

**Township of South-West Oxford
Minutes
Special Council Meeting
November 26, 2024**

Members Present: Mayor: Mayor David Mayberry
Councillors: Paul Buchner (Ward 1), Peter Ypma
(Ward 2), Valerie Durston (Ward 3),
George Way (Ward 4) – arrived at 1:22
p.m., Jim Pickard (Ward 5), Craig Gillis
(Ward 6)

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Mary Ellen Greb, Chief Administrative Officer/Deputy
Clerk
Adam Prouse, Works Superintendent
Brooke Crane, Treasurer
Julie Middleton, Clerk/Deputy CAO
Paul Groeneveld, Acting Fire Chief

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Mayor David Mayberry and a quorum was present.

Motion to Accept Agenda

Resolution No. 1 Moved by Paul Buchner
Seconded by Craig Gillis

RESOLVED that the meeting agenda for the November
26th, 2024 meeting of council be approved, as amended.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

None.

Appointments

9:01 a.m. – Marleen van Ham, Township of South-West Oxford Resident, re: 2025 Budget Deliberations

Marleen van Ham raised concerns about the 2025 budget, emphasizing that this is not the time for "wish lists" due to the financial strain on residents. She highlighted key areas for reconsideration:

- Parks and Halls: She cautioned against large expenditures on parks and hall upgrades, including:
 - Mount Elgin Parks (\$150,000): She would not support this project at this time.
 - Brownsville Playground: She struggled with the decision, noting that it's linked to security concerns due to vandalism.
 - Salford Shack: Noted that it might not be worth repairing, and if not, it should not be fixed.
 - Mount Elgin Hall Storage: Questioned the need for additional storage, urging the decluttering of existing spaces.
- Brownsville Parking Lot: There is street parking on both sides of the road now, the expansion seems unnecessary and should be reconsidered as an expense.
- New Facilities Technician Position: Ms. van Ham suggested that staff provide justification for the financial benefit of this position.
- Insurance Costs: The 14% increase in Sunlife insurance costs was also flagged as a potential area to explore for alternative options, suggesting that staff shop around to find better rates without cutting staff benefits.

She concluded by urging Council to make decisions with consideration for the working middle class.

Mayor Mayberry expressed gratitude for Ms. van Ham's participation, stating that public input is valuable and is encouraged. He noted that while there was a significant County increase last year, only a few people contacted him with their concerns. He also noted that volunteers once handled much of the work at Township facilities, but liability concerns and fear of volunteering have led to the need for contracted staff for required work, repairs and maintenance.

Councillor Pickard asked about the Township's insurance renewal process. CAO Mary Ellen Greb advised that a market review wasn't budgeted for in 2025, and that conducting an RFP would cost between \$5,000 and \$8,000. The Township does not have a policy to review insurance every five years. A 7% increase in Township liability insurance for 2025 was confirmed.

Councillor Ypma thanked Ms. van Ham for her constructive criticism and for sharing her concerns, recognizing the effort she put into her feedback.

9:16 a.m. - Stephanie Radu, Curator - Beachville District Museum - 2025 Operating and Capital Budget Presentation

Stephanie Radu, Curator of the Beachville District Museum, presented the museum's 2025 budget to Council. She discussed the programs planned for 2025 and the anticipated grants the museum expects to receive, noting that while the museum's operations and programs are expanding, the availability of grants has not kept pace with the growth. She briefly reviewed various line items in the budget and opened the floor for comments or questions from Council.

Councillor Gillis praised the museum board for its success in organizing events, highlighting that the museum hosts a number of well-attended events that attract new visitors to the area each year.

Ms. Radu explained that specific budget lines related to programs and outreach, such as PA Day camps, have increased as they are expanding offerings. She noted that as events like the car shows and PA Day camps grow, the corresponding budget lines for both expenses and revenue have also increased.

Councillor Pickard asked if the museum tracks visitor traffic, given the Township's significant investment in museum projects. Ms. Radu confirmed that staff diligently record foot traffic and report these figures through the community museum grant program. She noted that the museum has had 4,100 visitors through its doors, excluding participants in camps and car shows. Before 2018, the museum averaged only about 30 visitors annually.

Discussion Items

2025 Budget Deliberations

Protection Services – Fire

Acting Fire Chief Paul Groeneveld presented the fire services portion of the draft 2025 budget. He noted that the budget for firefighter wages has been too low over the past two years. He used a three-year average to adjust the budget, factoring in additional firefighters and training costs. He emphasized that the department cannot continue to operate with a deficit in firefighter wages.

