

Township of Springwater Tax Hike Sits at 3.86 per cent as Council Continues Budget Deliberations

By Linda Belcourt and Dominika Zapolnik

Township of Springwater Council met again on January 20 to review and deliberate on the 2023 draft budget. After almost 8 hours of staff presentations, review and council deliberation, the township tax increase now sits at 3.86 per cent. Water and wastewater rates are also slated to increase 2 and 5 per cent respectively this year for residents using these services.

During deliberations some items were forwarded as presented by staff, some were adjusted, some declined, while others were added by councillors. The next [budget meeting](#) is on February 2 at 5 pm, where the items that are carried forward are reviewed and finalized for approval in the final budget.

In the opening statement at the January 20 meeting, Mayor Jennifer Coughlin thanked senior management and staff at the township for putting together "... a very progressive and sustainable budget." Adding that she felt the program changes brought forward in the budget were in direct response to what residents have been asking for.

One of the items that was axed in the 2023 draft budget was a Community Engagement/Communications Officer position, with duties to engage community residents, strengthen partnerships and support the Springwater Farmers Market in Elmvale. Council voted 4-3 against this, with Deputy Mayor George Cabral, Councillors Danielle Alexander, Phil Fisher, and Anita Moore opposed.

In response to an email sent after the meeting, Ward 3 Councillor Brad Thompson, who voted in favour of this position, stated he did so because he saw it as an investment that would pay off in the future and that "... with proper support of the farmers market, it will grow into an attraction that will benefit locals and draw people to our community to support local business."

An item pushed forward to the 2024 budget process is a possible renovation of the Elmvale branch of the Springwater Library, which includes accessibility changes to conform to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards. A motion by Coun. Fisher and seconded by Coun. Moore included an amendment to have a special meeting before the 2024 budget deliberations to review the [Library Master Plan](#), which sets this renovation as a top priority. The motion allowed for needed maintenance at the Elmvale library branch to be included in the 2023 budget.

A motion to increase councillor discretionary budgets to \$7,500 per councillor (for a total of \$52,500 per year), funded through taxation, was brought forward by Deputy Mayor Cabral, seconded by Coun. Moore and carried by council for inclusion in the 2023 draft budget. This would give each ward councillor access to \$7,500 per year, with any unused funds carried over for 12 months "for use within their respective ward for special purchases, services, events and

other worthwhile causes which in their opinion would be meaningful, beneficial and worthwhile to their ward and residents.” The motion also seeks to create a similar discretionary fund for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for township-wide initiatives including partnering with ward councillors on a ward purchase, service, or event.

Additional program changes that were added include an additional 1 per cent for the Capital Infrastructure Reserve, pickleball court painting and a basketball net at Hillsdale Pavilion.

“The (budget) process was extended to ensure there is sufficient time for Council to diligently work through the budget requests and make informed decisions prior to finalization,” said Mayor Coughlin in a written statement provided by a township spokesperson. Adding that the next budget meeting is “when members of Council will have the opportunity to seek clarity from staff on any outstanding items and determine how to best achieve our mutual goal of producing a progressive, sensible and sustainable budget.”

Budget deliberations continue February 2 at 5 pm and can be viewed live at the Township Administration Centre located at 2231 Nursery Road in Minesing or online:

www.springwater.ca/budget