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Shelburne approves five per cent tax hike for 2024

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Shelburne Town Council has approved the adoption of the 2024 Budget, which will see a five per cent increase in the tax rate.

Carey Holmes, director of financial services and treasurer for the Town of Shelburne, presented a detailed report on the 2024 budget for the public during Town Council's regular meeting on Monday (Nov. 13).

?In the inflationary context with which we're in and everything else going on around us, I don't think a 5 per cent rate increase is unreasonable particularly when you look at the number of things that we're undertaking next year; it's a fairly ambitious year and a fairly moderate increase to go with it,? said Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills.

The five per cent increase in the tax rate will allow for an overall tax levy increase of nine per cent in tax dollars.

The estimated amount to be raised by taxation for 2024 is nearly $9.9 million, calculated by taking the total operating expenses of $12.9 million for 2023 and subtracting the revenues of just $3 million.

The total estimate for the 2024 general operating expenses of $12,944,252 is split up amongst eight expenditures: police ($3,281,670); operations and transit ($2,732898); general government and town hall ($2,739,043); recreation and culture ($1,471,686); planning and development (1,326,688); fire protection ($726,969); council and committees ($195,720); and other protective services ($469,578).

Some of the increase in expenses is the result of three additional staff positions in the town, which include a recreation programs special events coordinator, an operations analyst, and a utilities labourer. The town has also budgeted to purchase a new plow truck and parks and recreation pickup truck as well as increase reserve transfers to assist long-term capital assets.

Council was able to cut down the tax rate increase by nearly one per cent with the removal of the weekend transit service from the 2024 budget, which was estimated to cost $91,200.

The homeowner tax impact of a five per cent increase for the 2024 budget, based on an average single-family home assessment of $335,366, amounts to an additional $132 annually or $11 per month on the town portion for a total of $2,769.83 for the year.

The presentation showed residents a detailed breakdown of where $1 of a taxpayer's money goes: $0.33 to Police Services, $0.26 to Operations, $0.13 to Recreation and Culture, $0.09 to Planning and Development, $0.07 to Fire Protection, $0.06 to General Government and Town Hall, $0.04 to Other Protective Services, and $0.02 to Council and Committees.

The 2024 budget addresses a number of capital projects, including $101,311 for upgrades to the exterior of the Town Hall and a new server; $2,891,099 for connecting link paving, roads needs, drainage cleanout and the cemetery expansion; $1,415,000 to spend on new equipment and workshop expansion project; and $4,043,967 to go towards projects identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Nearly half of the capital projects for the 2024 budget will be focused on parks and recreation, leading to the financial plan being dubbed ?the year of the park?.

The 2024 budget totals $8,451,377 for the listed capital projects.

Water and Sewer capital projects total just over $2.5 million for 2024. The new projects associated with water include changes to Well #1 and developing a new Well #9, while the sewer capital project consists of the continued engineering design for the waste pollution control plant.

As part of the 2024 budget, it was suggested that Council use $300,000 from the tax stabilization reserve to help lower the tax levy, which would leave the tax stabilization reserve with a total of $214,299.27. The budget also recommended using $150,000 from the 2023 estimated surplus in the reserve. The tax stabilization reserve is set up to help offset tax hikes during financially challenging years.

Shelburne Town Council unanimously approved the 5 per cent tax rate increase for the 2024 budget.