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County of Dufferin mulls 5.6 per cent tax increase in 2025

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Dufferin County Council has been presented with a tax levy increase of 5.6 per cent for the 2025 budget.

During their meeting on Jan. 9, Dufferin County Council was given a presentation overview of the draft 2025 budget from Aimee Raves, manager of corporate finance and treasurer for the County of Dufferin.

Raves noted in the budget overview that the 2025 draft budget has been impacted by a number of external factors, including federal and provincial policy changes and funding, economic conditions and pressure in the labour market.

?These factors put not only direct financial pressure on the County, but also affect staff and resource capacity,? Raves wrote in the budget document. ?Expenses have increased significantly, mostly due to planned capital work which will require borrowing. Another large portion of the increase is offset by government transfers and a continued strategy to mitigate some of the remaining impact by applying reserves.?

The total operating expenses for 2025 in the County of Dufferin is $161,636,000.

?[It's] a significant jump over 2024, mainly due to the larger capital projects,? explained Raves.

To maintain the status quo going into 2025, the County of Dufferin would require $48,989,000 in tax levy, which would be an increase of 3.2 per cent or 1.5 million.

Dufferin County staff has a proposed $1,841,000 in additions to the status quo tax levy. The additional included new staff positions valued at $413,000, previously committed project valued at $295,000 and new projects costing $1,133,000.

The additions and the factoring in of growth leaves a proposed tax levy increase of 5.6 per cent, which is approximately $22.40 for each $100,000 of assessment.

During the meeting, Raves summarized major initiatives and projects supporting the County of Dufferin's Strategic Plan.

The projects were broken down into five categories:

Climate and Environment

? Better Home Retrofit Program - $2,030,000

? Climate Master Plan - $250,000

? County Buildings Energy Retrofit study - $200,000

? Electric vehicle charging stations for County fleet - $625,000

? Long Term Waste Strategy Update and Audits - $122,000

Community

? Housing Strategy Implementation - $685,000

? Upgrades and Capital Maintenance on Housing Stock - $1,887,000

? Paramedic Services Master Plan - $100,000

? Additional Paramedic shift in Shelburne - $426,000

Economy

? Advance Workforce Strategy for Early Childhood Educators

? County-wide Community Improvement Plan - $80,000

? Investment Attraction Program - $25,000

? Tourism Development - $20,000

Governance

? Review Committee/Meeting Structure

? Progress New Operations Centre

? Edelbrock Centre Improvements, Design Work - $750,000

? Complete Digital Modernization projects - $843,000

? Fundraising and Sponsorship Plan for the Museum of Dufferin

Equity

? Begin Implementation of Older Adults Strategy - $160,000

? Transit Improvements - $246,000

? County-wide Community Improvement Plan - $80,000

? Investment Attraction Program - $20,000

? Indigenous Education Training - $35,000

?We have a lot of different projects that we have on the go,? said Raves.

Raves noted that Dufferin County Council has options to reduce the tax levy, including increasing reserves, increasing expenses, postponing or removing specific projects, changing service levels, reducing contributions to capital, and applying more reserves.

Dufferin County Council will be holding a special meeting scheduled for Jan. 30 for further discussion of the 2025 Budget.