

APPROVED MINUTES

Public Meeting – Budget Consultation Wednesday, March 6, 2024 @ 6:30 pm North Shore Community Centre

PRESENT:

Chair Mayor Watts, Councillor MacDonald, Councillor Cook, Councillor Doyle, Councillor McLaine,
CAO-Sarah Wheatley
Public 10 members

1 Call to Order

6:30pm by Chair Mayor Watts.

2 Approval of the agenda

It was duly moved and seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Moved by David Riggs seconded by Peter Arsenault.

All in Favor

MOTION CARRIED

2.1 Disclosure of Pecuniary or other Conflicts of Interest

None.

3 New Business

3.1 Presentation of draft budgets (operational and capital)

ACCOUNT	2023-24 Budget subtotals	Projected Mar 31 subtotals	2024-25 budget subtotals
EXPENSES			
Fire Dues	\$ 278,650	\$ 278,650	\$ 300,500
<i>EMO - Emergency Measures Organization</i>	\$ 4,160	\$ 108	\$ 500
General Government			
<i>Subtotal General Government</i>	\$ 205,250	\$ 247,711	\$ 332,592
Planning/Development			
<i>Subtotal Planning/Development</i>	\$ 91,825	\$ 94,469	\$ 78,930
Recreation, events, community, culture			
<i>Subtotal Recreation</i>	\$ 68,200	\$ 66,048	\$ 79,600
North Shore Community Centre			
<i>Subtotal North Shore Community Centre</i>	\$ 61,900	\$ 66,870	\$ 87,853
Stanhope Place			
<i>Subtotal Stanhope Place</i>	\$ 12,400	\$ 16,132	\$ 21,406
Grand Tracadie Community Centre			
<i>Subtotal Grand Tracadie</i>	\$ 29,600	\$ 28,277	\$ 13,211
Extraordinary items			
<i>Subtotal Extraordinary</i>	\$ -	\$ 52,000	\$ -
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 751,985	\$ 850,266	\$ 914,592
SURPLUS/DEFICIT YTD	\$ 26,700	\$ 47,625	\$ 32

Proposed changes from last year:

- change fees structure with development permit to bring in more revenue.
- small tax increase for commercial properties only
- Use money from reserve fund to prevent raising taxes.
- Recreation: community events previously included kids day camp. Bar revenue/costs are included in Rec department as a service provided by our staff.
- Community Center revenue: this is the rental of space only.
- Wage grant hiring one summer student for Rec instead of three. One student for maintenance.
- Stanhope Place: will have a small increase but doing upgrades.
- Grand Tracadie: showing a decrease in revenue but will have a decrease on expenses. Daycare there will have a new contract.
- Extraordinary expenses: Fiona payout this year and Provincial Disaster payout coming soon.
- Staff wages were split into departments. CAO, bookkeeper, admin assistant, and small portion of maintenance staff, are considered “general government”. This department also includes some staff mileage, short term contracts, councillors, professional fees for auditors, legal costs (not related to development), insurance, office, bank, internet, general maintenance, and health insurance for staff and training.
- Planning/Development: staff wages, consultants, shared services agreements with two other communities. Now we are including legal services specific to development here. We will be increasing our development permit fees since the cost have been increasing as well.
- Recreation: Current staff member works 40 hours/week compared to 30 for past staff person.
- North Shore Community Center: The maintenance cost of the NSCC requires increased user fees.
- Stanhope Place: Series of maintenance tasks being completed. We will be renting out the facility more to the smaller groups, switching over to paying for telephone and internet then charging out to the groups accordingly.
- Grand Tracadie: Will be asking the tenant to pay for the utilities and we will pay for the maintaining of the structure. New lease agreement goes through several steps.

