

Special council meeting focused on budget

Shelburne Council held a special council meeting on Monday, January 19th that focused on the 2015 Town budget. The work session gave the new council, especially newly elected members, Dan Sample and Wade Mills, and opportunity to review, and time to fully understand, what is in place, preparing all Councillors to make the necessary and important decisions moving forward. In recent years, the Shelburne Town budget has often been ready for implementation by the end of December for the following year, but this year, with the municipal elections that took place in October, Council made the decision to take the time to study the document as a newly unified unit.

Town of Shelburne Chief Executive Office and Clerk, John Telfer reported: "This is a 4 hour budget working session that each Council member can work from a working document to derive common capital considerations as well as recommended operating numbers prepared by staff. Our intent is to work with the document until February and then proceed to a Public budget meeting and finally pass the budget. It could be late February or earlier March for the final budget passing. The website will reflect the next steps as we move forward."

With a draft operating budget of just over 6.6 million there is a lot to digest in a short time for new Councillors. New well and water meter capital projects estimated to cost nearly 4 million dollars will be, as predicted during the election run, a particular challenge for Council. Sewage expenditures were also included in those challenges, at an estimated cost of over 700,000 in the draft budget. Mayor Bennington named sewage capacity as one of the three biggest challenges facing the Town in the next term. During the election, he noted that "as the new subdivisions are built out, the Town's sewage capacity is starting to diminish. The affluent receiving stream isn't getting any bigger, so Council will need to address the amount of 'clean' water infiltrating into our sewage system."

Waste management may arise as a curiosity, if not a concern, with costs on the rise since the County take over in 2014 and a drop in revenues projected for 2015. The winter control expenditures have been challenging for the Town and staff in the last two years, with record snow falls literally blowing the budget, and costs piling up like snow banks at a projected estimate of nearly 130,000 dollars over budget in 2014.

Following Council's special budget work session on January 19th will be a return to chambers the next Monday night for their regularly scheduled council meeting. The draft budget will be discussed in further detail at that point.

By Marni Walsh