

Aurora proposes 3.77% tax increase

By Brock Weir

3.77 per cent is the magic number as Councillors prepare to tackle Aurora's Operations Budget this Saturday.

Municipal Staff propose a 3.77 per cent tax rate increase for the Aurora portion of your tax bill. According to numbers released Wednesday by Aurora CAO Neil Garbe and Town Treasurer Dan Elliott, an average homeowner with an annual property assessment value of \$400,000 can expect to pay an additional \$4.44 per month or \$53.24 per year for their municipal portion.

Factoring a forecast 1.54 per cent tax increase from the Region of York, this translates into a combined tax hike of 2 per cent, or \$80.04 for the year for an average property.

According to the report from Mr. Garbe and Mr. Elliott, factors contributing to the proposed 3.77 per cent tax increase include the budget for the Central York Fire Services, which accounts for 1.13 per cent of the 3.77, and increased salaries and benefits for municipal employees, which accounts for 1.80 per cent of the tax hike.

Additional factors include increased contribution to capital reserves, a 3.34 per cent increase in the Aurora Public Library's budget, but a 1.63 per cent relief to tax pressures due to growth.

Fire, however, remains the biggest issue.

Under the joint services agreement between Newmarket and Aurora, the operating costs of Central York Fire Services (CYFS) are shared on a proportional basis, based upon three factors combined: share of call volume, share of combined population, and share of combined assessment values, said Mr. Garbe and Mr. Elliott in their report. For 2014, Aurora's proportionate share decreased slightly from 40.25 to 39.95 per cent of the CYFS operating budget approved by the Joint Council Committee.

The Joint Council Committee for the CYFS recently approved a 2014 operating budget which was 7.9 per cent higher than the 2013 approved budget. This year's approved budget adds a further \$381,600 to the Aurora budget, representing a tax rate pressure of 1.13 per cent.

The remaining 0.42 per cent can be attributed to increased costs from the phasing in of an additional full-time fire crew.

Councillors begin their budget deliberations this Saturday, January 11 at 9 a.m. in Council Chambers. This will be followed by a further budget session Monday night at 7 p.m. Both meetings will be open to the public.

Full coverage of the budget deliberations will be found in next week's edition of The Auroran.