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# Preparations for 9th annual Polar Plunge well under way

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Council's first order of business Monday night was a presentation by Const. Jeff McLean regarding the annual Polar Plunge, in support of the Special Olympics.

Since 2012, the plunge has raised over $170,000 for the Special Olympics and 2020's effort, scheduled to take place on Feb. 17, hopes to substantially add to that figure. Jeff explained that everything was well in hand, but that more volunteers are always welcome, as would be a Council team of plungers. Last year, Mayor Wade Mills an Councillors Kyle Fegan and Lindsay Wegener completed the plunge.

The mayor suggested a press/media team could participate as well. Last year, Free Press Editor Mike Baker made the jump. The Polar Plunge will open for registration at 11:30 a.m., with plungers going in at 1:30 p.m., at the pavilion in Fiddle Park.

**Public budget presentation**

The next item was the 2020 budget presentation, by Treasurer Carey Holmes. Though there was no public in attendance, Carey soldiered on, noting that outside of the raise in dog tag fees and parking fines, as well as the $20,000 set aside for a dog park, and an equal amount set aside for the renovation of Jack Downey Park, there were no changes to the budget as presented the previous meeting and no change to the final figures.

The overall budget is still 7.54 percent higher than in 2019 and the average taxation increase on an assessed home of $325,895 remained at 5.5 percent.

Carey explains that was an overall average, as many factors contribute to taxation. For example, homes in the same subdivision could pay drastically different tax rates based on their assessed value compared to when they were purchased. A home bought when the subdivision was new, would pay a larger increase than one bought recently, as the value would have risen notably from the original purchase price, while the newer purchase would already be assessed at market value.

Ms. Holmes pointed out, that when it came to paying for the Town's capital projects, the bulk of the expenses were being paid from municipal reserves, while only, perhaps, 10% percent came from taxation. Nevertheless, she noted that fully 87 percent of revenues come from residential taxation.

**Water & wastewater contract**

Attentions next turned to the Town's new contract for water and waste water management, with the Ontario Clean Water Agency.

Director of Development and Operations Jim Moss, presented a motion to enter into a new 10 year contract for these services, with OCWA. Jim explained that OCWA was the major player in this field in Ontario and currently held contracts with a majority of small and mid-sized municipalities across the province. The Town's current 5-year contract will expire Dec. 31 of 2019.

At first glance, the new contract seems to have increased considerably, by $97,251.48, however closer inspection of the contract shows this to be somewhat of an illusionary increase. Under the new contract, OCWA will assume some $74,000 of previously Town handled expenses. Consequently, these would be subtracted from the Town Budget and added to that of OCWA, producing a net change of $0.00 to the budget. The remaining $23,180.48, can be attributed to the CPI, or cost of living increase seen annually. The total contract price, is $654,423, paid in quarterly amounts of $163,605.75.

Starting that it was not to demean the work of OCWA, Deputy Mayor Steve Anderson asked if there were not other companies that

could do this work, for less money. CAO Denyse Morrissey answered that there were a few smaller companies that worked in the field, but that they had neither the reputation, nor the expertise of OCWA. She noted that some municipalities handled these functions ?in house?, but that Shelburne could not afford to do this and if they did, it would likely not save the Town any money.

The CAO pointed out that the Provincial Drinking Water Licencing Program dictates that all municipal water systems must be operated by a fully licensed and accredited operating authority, which OCWA is. It was also made note of that OCWA maintains an office directly across the street from Town Hall, thus facilitating an easy working relationship. The new contract also meets several of Council'sw strategic priorities.

Coun. Wegener questioned an additional 15 percent contingency fund that was built into the contract, to which OCWA representative Natalie Baker replied that this was to cover outside expenses required by OCWA to run the Town systems, that were not budgeted for, such as outside electrician for other workers. Coun. Walter Benotto then brought up the matter of this being the third new SCADA system since he first joined council and wondered if it would be the last. Jim Moss replied that the current SCADA system was at the end of it's lifespan and was becoming problematic. The new system, he said would put the entire Shelburne water and sewer program on the same cutting edge technology and should last for a number of years, with only minor upgrades.

**Land rezoning**

In other business, a motion to rezone the land at 420 Victoria street to high density residential was defeated after some discussion.

It was determined that the land needed to be sale-ready before such considerations were entertained.

Council also passed a motion to allocate $3,000 of the allotted $6,000 Canada Day Festival money, to be used to purchase vendor and entertainer insurance for the event.

Following approvals the motion to accept the 2020 Budget as presented by the Treasurer, Mayor Wade Mills complimented Council and Staff for their efforts with the 2020 Budget and thanked all involved for a good job with this difficult undertaking.