Sarah presents overview of Capital Budget:

- Purchase land for recreation facility within municipality.
- Building aluminum stairs on the Promenade to Covehead Bay, mainly from gas tax and insurance funds.
- Heat pump for Stanhope Place in basement.
- Multi-use outdoor recreation – rink/pickleball facility at both North Shore Community Center and Grand Tracadie. This will be from gas tax money.
- 5-year outline: 2024-25 first year remains the same.
- 2025-26 EV Charger at North Shore Community Center, Pleasant Grove Park/playground once land is purchased, washroom facility at North Shore Community Center, Energy audit of all buildings for future projects, Capital asset management plan.
- 2026-27 site development of newly purchased land, upgrade/replace of under stage doors, Sign at Grand Tracadie like North Shore.
- 2027-28 Add recreation facilities to new land, Tracadie Commons trails, replace floors on gym.
- 2028-29 Short term rental study.
- We are required to give a 5-year plan under the provincial rules. Items planned for gas tax funding are flexible, once on the list. Once a gas tax project been approved you can defer, change, add to, or subtract from it.
- If anyone has concerns or questions they have until Monday morning March 11, 2024 to email Sarah.
- Gerard reviewed process on the reading.

3.2 Public comment

Public: under extraordinary items is \$52,000 related to EMO?

Sarah: that is Fiona related.

Public: where are you going to see the change for \$36,000 under Recreational.

Sarah: increase all rental fees and the bar fees have increased. Bar sales are heavily dependant on the number weddings/large events we have.

Public: What about Parks Canada tax base?

Sarah: they are in the tax roll book. This needs more clarification on amount paid to the municipal tax.

Public: questioning the contingencies of the development of some areas and cost.

Sarah: the increased legal fees for several specific projects are included in this year and next year projections.

Public: surprised that contractors can apply for development permits. Strongly suggests stopping this.

Sarah: when we change the Land Use Bylaw, we will be looking at this.

Mayor: Finding the province not giving enough support with underlying matters.

Public: Why no value on the garbage line.

Sarah: This is under the maintenance, and we are rearranging these costs.

Public: Showing the \$55,000 transfer from the reserve fund, is this from the rest of the reserve fund?

Sarah: Operating reserve is currently at \$140,000 and once we deduct \$55,000, we will be left with \$85,000. Plus, we have other reserves for land purchases, capital projects, and periodic expenses.

Councillor Cook: Questions the EMO fund \$500.

Sarah: Transfer from general budget to EMO Reserve. Two accounts showing a value of \$16,000 and \$18,000 now.

Public: Questioning if too many buildings?

Gerard: This is a question to go to council for discussion.

Sarah: The more staff we hired is taking over more space at North Shore for offices, so we will divert more rental to Stanhope Place.

Public: Is there any way of getting revenue neutral in Grand Tracadie? Concerned of receiving an unexpected bill in a couple of years.

Sarah: The data that was analyzed shows we should be revenue neutral by next year. Developing the reserve will involve a phased approach.

Mayor Watts: We want to encourage the daycare there and our community very happy to have it. Repairs presently happening from Fiona that insurance is covering.

Public: The increase of rental fees by what percentage? With the increase will there be any updates to sound system, heating, or floor? Wondering about if efficiency grants would cover any of these mentioned updates?

Sarah: We are not charging enough to date compared to other locations. Year over year increase would be 50% on overage, but much larger for wedding packages. The fees bylaw sets a cap. It must go to council and have two readings for approval. Efficiency audit would likely be required first to see what would be best for upgrades or future grants.

Public: how much is time is spent on Development? Is there much cost on the Development and Planning?

Sarah: we did not get too detailed in the budget outlining how much cost of CAO time was allocated to development, but she keeps track of hours.

Public: Do you spend much time at researching what grants are available?

Sarah: I didn't incorporate many specific grants in our current budgets because they are rather unpredictable for projects approval. Prior to this job, I ran a charity so I know a lot about grants.

Public: How did you pick Commercial tax for increase?

Sarah: Most municipalities have different rates for commercial vs Non-commercial.

Councillor Doyle: Have we ever considered an Airbnb tax?

Mayor Watts: We haven't proposed this to the committee to date. This year we will start to evaluate and see if there's an opportunity for additional revenue.

4 Next Meeting

4.1 Finance & Infrastructure committee: Wednesday March 13, 2024

4.2 Council: Wednesday March 20, 2024

5 Adjournment

It was duly moved and seconded to end the meeting at 7:20pm

Moved by Councillor Cook seconded by Councillor Doyle.

All in Favor

MOTION CARRIED

SIGNED: Gerard Watts, Chair

DATE:

SIGNED: Sarah Wheatley, CAO

DATE: