

**Minutes Special Council Meeting 2008 Preliminary Budget Review  
Held Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon  
Town Hall Council Chambers**

**PRESENT:**

Mayor Wayne Hurst  
Deputy Mayor Robert Bailey  
Councillor Rick Fryer  
Councillor Robert (Bob) Pillon  
Councillor Paul Renaud  
Councillor John Sutton  
Councillor Rosa White

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Frank Pizzuto, CAO  
Carol Bendo, HR Specialist/Deputy Clerk  
Paul Beneteau, Treasurer  
Stephen Brown, CBO  
Lory Bratt, Planning Coordinator  
Dave Carpenter, Manager of IT Services  
Ron Dzombak, Manager of Recreation Services  
Ivan Fregonese, Supervisor Budget Services  
Pamela Malott, Manager of Corp. & Legs. Services/Clerk  
Rick Murray, Fire Chief  
Randy Sinasac, Deputy Fire Chief  
Lou Zarlenga, Public Works Manager

**CALL TO ORDER**

**DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

None declared

**OPENNING COMMENTS**

Councillor Pillon made comments asking to address various issues of concern during the meeting.

Councillor Renaud requested specific information on the number of inspections done by the Deputy-Fire Chief and the number of inspections done by the Part-time Inspector.

**ITEMS**

**1. Overview by the CAO – Where We Started and Where We Are**

All staff have worked diligently in preparing and presenting the draft budgets to Council over the past 4 months. Council has completed significant budget deliberations over a 5 day period. And we have made significant progress. Budget review is a team process – in this regard, the Team, Council & Staff, worked extremely hard and well to keep service levels and budgets at reasonable levels. We should all be satisfied with the process.

What have we achieved?

- The draft Operating Budget currently stands at a 1.02% increase. This is a significant achievement considering increases due to wage settlements, utility costs and service levels.
- The Capital Budget decreased by 0.64%. Staff in 2008 recommended restrictions on new capital expenditures if they impacted debentures. All the same, \$ 17 million is proposed in the capital budget and \$ 3.5 million in general rated expenditures. Limiting debt is essential in future years for the Town's financial health.
- New Initiatives contributed a 1.7% increase to general rated taxes. Initially it was recommended that more new initiatives be considered. Council approved three very essential ones. These included a permanent special events portfolio which is desperately required for economic development opportunities; a Big Creek Watershed Plan that will enhance our environmental stewardship; and a fire inspector who will provide much needed inspections and education and is also legislated. These three above initiatives cost \$170,000 and represent a 1.5% increase.
- Lastly, Council has had to deal with the fire area rating for Anderdon residents. The decision to eliminate fire area rating over two years increasing taxes to all residents not living in Anderdon by 1.12% in each of 2008 and 2009 is a prudent one and eases the tax burden for residents. The Town has now dealt with all areas where unique user fees and area rating have been eliminated. All residents receive the same level of service and pay equivalent amounts. This is fair for all residents.

In Summary, the tax increase proposed for 2008 without the inclusion of fire area rating is 2.73% or an average increase of \$30 per household. I believe that Council and Staff worked extremely hard to achieve this low increase despite significant challenges.

The fire area rating increase cannot be considered an increase in the same terms of the normal tax increase. It is a redistribution of currently collected levies with a positive impact on the Anderdon residents and cost implication for other residents over the next two years.

When everything is considered a proposed 3.85% increase, which includes all operating, capital, new initiatives and fire area rating is a significant accomplishment.

2008 Budget deliberations have been intense and challenging. Everyone involved rose to the occasion and we have accomplished much. Council and staff are to be congratulated on this effort.

#### **Questions/Clarification**

Councillor Fryer asked for clarification on what would happen with the Anderdon ratepayers if the Fire Rating is cut in half for 2008. Clarification given by the Treasurer that they would pay half of the amount to be raised this year and half next year.

Councillor Fryer asked about the Special Events Coordinator position and received clarification on benefit amounts for same.

Councillor Fryer asked about the Richmond Street Market Project- why is it listed under the Capital Budget? CAO Pizzuto responded that it is a Capital Project; bottom line is the same.

Councillor Bailey asked for clarification on past increases: in 2005 increase was approximately 7%; in 2006 increase was approximately 6.95%; in 2007 increase was approximately 3.24%.

## **2. Review of Changes Since Meeting on January 28, 2008**

- Review of slides by Treasurer, Paul Beneteau
- CAO reviewed Fire Inspector Position
- COA reviewed loss of Parks Maintenance revenue from GECDDB

Councillor Fryer asked about gas tax revenues and how they increase. Treasurer advised there are incremental increases annually.

## **3. Capital Budget Overview**

### **a. Long-term forecast of projects, revenues and debt servicing**

### **b. Review of approved projects**

Councillor Fryer asked if Richmond Street Market cost was reduced from \$ 233,000 to \$ 30,000 how would this affect the tax rate this year? Response that projects undertaken in 2008 would be debentured at the end of 2008 and affect the 2009 tax rate.

Councillor Pillon requested clarification on the replacement of vehicle at PWD. New truck would replace unit 103- this vehicle was down too much in 2007 to be dependable.

### **c. County of Essex Capital Works in Amherstburg**

### **d. Decision on Ball Diamond Initiative**

Councillor Sutton asked for clarification on the funding from the school board- if we receive funds and the Baseball Association does not come up with their portion of the funding- does our agreement with the school board change? Response that we would revisit at that time- the money belongs to the Town and would be at the discretion of Council to use.

Councillor White asked if the Baseball Association has previously met their financial commitments to works undertaken. Response from Treasurer that they have met all previous commitments.

Councillor White reviewed a vision statement from 1998 concerning Tourism and Economic Development stressing that we have not met our goals in this regard.

*Moved by: R. White*

*Seconded by: Deputy Mayor Bailey*

*That Council accept the recommendation of Administration concerning the initiative for a baseball diamond and move forward with same.*

Deputy Mayor Bailey stressed that this project going forward would involve success by the Baseball Association in fundraising efforts.

*Motion Carried*

*Moved by J. Sutton*

*Seconded by: R. Pillon*

*That Council recess for five minutes at 10:10 a.m.*

*Motion Carried*

*Meeting resumed at 10:20 a.m.*

**4. Review of New Initiatives**

- **Review approved initiatives**
- **Revisit fire inspector approval**

**Special Events Coordinator Position**

Councillor Pillon asked if Big Creek Watershed Study could be spread over two year period. Response that Alan Parks of the ACE Committee had advised the \$ 50,000 was needed up front.

Councillor Pillon asked if Special Events Coordinator could not be left as a contract position for the 2008 year. Treasurer advised that savings would be approximately \$ 13,000 in benefits.

Councillor Fryer asked if it would not be prudent to wait for the Economic Development Study to come back to Council in 2008 before making any decision on changes to the Special Events Coordinator position.

Councillor Pillon expressed opinion that there have been limited benefits to the agricultural interests in the area from money spent by the Town in tourism initiatives.

Mayor Hurst made comments confirming that Council acts in the best interest of all ratepayers both urban and rural; a meeting at County last week focused on aspects of Agricultural business; challenging times call for creativity and we must look at best ways to market ourselves; our biggest asset is our location.

Councillor Fryer asked what other Communities are doing for funding for Tourism portfolio. Response from CAO Pizzuto that other Communities may do a variety of things for funding; and that there are opportunities out there that can be explored further.

Councillor Fryer asked about the Santa Claus Parade and under whose umbrella this would fall in 2008? Response from CAO Pizzuto that it would fall under the umbrella of Special Events.

Deputy Mayor discussed the recent direction of County Council in committing to Tourism on a Regional Level.

**Fire Inspector**

Council asked for clarification on cost recovery on any Fire Inspections being done. Chief Murray advised we currently do not charge a fee for this service. CAO Pizzuto advised there are some revenue opportunities in this area and Administration will provide further information back to Council.

Councillor Sutton expressed liability concerns as fire inspections are mandated and expressed opinion that Council should be moving to a full time inspector in December.

*Moved by: J. Sutton  
Seconded by: R. White*

*That Council make a decision in late November 2008 concerning giving consideration to moving to a full-time Fire Inspector in January 2009.*

CAO Pizzuto spoke to the necessity of continuity in the position being the reason for consideration in November 2008.

Councillor Pillon asked for clarification on the motion.

*Motion Carried*

**Other Items Reviewed**

1. Councillor Pillon asked for clarification on the Manager of Development Services position being a full-time position in 2008. CAO Pizzuto responded that the position is being advertised as a full-time position.
2. *Moved by: J. Sutton*  
*Seconded by: R. White*

*That direction be given to Administration to come back with a report on the potential for revenue from fire inspections and options for staffing the actual inspections within the next few months.*

*Motion Carried*

3. Councillor Renaud asked for re-consideration of the line item for Committee expenses for the Car Show be brought back up to \$ 5,000.

Clarification from Carol Bendo, HR Specialist, that part of caravan funding in 2007 came from the RED grant. Matching funding is required from other sponsorship. Grant again is being sought along with sponsorship for 2008.

Clarification from the Treasurer that bottom line now stands at a 3.97% increase.

*Moved by: R. White*  
*Seconded by: P. Renaud*

*That Council re-visit the amount to be given to the Amherstburg Entertainment Committee and allow \$ 5,000 towards the Car Show.*

Deputy Mayor Bailey stated that Council should stay with the \$ 3,500.00 as previously agreed as the premise is that groups should move to becoming self sustaining once the Town has helped with original start up of an event.

Councillor Fryer spoke in favour of Deputy Mayor Bailey's comments.

*Motion Lost*

**Future Meeting Dates confirmed:**  
**Public Meeting Budget – February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.**  
**Final Approval Budget – March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.**

*Moved by: R. Fryer*  
*Seconded by: J. Sutton*

*That Council rise and move In-Camera after a five minute recess.*

*Motion Carried*

*Moved by: R. Pillon*  
*Seconded by: R. Fryer*

*That Council move In-Camera*

*Motion Carried*

*Moved by: J. Sutton  
Seconded by: R. Pillon*

*That Council move out of In-Camera back into public session.*

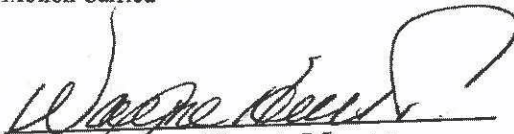
*Motion Carried*

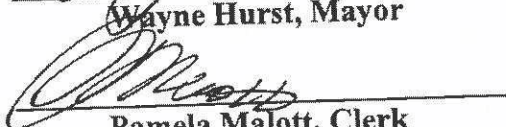
**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by: J. Sutton  
Seconded by: Deputy Mayor Bailey

That we rise and adjourn at 12:40 PM.

Motion Carried

  
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Wayne Hurst, Mayor

  
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Pamela Malott, Clerk