

Minutes The Blue Mountains Special Meeting of Council



MEETING DATE: January 23, 2013

LOCATION: Town Hall, Council Chamber

PREPARED BY: Corrina Giles, Town Clerk

A. Call to Order

- Mayor Anderson called the meeting to order with all members in attendance.

Also in attendance were CAO Troy Speck, Director of Engineering & Public Works Reg Russwurm, Director of Planning & Building Services David Finbow, Director of Recreation Shawn Everitt, Director of Finance & IT Services Robert Cummings, Manager of Water & Wastewater Services John Caswell, Chief Librarian Terri Pope and Manager of Human Resources Tracey McKenna, Financial Analyst Debbie Brown, Fire Chief Ron Doherty

- Approval of Agenda:

Moved by: John McKean

Seconded by: Joe Halos

THAT the Agenda of January 23, 2013 be adopted as circulated, including any items added to the Agenda, Carried.

- No member declared a pecuniary interest with any matter as listed on the Agenda

B. Public Meeting

B.1 Public Meeting

Re: 2013 Proposed Budget and 2013 Water and Wastewater Budget and Rates

Mayor Anderson read the Notice of Public Meeting with regard to the 2013 Proposed Budget and Notice of Public Meeting with regard to the 2013 Water and Wastewater Budget and Rates

Ellen noted a statutory Public Meeting to review the estimates and proposed rate changes for water and wastewater will be held in the Council Chamber at The Blue Mountains Municipal Office at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 23, 2013. Any person may attend the Public Meeting and / or make written or verbal representation regarding the 2013 Proposed Budget and 2013 Proposed Water & Wastewater Rates.

Ellen noted that notice is hereby given that the Council of The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains, at its regularly scheduled Council Meeting of Monday, February 11, 2013, intends to adopt the Estimated Revenues and Expenditures for all departments of the Town for the year 2013 and intends to adopt the 2013 Water & Wastewater Budget and Water & Wastewater Rates.

The Clerk noted that Notice of the Public Meeting was given in accordance with the Town's Notice Policy. The Clerk noted that an error was made on one communication that indicated the public meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m. and confirmed this evening's meeting would end no earlier than 7:15 p.m. so as to allow those arriving at 7:00 p.m. to participate in the Public Meeting.

The Clerk noted in response to the Notice of Public Meeting, comments were received from Alfred Farmilo, Don Braden, Allan Fraser, Fred Barnes, John Jeffs, George and Lynn Cornfield.

Mayor Anderson then turned the Chair over to Councillor Ardiel as Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee.

Director of Finance and IT Services Robert Cummings then spoke providing an overview of the budget and the budget timeline.

Robert confirmed there are no new services included in the budget and that just over \$12M is required in property taxes to maintain the current tax services, and referenced less revenue from grants and user fees.

Robert then reviewed the historical tax levy increases, and noted that the 2013 budget proposes an increase of 6.3%, being a blended rate of 2.57%.

Robert then spoke regarding the 2013 expenses by service.

Robert noted that water and wastewater is a user service and compared The Blue Mountains' rates with neighbouring municipalities. Robert noted that the consumption rates are increased.

Mayor Anderson then asked if any member of the public would like to provide comment on the proposed budget and water and wastewater rates.

Michael Seguin, president of Blue Mountain Ratepayers spoke expressing concern with the complexity of the budget material, discretionary spending, questioning why taxes are being increased when reserves are in such a good position, service levels and funding of capital projects. Mr. Seguin questioned why Tomahawk is not a user-pay service. Mr. Seguin expressed concern with the increases in water and wastewater fixed rates and how the increase in taxes and water and wastewater rates will effect those on fixed incomes.

Diane Hanoski, resident of East Ridge Drive, spoke noting the increases should be at a manageable rate, and noted that she does not believe the comparables to be correct as other municipalities have services such as hospitals and transit to pay for. Diane then questioned the status of the landfill and questioned why the increases are so high.

Robert spoke in response to Ms. Hanoski and noted that landfill work is in the budget and that the actuals in the current year have not been completed at this time, and that the increases represent service levels or desired levels.

Councillor McKean then spoke regarding the landfill and noted there is \$100,000 in engineering still to be completed this year at the landfill and that there is \$7.5M in work to be performed next year at the landfill. Ms. Hanoski then noted that plastics should be sold to Ice River Springs for recycling for revenue to the Town.

Terry Thompson, Co-Chair of Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association Budget Review Committee spoke noting he supports the remarks of Mr. Seguin. Terry commended Council and staff for their work on the budget. Terry expressed concern with the proposed increases and how the budget is prepared. Terry noted the Town should cut services when funding is reduced from the Province, not add it to the tax increase. Terry spoke regarding proposed revenue increases at the harbour, Tomahawk, cemetery, and proposed fundraising at the Library and Beaver Valley Community Centre.

Terry proposed reductions in garbage collection, landfill expansion, review of vacant staff positions to determine if the position is required. Terry spoke regarding police services and proposed alternatives be reviewed.

Terry spoke regarding water and wastewater services and noted the proposed increases are excessive. Terry requested Council bring a 0% increase in taxes for 2013.

Director of Recreation Shawn Everitt spoke noting harbour dockage is paid for by the harbour users and that all projects at the harbour are covered by user fees, not the taxpayers.

Vivienne Alper, resident at 100 Alice Street, spoke noting she has no detailed concerns, but noted she supports the comments of Mr. Seguin and Mr. Thompson. Ms. Alper noted the increases in taxes and water and wastewater are onerous to those on fixed incomes and asked that Council reduce the increases to gradual increases.

John Jeffs, resident of Collingwood, spoke on behalf of a number of Craigeith residents noting the residents in Craigeith are not pleased with the proposed increases.

Andrea Ramisseri, Craigeith resident, provided the Clerk with a petition signed by residents noting concern with the proposed increases, further noting that increases should be reasonable.

Terry Thompson spoke noting the average assessment in The Blue Mountains is not comparable with assessment in the comparator municipalities.

Robert Cummings then spoke thanking those present for their comments. Robert spoke regarding the vacant lot servicing charges proposed in the draft budget, noting The Blue Mountains is the second or third municipality in Ontario to charge for servicing on vacant lots and noted there are approximately 1000 vacant lots in the municipality. Robert noted that the budget anticipates \$50,000 in revenue from the proposed charges and noted public consultation is required before moving forward. Robert noted the water financial plan is not near what was forecasted, and that the 2012 actuals and projects included in budget, if not complete when the budget was prepared, is not a savings as the project is still to be completed.

Robert then spoke noting the training budget has been reduced in the last two to three years, and noted that reducing training does not keep staff current.

Michael Seguin then spoke with respect to grants, funding and uploading and noted that uploads help to reduce the municipality's costs and should provide the municipality with some financial benefit. Deputy Mayor McKinlay spoke in response regarding uploading and downloading of services, and confirmed that the County received some benefit through social services, and confirmed that the County used these savings to establish long term infrastructure reserves to minimize future increases.

As no one further wished to speak Chair Ardiel declared the public meeting to be closed.

C. Adjournment

Moved by: D.R. McKinlay Seconded by: R.J. Gamble

THAT this Council does now adjourn at 7:16 p.m., Carried.

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Ellen Anderson, Mayor

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Corrina Giles, Town Clerk