

**Township of South-West Oxford
Minutes
Special Council Meeting
November 28, 2023**

Members Present: Mayor: Mayor David Mayberry
Councillors: Paul Buchner (Ward 1), Peter Ypma
(Ward 2), George Way (Ward 4), Jim
Pickard (Ward 5)

Members Absent: Valerie Durston (Ward 3), Craig
Gillis (Ward 6)

Staff Present: Mary Ellen Greb, Chief Administrative Officer/Deputy
Clerk
Adam Prouse, Works Superintendent
Brooke Crane, Treasurer
Rob Serson, Fire Chief & CEMC
Howard Leaver, Chief Building Official
Julie Middleton, Clerk/Deputy CAO

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Mayor David Mayberry and a quorum was present.

Motion to Accept Agenda

Resolution No. 1 Moved by Paul Buchner
Seconded by George Way

RESOLVED that the meeting agenda for the November 28th, 2023 meeting of council be approved.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

None.

Discussion Items

2024 Budget Deliberations (Continued and Updated)

Treasurer Brooke Crane provided council with a summary of the updates made to date to the draft 2024 budget as follows:

1. Updated all department wages with 3.3% COLA (down from estimated 4%) – total savings of \$15,325
2. Health Services:
 - Increased Foldens Walking Trail capital project back to \$70,000 (from \$35,000).
 - Increased Salford Community Centre's canopy shelter to \$11,600 (from \$6,000) as per contractor quote received.
3. Fire Department:
 - Added \$5,000 to Capital Buildings for installation of an oil separator at Brownsville Fire Hall. This will be funded by reserves – not taxation.
4. Roads & Transportation:
 - Added \$15,000 to Hot Mix Patching Materials which was missed in the first draft
5. Planning & Development:
 - Budget for Engage & Inform Committee for Earth Day Event decreased to \$5,000 from \$6,000.
 - Adjustment to be made to capture funding anticipated from Oxford County in the amount of \$500,000 for the Broadband Project. This update does not affect the overall percentage as the budget figures remain the same.

As of November 28th, the overall proposed percentage increase to the 2024 budget is 7.97%.

Council discussed that there was a slight deficit in 2022 (\$88,000). This will be funded from reserves – there is still approximately \$7.4 million remaining in reserves. Staff will report on transfers to and from reserves at the next Council meeting for discussion and consideration.

Council discussed the following items in relation to the draft 2024 budget:

- Consideration may be given to how the purchase of the new pumper for Beachville Station will be funded – debenture may be considered. Borrowing comes at a cost. The purchase is planned to come from reserves – this will not impact the tax levy.
- Consider removing proposed recreation/facilities staff person. Six months has been included in the draft 2024 budget at a cost of approximately \$35,000. Consider tracking the need for this position for a full year before moving forward.

- Discussion took place regarding how public works projects are funded in 2024 – consider taking more from reserves to fund 2024 projects (\$80,000).
- Discussion took place regarding the cost of paved roads vs. gravel roads. Paved roads have to be reconstructed every 20 years and this needs to be taken into consideration when determining maintenance costs. Gravel roads are less expense overall.
- Working capital reserve has not been used this year. Consider foregoing this transfer to reserve for one year (\$60,000). Any surplus in 2024 may go back into the working capital reserve.
- The purpose of the disaster relief fund was discussed. If a significant event occurs this will provide the Township with funding for response. Surplus fire services funds go into this reserve.
- Council reviewed the requests received from Township Hall and Park Boards and their proposed capital projects. It was suggested that the Mount Elgin Parks and Recreation operating budget be reduced to \$5,000 from \$7,500.
- Councillor Way advised the Beachville District Museum has funds available for the replacement of the air conditioner and Barn 1 design work. They have approximately \$125,000 in their bank account. The museum is bringing in good income and their bank accounts keep growing.
- The Salford Hall Board is questioning if they will proceed with the proposed canopy project. This will impact winter maintenance in the parking lot if it extends from the building to the ground. Funds are proposed to come from reserve.
- The Township will consider the asset management plan in June/July, 2024 – this will establish new reserve targets for the Township – this may result in the establishment of some new reserve accounts (stormwater management, trails, sidewalks).

Council provided direction to staff to make the following amendments to the draft 2024 budget:

1. Increase the proposed transfer from reserve to fund roads and transportation projects in 2024 by \$80,000.
2. Remove \$60,000 transfer to the working capital reserve in 2024.
3. Decrease Mount Elgin Parks and Recreation operating budget by \$2,500.
4. Remove proposed recreation/facilities staff position at a cost of \$35,000 (subject to further discussion at the next Council meeting).
5. Remove \$7,500 for the Beachville Barn 1 design – to be funded from reserves.

The above amendments will result in tax savings of \$177,500 and \$7,500 in reserve savings. It is estimated that this will bring the proposed tax increase in

