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Budget talks begin with projected 2.8 per cent tax increase

By Peter Richardson

Council met Monday night ostensibly to discuss the Draft 2017 Budget; however, prior to that discussion, several matters of interest were presented.

One of those was a report from S. Burnett & Associates regarding the building of the Fiddle Park Pavilion. Previously, Council had agreed to split the bidding process into two parts, those being the preparation of the site and the actual building of the pavilion.

The site preparation, levelling of the site and preparing a base, was recommended for completion before this winter, with the building phase to follow next Spring. This required Council to approve the expenditure of $30,000 before the cost of the building was established.

With a previously proposed final budget of $100,000 for the 60x100 foot pavilion, this would put the project over-budget by the aforesaid $30,000.

After considerable discussion about how best to proceed, while trying to remain within the original cost estimate and not hinder the final construction, it was decided to approve the site preparations prior to winters arrival and receive bids for the actual construction, with an eye towards possibly resizing the building at a later date.

Next up was the matter of accessible parking at the intersection of Main and Owen Sound Streets. CAO John Telfer explained that in order, to relieve traffic congestion on Main Street and at that intersection, in particular, the town would need to eliminate one parking space and move one handicap space, as well as create a right turn lane and install an advanced green traffic signal.

He also advised that a second parking space be eliminated on the south side, of Main Street, at Adeline Street, as it caused a visual obstruction to vehicles turning onto Main Street from Adeline.

With vehicles being able to avoid those turning right, onto Owen Sound, from Main Street, a visual obstruction at Adeline would be a major safety concern.

After studying the issue, Council moved to adopt the proposed changes, with the addition of a study, of all the existing parking spaces, with the hope of perhaps being able to restore at least one of the removed spaces by reducing the size of others on Main Street.

Upon completion, the handicap space presently on the south side of Main Street at Owen Sound will be moved back, westward, by one space, thus eliminating one regular spot, and the space on the Southeast corner of Main and Adeline Streets would also be removed.

A turning lane and an advanced green signal would be added to the Main and Owen Sound Streets intersection to complete the changes.

Treasurer Carol Sweeney and Carey Holmes began the Budget Presentation with an overview of the 2017 Funding Gap, which left the amount to be raised, by taxation, at $6,177,630, a jump of 10 per cent over 2016.

Total revenues though up were only increased by 5 per cent, while some expenditures rose by as much as 44 per cent, as in the case of Other Protective Services. That increase resulted from the hiring of more crossing guards and additional By-Law hours being added in 2017.

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Initially, this Budget, will result in a projected tax increase for residents of 2.8 per cent, or $5 9 for the average taxpayer. This number, however, is only the Municipal portion, exclusive of the County and Education Levies, and is predicated on a 2017 assessment of $287,079.

This means that a tax burden of $2,083 in 2016, becomes $2,142 for 2017.

2017 is also the beginning of a re-assessment year with MPAC.

At this juncture, the County levy will see a further 1.49% increase.

A breakdown of how the $2,142 tax bill will be allocated is as follows: $43 for Council and Committees, $685 for Police Protection, $557 for Public Works, $428 for General Government and Town Hall, $150 for Recreation and Culture, $150 towards Planning and Development, $86 for Fire Protection and a final $43 for Other Protective services.

With two further discussion meeting before Council Approves the final draft of the 2017 Budget, it is expected that further changes and revisions may result in possible reductions to the final tax levy.