

Budget talks begin with requests from Councillors

At the closing of the Town's first Budget Committee meeting of the year, Councillors were given the opportunity to bring forward new budget requests.

The requests will not be voted upon until later budget deliberations, however it was a chance to highlight what each lawmaker would like to bring to the discussion table.

Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo earmarked two points of discussion. First, he said he would like to get things back on track for the historic Petch House and that through a quick conversation with the CAO he understood that a report was pending.

?If not during this budget, certainly during the year, and if it requires some motion, I'm happy to do that. I want to get that back on track.?

Gallo also said he would like to explore the costs of getting outdoor skating rinks with boards.

?I don't know whether this is possible to mark in this budget, but to explore the possibilities of having outdoor skating rinks with boards. Not necessarily a ward issue, but a general issue across the Town, maybe multiple ones, to explore the costs of that, and to see how we can go about implementing them. Those are two things that I like to work on.?

Mayor Tom Mrakas confirmed a report on ice rinks that will also identify the costs for ?easy rinks? that are specifically built for hockey will be provided soon. To ensure enough capital to implement the rinks before another winter season is over and a new budgeting season begins, Mrakas suggested pulling money from the reserves and having the report include funding impact and reserve analysis.

Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson said he would like to discuss bringing more lights to the northeast corner of Bayview Avenue and Vandorf Sideroad.

He said if not in this year's budget, he would like to see something that acknowledges that it will be added to the 10-year capital plan.

?In an email I had with [Anca Mihail, Manager of Engineering for the Town], she said they could add it to the 10-year Capital Plan. It would just be nice to perhaps as part of this whole process, identify some of those initiatives,? Thompson said, adding that it would be helpful to make note of capital projects for future years as a placeholder for conversations and since the 10-year plan is continually updated.

?I'm sure we're all going to have initiatives or things that we would like to see done in our wards that are capital [in] nature, and I'd like to take a longer period view and so we've been we can start identifying some of them get put onto the 10-year capital plan, not necessarily all approvals, but at least so that they don't get lost and in hindsight.?

Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland said that several things were on her mind such as Council remuneration and outdoor fitness parks.

?I know that I'm going to be advocating for the bathroom at Copland Park,? she said, adding that the park is increasing their programming and is also known as one of the top 10 parks in York Region, attracting people from outside the Region, too.

Gilliland also inquired about the mill and overlay project on Industrial Parkway and whether there was an opportunity to include a design that may encourage traffic flow and adaptive transportation as well.

?I know that it's slated for some mill and overlay, about a \$2 million project. And my question is if this is an opportunity for us to expand it so there's a multi-use path there or an extra lane, versus spending this \$2 million we're doing the road?this could be an opportunity to maybe look at investing in this capital a little bit later? Maybe wait and design something down the road that it's actually more conducive to traffic flow and encouraging traffic and adaptive transportation as well.?

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese said he had similar thoughts to Gilliland and that he hasn't seen any information on how active transportation will be managed.

?I just like to know where active transportation fits in our York Region plan and our own plan for active transportation, because it's been sadly missing for a little while. So, I'd like to see where that is.?

Director of Planning Marco Ramunno confirmed that the Active Transportation Plan will be brought to Council in the spring. ?[Either] April or May, for Council's consideration. We're in the middle of airing that plan.?

Adding on to Gilliland's mention of Council remuneration, Gallo also suggested having something in the budget that enables Ward Councillors to spend on certain roles or communication needs with their wards.

?To have something in the budget for each Ward Councillor to either have a function in the ward or just to have a nominal amount there that that we are able to spend within the ward to communicate. Maybe there's certain criteria that we'd have to have to spend that money, but I know other municipalities do it and I'm wondering if staff had put any thought towards that or what Council feels.?

Director of Finance Rachel Wainwright van Kessel said that she will gather more information on how other municipalities have managed work budgets and remuneration of Councillors.

?We'll pull that information together and present it to Council, and if you wanted to add it to the budget, we can calculate the overall impact that would be on the levee.?

Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim said he would like to discuss adjusting the size of tennis courts on Warren McBride Crescent and William Graham Drive to fit regulation tennis courts that must be a bigger size, or into pickleball courts that must be smaller.

?There's a park there and we built two tennis courts, but they're too small. They're smaller than regulation tennis courts, but they're bigger than pickleball courts. And it's relatively empty. And normally, the tennis courts that I've seen around Town and especially pickleball courts, they're constantly being used.?

?I'm wondering if we could consider a budget for the future to maybe adjust that to either make them be tennis courts, or given the trends these days, make them into pickleball courts so that that park and that asset can be more readily used.?

By Elisa Nguyen