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Dufferin County Council approves 4.21 per cent budget

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Dufferin County Council has passed the 2025 budget with a 4.21 per cent increase on the tax levy.

During a special meeting on Jan. 30, Dufferin County Council went through a revised version of the 2025 budget and was able to make additional cuts.

Council was first presented with the 2025 draft budget on Jan. 9, where a tax levy increase of 5.6 percent was introduced. After the meeting, approximately $210,000 worth of changes were proposed reducing the overall tax levy increase to 5.16 per cent after growth assessment.

The changes to the draft budget included:

? Adding $40,000 to the household hazardous waste events for a total of $280,000 which was offset by the waste reserve

? Adding additional courthouse rent revenue, $15,000

? Removing bike lanes from Dufferin Rd. 25, decreasing the tax levy by $100,000

? Applying reserves to Housing Strategy Project Lead, decreasing the levy by $134,810

The new changes brought up at the Jan. 30 meeting included:

? Removing the rain barrel program, decreasing the budget by $25,000

? Funding the Housing Strategy through 2024 surplus decreasing the budget by $500,000

Council also passed a motion following the year-end reporting that the remaining surplus from 2024 be allocated towards a reserve fund for future strategic housing initiatives. An early edition of the motion initially recommended 50 per cent of each year's surplus would be utilized for the Housing Strategy for the next five years. The surplus for 2024 is estimated at $2.5 million.

?As the top item that this Council has identified is implementation of affordable housing, I think it's important that we put forward our interest in trying to find a way to fund it. It's great that we're doing a strategy, but if we're not going to put the money aside to implement it, the strategy isn't worth the paper it's printed on,? said Coun. Lisa Post, Mayor of Orangeville. ?This is a way, in principle, to ensure that we've got a funding source identified on how we can move the strategy forward in an effective way.?

One final addition to the budget was added, which was an increase in the investment attraction program from $80,000 to $100,000.

Despite passing the 2025 budget, some County councillors did express their disappointment with the final tax levy increase of 4.21 percent.

?I'm going to vote no on this budget mainly because I don't think we took any tough decisions; we simply kicked the can down the road,? said Coun. Philip Rentsch, Deputy Mayor of Grand Valley. ?We basically said we're going to do everything, and we're going to figure it out.?

Coun. James McLean, Deputy Mayor of Melancthon, shared similar sentiments.

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?My priority coming in tonight was to try to keep things as affordable as possible for our taxpayers. I don't feel like we got there,? said McLean. ?I'm really disappointed we didn't make the tough decisions. The toughest decision we made was around rain barrels. I think we could have done both and I think this could have been a housing budget that also came in with a lower tax levy.?

Dufferin County Council approved the 2025 budget with a 4.21 tax levy, which is equivalent to $50,170,530.