficient magnitude to fund the “justifiable increases”; and,*
 - *What happens in the subsequent year(s) when surpluses are not forthcoming or not sufficient to continue to buy down tax increases?*
- 2 Where is the \$700,000 in savings from Water being allocated and over what time frame?
The savings realized in the water department will be transferred to the Water Reserve. This reserve is similar to the Wastewater Reserve that the Town has maintained. The Water Reserve is part of the rate study and will be used to fund Water Capital projects.
- 3 In regard to the Water department, full consideration of the full cost application should include the property related costs and those costs should be incorporated into water operation costs as it is similarly incorporated for other departments.
Based on the 2016 preliminary draft Water budget received from Collus Solutions, the water department would incur a net building cost of \$186,220. 50% of this amount has been included as recoverable from Wastewater in the “Wastewater Admin Fee” budget line
- 4 Establish a Foundation for maintenance of town historic properties. Fundraising could be independent of the tax levy and, potentially, charitable tax receipts could be issued.
This can be done through the establishment of a reserve fund and communication plan so the public is aware of the opportunity to assist in the maintenance of the historic town owned properties.
- 5 Ensure that all departments are working from net budget figures to plan 2016.
Finance staff review all capital projects submitted to ensure that we are not carrying unnecessary budget allocations forward. In terms of the operating budgets, the nature of the expense does not require an amount be carried forward to complete a project. Operating projects are deemed complete at year end and any additional spending required must be included in the subsequent year.
- 6 Where is the \$75,000 savings from the Integrity Commissioner being realized.
The costs associated with the Integrity Commissioner have been included in legal costs

- 7 Reduce Department Head discretionary spending ceiling from \$25,000 to \$10,000. Anything beyond that number will require Council approval.

*Department Heads **do not** have any **discretionary** spending ceiling. Section 4.0 of the current Procurement By-law (BL2006-42) discusses approval levels and specifically section 4.1 allows a Department Head to approve expenditures **up to \$25,000**. Section 2.1 b) of this by-law states:*

“No contract shall be entered into and no expenditure shall be authorized or incurred unless Council has provided funds for such purpose in the annual budget...”

In other words, if there is no budget allocation, there is no expenditure. There will be a higher level of oversight and control on expenditures with the introduction of a centralized purchasing function, the hiring of our Procurement Officer and the revised Procurement By-law, Policy, and Procedures and Protocols Manual that Council has received for review.

In addition, seeking Council approval for every item over \$10,000 is not feasible in terms of the available staff time for the writing of reports nor is it efficient in terms of service delivery, customer service, or the overall efficiency of the organization.

- 8 No discretionary Capital Spending

Staff do not budget discretionary capital spending.

- 9 Require all legal and consulting fees paid to a single firm, outside our contract legal team, over \$10,000 be approved by Council.

Again, this is a procurement issue and it can be discussed in relation to the revised Procurement By-law, Policy, and Procedures and Protocols Manual.

- 10 The sidewalk snow plow is ... very robust for residential sidewalks and has done extensive damage to walks, curbs, new town lamp standard bases, driveways and the beautiful stone wall on the pathway entrance to the Leisure Time. The damage to all the edges of our lawns was quite extensive last year and requests have been made for the town to repair this damage each year.

The equipment used is standard sidewalk equipment that is in use throughout the municipal industry. It is sized to accommodate the snowfall we receive in the most efficient manner possible. It is unfortunate but damage will occur. In a snow storm it is difficult to see or know where every curb or sidewalk edge is located and, as a result, sod damage does occur. The most unique situations are pre-marked but with time and staff constraints we cannot mark them all.