

RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF VICTORIA
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2023
6:30PM – OLD SCHOOL
730 VICTORIA RD, VICTORIA

Present

Councillors Marly Anderson (Chair), Jamie-Lee Brown
CAO Anna Keenan
FAA Marsha Empson
Councillors Tom Wright, Eric Gilbert, via Zoom
Members of the public, via Zoom

Quorum was achieved for this meeting.

Meeting called to order by Councillor Marly Anderson @ 6:31pm

Councillor Anderson thanked all for attending and for the work put into completing the draft budget.

Approval of Agenda

Motion moved to approve the agenda as circulated.

Motion moved by Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Wright.

Motion carried unanimously (3 votes for, 0 against).

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved to approve the minutes of March 13, 2023.

Motion moved by Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Wright.

Motion carried unanimously (3 votes for, 0 against).

Councillor Anderson explained that after each budget sub-item there would be 3 minutes allowed for public questions and discussion.

Public Presentation of the Financial Package (Budget 2023/24)

CAO Keenan explained that she would present the most up-to-date information, pointing out where there are already amendments expected to be made to the draft budget that was published 2 days ago, in the meeting package.

CAO Keenan reviewed the budget development process:

- The first draft of the budget was developed during week 3 of CAO Keenan's employment with the municipality.
- After the first presentation of the budget, public comments were accepted.
- CAO Keenan indicated that she was appreciative of all the comments, and that some of them led to change within the budget. She particularly appreciated comments and advice provided by previous CAOs, Keith Dewar and Hilary Price.
- Between Draft 1 and draft 2, she and FAA Empson reviewed and edited the numbers being reported as actuals, to account for the final 3 weeks of the year.
- She explained that the budget must be balanced or in surplus to submit to the province; a planned deficit is not allowed.
- A request to increase taxes would have to be submitted by March 31, if Council wished to approve an increase.

CAO Keenan briefly reviewed and summarised public feedback and staff responses:

- Many water & Sewer specific items were not reviewed, as they had been discussed at the Water & Sewer meeting the week prior.
- \$50k in funding for a fire truck that had been included in the initial budget, with the understanding that there may be an eligible grant available to offset the costs. However, it is not currently known if there is such a grant available, therefore, the budget was amended to remove the line items associated with a fire truck purchase, both on the income and expenses sides. CAO Keenan will be happy to revisit if a grant can be found, and would also like to work with the fire department to pass a fire services bylaw.
- A comment suggested that shared services be factored into the budget. CAO Keenan explained that while the municipality has discussed with the province, and will continue to look at this option, the proposed model has not been put into action yet and therefore a dollar amount can't be assigned confidently. The province intends to present information on the shared services model at the April council meeting.
- The greatest number of comments were received regarding water and sewer generators. CAO Keenan indicated that capital budget funds would account for this. The municipality is prioritizing 4 major capital projects, and if one needs to be dropped for lack of funds, she recommends dropping the sewer generator. She provided rationale to support her recommendations, including that the current wharf equipment is at the end of its life and has been requested by the provincial engineers responsible for water & sewage facilities, and that the municipality's Water Treatment Facility can be manually pumped out if needed, in the event of an extended power outage.

Questions and comments

- Councillor Gilbert commented that he felt discussions were needed to clarify Fire Department spending and expenses. CAO Keenan explained that the \$70K showing in

Draft 1 of the budget included \$50k for a fire truck, which has since been removed from the budget until an applicable grant can be found to offset the expense.

- Staff confirmed that the line for Fire Dues is, in fact, Outside Fire Dues, for residents outside of the municipal bounds only. Residents & businesses within municipal bounds pay for fire service as part of their regular property taxes.

CAO Keenan Presented the Water & Sewer Budget, as approved by W&S Commission March 23, 2023

- CAO Keenan explained that the Commission had approved the W&S portion of the budget, but council needed to approve it as well.
- She indicated that the IRAC rate increase had impacted the income for W&S and had created a surplus.
- In the submitted budget, this surplus was marked as a transfer to the municipal reserve, however, former CAO Keith Dewar informed CAO Keenan (who confirmed with the auditor) that the funds are not allowed to be handled in that way. Because rates were paid specifically for Water & Sewer service, the surplus will need to be directed to a W&S reserve fund.

Questions and comments

- Councillor Brown indicated that the Commission reviewed that portion of the budget thoroughly at the W&S meeting and that she was comfortable with the final draft.

