

Straight talk coming on where your tax dollars are going

By Brock Weir

If you're looking for a little straight talking about where your tax dollars are ultimately going, you're in luck.

Council gave the green light to take Aurora's annual budget and other financial matters facing the town back to basics with regular financial health status reports floated by Councillor Sandra Humfryes.

In her motion to Council, Councillor Humfryes said the municipal budget process can often be very complex and focused, to a point where most Aurora residents do not fully understand the health of the Town. A financial health status report would be compiled each fiscal year following the approval of a budget, making sure it is clear, concise and meaningful to residents, avoids financial jargon, and really highlights the bang each taxpayer is getting for their buck.

This includes the amount of cash Aurora has in the bank, the value of the Town's assets and investments, and the overall health of various financial reserve accounts.

We need to be able to articulate to our residents our overall financial health, said Councillor Humfryes. I think it is a great opportunity for us to sit back and present to residents [saying] very basically we have this much money in the bank, our investments are making this much, we owe this much, and we are looking pretty good.

It is [about] having that general understanding of how good we are really doing. I know we have that out there in various forms, but in plain wording we can all relate to so residents will understand where we are and when we do make decisions in investing in new facilities, or would like to hire a few more staff resources with good reason we can say we're doing good and we can move forward.

The proposal received an enthusiastic response from Council, with Councillor Wendy Gaertner saying clear and concise would be welcomed by residents.

Budget talks often focus on communicating with residents about how their money is being spent and the value they are getting for every dollar, added Councillor Michael Thompson. This is a natural progression.

We have communicated it in the past, we have seen reports other municipalities have done, and I know for myself I am a little envious because I thought there are certainly municipalities out there that do a phenomenal job of communicating that value to residents. It is their money and they should have a clear and easy understanding of the value they are getting for their tax dollars. It is that simple. I find it has been a challenge in the past, so I am fully supportive