This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 9:15:53 2026 / +0000 GMT

Horning?s Mills Hall to receive operational funding in Melancthon?s 2020 budget

Written By MARNI WALSH

Melancthon Council did an ?about face' last week when operational funding for Horning's Mills Community Hall, which was removed from the 2020 Budget at the April 16th Council meeting, was redirected from a different fund.

Coun. Margaret. Mercer, who did not support the April 16 removal of funding for the Hall, made the motion to redirect the funds, which was seconded by Mayor Darren White and supported by Council.

The new motion states that ?the actual operational costs be transferred from the Municipal Modernization Fund,? to the Horning's Mills Community Hall account? rather than stipulating a specific funding amount.

The Municipal Modernization Fund was established in March of 2019 when the Township received a one time payment from the Provincial government of more than $300,000. Melancthon was one of many municipalities to receive the funding from the Ford government which was touted for the purpose of finding efficiencies and reducing costs.

Melancthon CAO Denise Holmes says the Township will not know the exact cost to operate the Community Hall until the end of the year. Although, 2019 expenses were calculated to be approximately $5,000, Ms. Holmes says due to ?COVID-19 and the Hall being closed with no one using it, it might not be as much this year or, who knows, it could be more, and that is why Council did not specify an amount in the motion.?

Mayor White told the Free Press, ?The $5,000, as well as a number of other things, was removed a few weeks ago during discussion on the budget as some members on Council felt that reducing the budget as much as possible, to allow residents some additional flexibility during a period of economic uncertainty due to COVID-19,? was important. ?I believe that many of our residents will suffer some financial loss over the next while and the proper thing to do was to reduce the budget as much as possible this year.

?As a result of those budget reductions, Melancthon's budget for this year is a negative 1.7 percent,? says Mayor White,

Coun. David Thwaites, who voted against transferring operational funding for the Hall from the Moderization Fund on May 8, expressed his concern for the cost of pending infrastructure projects and the ?financial uncertainty for all Canadians, including each of us who reside in Melancthon.?

Coun. Thwaites says Roads and Bridges Reports presented to Council in January of this year detailed ?significant investment in infrastructure spending that had not been previously factored or allowed for in previous years.? He says, ?The investment requirement over the next few years amounts to multiple millions with the result that Melancthon residents were and will, no doubt, be facing a sizeable tax rate increase.?

?Council, in the midst of our Budget considerations, had to make some choices,? says Councillor Thwaites. Due to the expected financial strain COVID-19 will put on Melancthon rate payers, Mr. Thwaites says Council ?chose as a matter of direction to try minimize any possible tax increase by cutting or postponing as many financial expenses as possible.? He says, this meant considering many items, ?including the Hall which had been closed and remains closed as a result of the pandemic.?

?On April 16, Council decided to remove the $5,000, identified for the Hall in 2020, from the budget that would have impacted municipal taxation,? says Coun. Thwaites. ?The result is that as of that date any operational expenses of the Hall would be funded through the use of the funds in the Hall bank account (approximately $32,000.)? His May 8th ?no? vote to Councillor Mercer's Motion maintained his support for that idea.

Coun. Mercer says she made the Motion to restore funding because, ?Horning's Mills Hall is not just Melancthon's only dedicated

venue of this type, but it has a history and significance in the community. We've all been to functions there. People have been married there. It's important and it's needed. We own it. How can we not support the operational costs of our own building??

Mayor White believes ?The responsibility for the Hall falls with the Township and we are obligated to ensure it's continuation and a funding program.?

?I think that currently there is some discussion surrounding role/function of the Board vs. role/function of the Township,? says the Mayor. ?This is why I suggested a public meeting, to gather input from the community as to what they feel is the future direction of the Hall, so that a more fulsome plan could be put together that determines roles and responsibilities, funding options and capital planning.?

Due to Covid 19, the public meeting has yet to be rescheduled, but whether in person or via a virtual meeting, Mayor White hopes it will be a forum to develop ?a sustainable funding plan that would continue to cover the actual operating costs of the facility, while potentially, also making some kind of ongoing contribution to a capital works component.?

Mayor White says, ?Public input as to the future direction would be a key component of that plan.?

?We believe, among other things,? says Mayor White, ?Horning's Mills Hall is a gathering place for the residents and a place where locally based programs can have positive effects on the quality of life in rural Ontario. In short, when you remove the emotion, I don't believe there is a fundamental issue within Council of the future direction, the ownership, or the funding of the hall, there simply are differing opinions on what form those things take, and what a final plan will look like.?