He noted that this year, there were many motor vehicle accident calls, generating revenue from the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and out-of-town residents. A conservative approach was used in estimating this revenue going forward.

Insurance costs are expected to increase by 7%, and the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) is set at 1.9%. COLA has been confirmed at 2% based on the October-to-October period.

Acting Chief Groeneveld continued to review the capital portion of the fire budget, highlighting vehicle replacement needs for 2025.

FD 16-2024: Fire Services Vehicle Replacement

Acting Fire Chief Paul Groeneveld presented a proposed fire vehicle replacement schedule, highlighting the financial implications for the Fire Vehicle Reserve. The Township plans to replace fire vehicles on a 20-year cycle, with exceptions for the Fire Chief's vehicle and Utility 2, which are aligned with the Roads Department's schedule. The following options were presented:

Option #1 - Status Quo: Maintain the current replacement plan or increase annual reserve contributions.

Option #2 - Vehicle Rationalization: Reduce the number of fire vehicles, continuing annual contributions to the Fire Vehicle Reserve with 2% annual increases. In 2025, the proposal includes replacing the Utility Pickup and Fire Chief's vehicle with a 4-door pickup truck.

Councillor Ypma suggested refurbishing Utility 2 and converting it into the Chief's vehicle.

It was noted that under the current plan, the Township faces a projected deficit over the next ten years. Acting Chief Groeneveld emphasized the need to prioritize equipment replacement, including 14 SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus) units and 100 cylinders. A grant application for a \$54,000 SCBA decontamination unit is pending. He further commented on building maintenance needs at Station #2 (painting and paving) and Station #3 (epoxy floor repair).

A new Fire Master Plan is proposed to guide the Township's fire service direction over the next 5-10 years, helping Council determine service levels (e.g., water and ice rescue) and assess future equipment and training needs. The estimated cost for the plan is \$40,000, to be prepared by a consultant to ensure objectivity.

Councillor Gillis recommended ordering the new Tanker 2 in advance to secure better pricing and ensure a timely delivery. The Council discussed whether to purchase a stock unit through CANOE or a custom unit through a RFP.

Resolution No. 2 Moved by Peter Ypma
 Seconded by Craig Gillis

RESOLVED THAT Staff Report No. FD 16-2024: entitled "Fire Services Vehicle Replacement" be received as information.

AND THAT Staff be directed to include the proposed fire service vehicle replacement schedule in the 2025 Capital Budget and Long-Term Fire Vehicle Replacement Schedule, as amended to convert Utility 2 vehicle to the Fire Chief's vehicle effective January 1st, 2025 and that Tanker 2 be ordered in 2025 for delivery in 2026.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

**Council took a five-minute break at 10:15 a.m.*

2025 Budget Deliberations

Protection Services – Fire (continued)

Discussion took place regarding the difference between honorarium and wages contained within the fire services portion of the budget. Discussion also took place regarding upgrades that were required to the communications system within Oxford last year – these expenses are not anticipated going into 2025.

Revenue

Treasurer Brooke Crane presented the revenue budget summary as presented as part of the draft 2025 budget deliberations. A discussion took place regarding the revenue received from the Town of Ingersoll in 2024 under the boundary adjustment agreement. Council discussed the potential for future tax write-offs, with an estimated \$80,000 in related expenses to be paid annually.

It was noted that bank interest is significantly lower than the previous two years. Council questioned whether this was due to less money on deposit, as interest rates on bank accounts are also starting to drop.

Reserves

Council reviewed the reserves portion of the draft 2025 budget as presented. Discussion centered on whether \$1.5 million is necessary in the tax stabilization reserve. The need for the amount in the waste management reserve was also questioned.

Discussion took place regarding the use of the modernization reserve for stormwater management operations and financial planning.

An adjustment was noted to move expenses from the waste management reserve to the correct roads-paving reserve account. Additionally, the 2024 and 2025 contributions to the waste management reserve were redirected to the waste management equipment reserve (totaling \$156,000).

The potential elimination of the COVID-19 funding reserve was discussed. Staff plan to eliminate this reserve in 2025, with some projects that were planned to use other reserves possibly utilizing the COVID funding instead.

Closed Session – 10:59 a.m.