CAO Keenan presented the Operational Budget.

Income side of the budget:

- One of the changes between Draft 1 and Draft 2 included an increase to commercial taxes, which increased income by \$3271.
- Outside fire dues decreased ~\$400, resulting from a correction to calculations used to determine 2022/23 dues. Councillor Gilbert thought that perhaps it would be higher for 2023/24, but FAA Empson indicated that she had not been provided with the reporting for the upcoming year.
- A large increase in rental income was also included for the upcoming year. Staff will be responsible for promoting increased rental income from our municipal assets.
- A transfer from a municipal reserve fund was included in the submitted budget as income, but we now know that this is not allowed (as those funds came from Water & Sewer), so this line will need to be amended before the budget is passed.

Questions and comments were invited. There were none.

- CAO Keenan indicated that there were some large corrections made between draft 1 and draft 2 expenses, to present a balanced budget.

- The expenses for the Fire Department were reviewed first, showing an increase in overall expenses from the past year, however, building repairs and maintenance will need to be decreased to ensure budget balance. It is hoped that some building repairs may be covered by a grant for heritage funding. Overall, the Fire Department budget is approximately the same as the previous year.
- CAO Keenan explained that the grass cutting quotes for all properties came in significantly higher than last year's actuals. In order to find savings, CAO Keenan proposed amending the submitted budget for a 6% reduction in the overall budget for lawnmowing, to be expressed as a single reduction in costs for the Dunrovin Green Space grass cutting. The service levels will need to be negotiated with the contractors.
- CAO Keenan proposed an amendment to reduce the expenses for Official Plan Legal and Consulting, from \$10,000 to \$7000.
- A large reduction of \$50,000 to Legal/Consulting Fees was applied, the original amount incorrectly included expenses that were only applicable to 2022/23, for MRSB.

Questions and comments

- Councillor Anderson asked if there was a grant for seasonal wages. This was confirmed as accurate and the line item capturing the grant, from the Employment Development Agency, was clarified.

CAO Keenan presented the Capital Budget & 5 Year Capital Forecast

- CAO Keenan explained the corrections made to the line for the Wharf Project, due to spending that did not occur in 2022/23.
- An additional \$100K in projected actual capital funds, that was received late in the current year, was captured.
- \$50K was moved from 2024/25 to 2023/24, for a sewer generator.

Questions and comments:

- Councillor Gilbert expressed thanks for the tremendous amount of work done to prepare and present the budget.

CAO Keenan concluded by stating that the presented budget, and suggested amendments to it, were her recommendations to Council. The next agenda item was for council to discuss and make the necessary amendments and/or motions.

Amendment and Adoption of Financial Package and Associated Tax Rates

Motion to amend the presented financial package, to achieve compliance with the MGA, as follows:

- ***In Water & Sewer expenses, re-allocate the \$12,592 outgoing transfer to the Municipal reserve fund, to instead become a transfer to the Water & Sewer reserve fund.***
- ***In Operational Income, remove the \$9,579 incoming transfer from reserve funds***

- *In Operational Income, adding \$1004 by increasing school hall & playhouse rentals each by \$502*
- *In Operational Expenses, removing a total of \$8675 as follows:*
 - *\$3000 from Official Plan legal & consulting*
 - *\$3000 from Fire Hall Building repairs and maintenance*
 - *\$2000 from firefighter training budget*
 - *\$250 from end-of-year celebration expenses*
 - *\$425, from a 6% reduction in total lawn mowing expenses, recorded as a reduction of that amount from the Dunrovin Green space.*

Motion moved by Councillor Gilbert, seconded by Councillor Brown.

Motion carried unanimously (3 votes for, 0 against).

Resolution #2023-20

Motion to set the municipal commercial tax rate as \$0.88 per \$100 of Commercial property value, effective as of April 1, 2023.

Motion moved by Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Gilbert.

Motion carried unanimously (3 votes for, 0 against).

Resolution #2023-21


Motion to approve the financial package as amended.

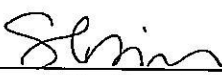
Motion moved by Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Gilbert.

Motion carried unanimously (3 votes for, 0 against).

Resolution #2023-22

Motion to adjourn made by Councillor Brown @ 7:51pm.


 Submitted by CAO Anna Keenan


 Approved by Deputy Mayor Shelley Trainor