

Remuneration By-law will follow cost of living allowance

By-law 38-2014, which gives Shelburne Council the remuneration increase recommended by Ward & Uptigrove Consulting and Human Resources (W&U), passed second and third readings at Town Council January 12th. CAO John Telfer reported, "In a recorded vote of 5 to 1, both readings were carried and finally passed." One Councillor, Tom Egan, was not present at the meeting. Mayor Bennington stated, "The recommendations were approved and the by-law now identifies the future raises to follow the cost of living allowance versus long gaps in consideration and larger increases to be considered. It also takes the uncomfortable position away of a Council considering its own raises."

"The by-law brings the end of a long path of research and evaluation by both the previous and newly elected Council," said John Telfer. W&U recommended Council consider an increase to overall Council remuneration, last summer, to meet the market average based on a comparative review of relative market data. The firm's recommendation will see Councillor's salaries rise from the previous \$8000 annually to just under \$12,500; the Deputy Mayor's remuneration rises from \$9000 per year to \$14,711; and the Mayor's remuneration increases to \$20,874 from its former \$12,000 per year. At the time of the recommendation, W & U reminded Council that equitable compensation for the responsibilities, duties and services Councillors perform and provide as representatives of the Town is not only essential, but a best practice as it attracts and retains interest in Council positions.

Councillor Wade Mills, the only successfully elected candidate who spoke in opposition of the move during the Municipal Election campaign said, "We all had an opportunity to speak our minds on the issue so it was decided that there was no sense in kicking the can down the road any further." Mills honoured his campaign pledge and voted against the by-law Monday night. "This is more of a symbolic gesture," said Mills, "to highlight the concerns I have with the process that was used and hopefully inspire my colleagues around the table to work with me to find a more transparent, less political, way of dealing with this issue in the future."

Mills, a lawyer, notes that political pay raises are always a difficult issue:

"The legislation gives Council the authority to set the rates of pay but unfortunately does not provide any further direction or clarification in terms of process. Personally, I would like to see a formal process put in place that calls for a regular review of Council remuneration with considerable input from members of the voting public. This approach will go a long way in depoliticising the issue for future Councils and making the process much more transparent."

Future remuneration increases following the cost of living allowance, in the newly passed by-law, appears to be a good start to the process of change.

By Marni Walsh