The meeting will be closed to the public to discuss subject matter that is:

(b) personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees (Commodore Apartments, Beachville)

Resolution No. 3 Moved by Jim Pickard
 Seconded by Valerie Durston

RESOLVED that Council hold a closed meeting in order to discuss a matter pertaining to:

(b) personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees (Commodore Apartments);

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Resolution No. 4 Moved by Paul Buchner
 Seconded by Peter Ypma

RESOLVED that the Council of the Township of South-West Oxford reconvene in regular session at 11:10 a.m.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Discussion Items (continued)

2025 Budget Deliberations (continued)

Community Halls and Parks

- Council commented that the proposed transfer to the Township’s recreation reserve will need to be increased. There are not enough funds in the reserve to cover the requests received from the Township’s hall and park boards. It was suggested that going forward, Township expenses in relation to halls and parks will need to be limited to the amount transferred into reserve annually.
- Council provided direction to staff to reduce the grant to Lawson Trail to \$3,500 and to reduce the grant to Cycles of Life to \$1,000.

Community Halls and Parks (continued)

- Council amended the Beachville Parks and Recreation capital budget request to \$20,000 in 2025.
- It was noted that new playground equipment for Mount Elgin Parks and Recreation is dependent on funding from the province. Playground equipment in Brownsville is also dependent on funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. If the funding for either project is not approved, then the project will not proceed in 2025.
- With respect to proposed additional parking in Brownsville, it was suggested that the sidewalk be extended. This project may be premature until there is more information in relation to the location of the new playground equipment. It was suggested that this project be removed for 2025.
- Council agreed that the sign project for the Dereham Centre Hall should proceed in 2025.
- Council agreed that the water system and repair of the storage room at the Salford Community Centre should proceed in 2025. The shack project was removed from the budget for 2025.

Appointments (continued)

12:01 p.m. - David McRoberts and Matt Wilson, Sweaburg Minor Ball - 2025 Community Grant Request

David McRoberts and Matt Wilson, representing Sweaburg Minor Ball, presented the organization's 2025 Community Grant request to Council. The organization is requesting \$6,000 from the Township for 2025, which will be used to replace old equipment. They noted that participation has significantly increased over the past two years, with an expected 9-10 teams in 2025. Sweaburg and Foldens have merged to play as one organization. The organization plans to purchase a used tractor for field maintenance in 2025, at an estimated cost of \$3,000.

12:08 p.m. - Don Taylor, Sweaburg Parks and Recreation - 2025 Operating and Capital Budget Presentation

Don Taylor, representing Sweaburg Parks and Recreation, presented the Committee's 2025 operating and capital budget. The Committee proposes to replace the ball diamond clay at an estimated cost of \$16,500. Mr. Taylor advised Council that there have been ongoing drainage issues at the ball diamond, with repairs costing \$4,000. While this expense has been deferred to 2025, the necessary work has already been completed. The Committee also plans to re-crown the ball diamond, which is included in the proposed capital budget for 2025. The last time clay was added to the ball diamond was approximately ten

years ago. The diamond is in use most nights during the spring and summer months.

** Council took a 30-minute break for lunch at 12:16 p.m.*

Discussion Items (continued)

2025 Budget Deliberations

Sweaburg Minor Ball – 2025 Community Grant Request

Resolution No. 8 Moved by Valerie Durston
Seconded by Craig Gillis

RESOLVED that the Council of the Township of South-West Oxford approve the grant request received from Sweaburg Minor Ball in 2025 in the amount of \$6,000.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Sweaburg Parks and Recreation – 2025 Operating and Capital Budget

Resolution No. 9 Moved by Craig Gillis
Seconded by Paul Buchner

RESOLVED that the Council of the Township of South-West Oxford approve the capital request received from Sweaburg Parks and Recreation for the total project cost in the amount of \$16,000 for clay for the Sweaburg ball diamond in 2025.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Hilltop Park – Beach Volleyball Courts

Members of Council express support for the addition of beach volleyball courts at Hilltop Park in Mount Elgin in 2025. Works Superintendent Adam Prouse advised that he anticipates minimal annual maintenance needs.

Mount Elgin Hall – Storage Addition

Council suggested that the proposed storage addition be split over two years with \$85,000 to be funded in 2025 and balance to be funded in 2026. It was noted that the washroom stalls in the hall are in need of replacement in 2025.

** Councillor George Way arrived at 1:22 p.m.*

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Adjournment

Resolution No. 11 Moved by Craig Gillis
 Seconded by Peter Ypma

RESOLVED that there being no further business, the
Council meeting be adjourned at 1:46 p.m. to meet again
on Tuesday, December 3rd, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

CLERK: Julie Middleton

MAYOR: David Mayberry

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.

APPROVED