A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.20.041, entitled “2020 Draft Budget – Public Comments” for information purposes.

B. Overview

This report outlines the comments from the Public Meeting for the 2020 Draft Budget, which was held on March 9, 2020 at 5:00 p.m., as well as Staff’s response to these comments.

C. Background

The 2020 Draft Budget has been reviewed by Council and the Public over a series of meetings throughout 2020. On March 9, 2020, the Town held a Public Information Session and a Public Meeting to provide the public with the opportunity to review and comment on the 2020 Draft Budget and 2020 Draft Water and Wastewater Budget.

The timeline, as presented to Council, is to bring forward a By-law to adopt the estimates of all sums required for 2020 on April 6, 2020 for Council’s consideration.

The Town received one written comment prior to the Public Meeting and no verbal comments during the Public Meeting. Below is a summary of the comments received from the public.
D. Analysis

Written – Budget Review Committee (Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association)

Comment:

The purchase of the Foodland site was drawn from reserve Capital funds. We can’t find the transfer in the 2020 budget. We know the purchase was in 2019. Just the same the cost of the purchase and the transparency of the purchase should be shown in the town’s documents. We should see where the money came from and where it went. Now it is not seen by the taxpayers.

Wastewater repair costs are increasing with supplementary requests. The approved totals to date should be viewed in the budget documents so all can see the increasing value of construction. BRC believes the delay in the town placing shovels in the ground on major capital and repair projects will add up to a large number. We are at the tip of the iceberg. Tracking the additions is the transparency that we are requesting. The urgency of getting the capital project to a reality will become a discussing item within other departments.

BRC also believes that the number in the budget for parking revenue is fictitious and not well thought out by staff. The parking revenue number hasn’t got a chance of being met in 2020 but apparently staff are not concerned about the number shown in the budget additions.

Staff Response:

In late 2019 the old “Foodland” site was purchased by the Town. The Town’s debt policy allows for a project to remain unfinanced for 3 years. The 2019 Financial Statements will reflect an increase in unfinanced projects over 2018 due to this purchase. During 2020, Council may make a decision on the use to the property. The 2020 budget does however, have budget money allocated for demolition of the building on the property.

The 2019 Budget included the hiring of two Senior Infrastructure Capital Project Coordinators to complete capital projects, and staff will be reporting to Council regarding the progress on large capital projects. Finance staff can track, in the Monthly Financial Report to Council, any supplementary budget requests.

Paid parking is a new initiative in the 2020 budget. Staff recognizes that these are estimates for parking revenue and will be reporting to Council on variance between actual and budget.

E. The Blue Mountains’ Strategic Plan

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

F. Environmental Impacts

None.
G. Financial Impact

The Town’s 2020 Draft Budget presently requires a Town tax levy increase of 3.7%, however due to growth in assessment, the tax rate will see a decrease of 4.27%. For a house assessed at 645,000 it may see a decrease of $73 for the Town’s portion of the property tax bill.

H. In consultation with

Sam Dinsmore, Deputy Treasurer/Manager of Accounting and Budgets
Katherine Dabrowa, Budget Analyst

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has been the subject of a Public Information Centre and a Public Meeting which was held on March 9, 2020. Those who provided comments at the Public Meeting and/or Public Information Centre, including anyone who has asked to receive notice regarding this matter, have been provided notice of this Staff Report.

J. Attached

N/A

Respectfully Submitted,

Ruth Prince
Director of Finance and IT Services

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