



# Staff Report

## Finance and IT Services

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**Report To:** Committee of the Whole  
**Meeting Date:** January 29, 2018  
**Report Number:** FAF.18.03  
**Subject:** 2018 Draft Budget – Public Comments  
**Prepared by:** Ruth Prince, Director of Finance and IT Services

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### A. Recommendations

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THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.18.03, entitled “2018 Draft Budget – Public Comments” for information purposes.

### B. Overview

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This report outlines the comments from the Public Meeting for the 2018 Draft Budget, which was held on January 22, 2018 at 7:00 p.m., as well as Staff’s response to these comments.

### C. Background

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The 2018 Draft Budget has been reviewed by Council and the Public over a series of meetings throughout 2018. On January 22, 2018, the Town held a Public Information Session and Public Meeting to provide the public with the opportunity to review and comment on the 2018 Draft Budget and 2018 Draft Water and Wastewater Rates.

The timeline, as presented to Council, is to bring forward a By-law to adopt the estimates of all sums required for 2018 on February 12, 2018 for Council’s consideration.

The Town received no written comments prior to the Public Information Session and one verbal comment (Attachment 1) at the Public Meeting. Below is a summary of the comments received from the public.

### D. Analysis

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#### Verbal Comments

#### Terry Thompson, on behalf of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association Budget Review Committee

Mr. Thompson noted that the ratepayers were very surprised by the 37% unaccounted for water loss that was noted during the Committee of the Whole Budget Meetings in December and would like staff to keep investigating this matter, as it is costing the Town and ratepayers money and will ultimately push up the costly expansion of the Water Treatment Plant earlier than needed.

Mr. Thompson also noted that much of the Town's expenses cannot be controlled by the Town, as 40% of the Town's tax money goes to the County. He then noted that the County of Grey does not have a Budget Review Committee the way that the Town does. Mr. Thompson noted that he will look into developing such a Committee and would like to thank Town Council for raising this issue of the Town paying so much of the County's levy at County Council.

Mr. Thompson also noted that the Ratepayers are concerned with the amount of legal and administration costs the Town is paying in regards to Councilor Seguin and urged Council to settle this matter.

#### Staff Responses

Staff at the Town will continue to meet and work with the Blue Mountain Ratepayers throughout the Budget process.

### **E. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan**

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Goal #4: Promote a Culture of Organizational and Operational Excellence  
Objective #4: To Be a Financially Responsible Organization

### **F. Environmental Impacts**

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None.

### **G. Financial Impact**

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The Town's 2018 Draft Budget presently requires a Town tax increase of 2.07% and when blended with the County and Education rates the blended increase is 1.18% over the 2018 levy.

### **H. In consultation with**

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Senior Management Team  
Sam Dinsmore, Deputy Treasurer/Manager of Accounting and Budgets

### **I. Attached**

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1. Verbal Comments

Respectfully Submitted,

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Ruth Prince  
Director of Finance and IT Services

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Comments to Council on 2018 Budget, January 22, 2018  
Public Meeting regarding the 2018 Draft Budget and 2018 Draft Water and Wastewater Rates

Good evening Council, my name is Terry Thompson, I live at [REDACTED] and I am here on behalf of the Budget Review Committee of the Blue Mountains Ratepayers Association.

Let me preface my remarks by saying that we sat in on much of the Council review in December, nearly two days of detailed work. Council asked many good questions, drilling down to get at the details. Shawn Everett and several others on his staff responded to every question, answering virtually every question - they clearly had expert knowledge of their budgets.

In my several years of attending these sessions on behalf of our ratepayers I don't think I've seen Council more engaged. One surprising number, the water losses or leakage of 37% was questioned by Councillor McGee, making the point that this costs the town money and unless stopped it brings forward the date of a costly plant expansion. We will monitor our engineer's progress on reducing this loss.

Overall we felt that Finance staff, Ruth Prince and Sam Dinsmore, did a great job. We met with them in December and again in January to follow up on a number of points. It is interesting to note that of the \$20 million of tax supported expenses, only about half can be directly controlled by Council - we will work in 2018 with staff to bring our more clearly what costs can be controlled.

The overview shown earlier by Ruth noted that about 40 cents of every dollar of tax is sent to the County. We support the work of Councillor Martin's County task force. As far as we know, there is no budget review committee of ratepayers, like ours, at the County level and we would like to see what can be done in that area, to give ratepayers a voice at the County level. We were pleased to see Mayor McKean ask County Council to consider having each municipality pay for their own representatives at Grey Council - this would save our ratepayers nearly \$100,000 in 2018 and if we sent only 1 representative instead of 2 we would save even more. We need to do as much as we can to lower the 26% inequitable Grey County burden and get closer to a fair 20% share for Blue.

We must also comment on the legal and administrative costs of the dispute between the Town and Councillor Seguin. The ratepayers are concerned that the ongoing legal costs and the associated administrative inefficiencies created by this situation should be resolved. Ratepayers want to know the amount of the total legal costs to date and budgeted for 2018 on this issue. Fiscal responsibility is one primary duty of Council and we urge Council to settle this matter.

Thank you

Terry Thompson, January 22, 2018