



The Corporation of the Township of Norwich
Council Meeting Minutes
Thursday February 22, 2024
Regular Council Meeting

In Attendance:

Council:

Mayor Jim Palmer
Councillor DePlancke
Councillor Gear
Councillor Couwenberg

Staff:

Lee Robinson, CAO
James Johnson, Director of Finance/Treasurer
Kimberley Armstrong, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk
Ken Farkas, Director of Public Works
Derek Van Pagee, Director of Fire and Protection Services
A.J. Wells, Director of Medical Services
Brad Smale, Director of Building Services/Chief Building Official
Pat Hovorka, Director of Community Services
Sean McCoy, Deputy Clerk/Planning Coordinator

1. Call to Order

The regular session 2022-2026 Council of the Township of Norwich was held in the Council Chambers, Norwich, commencing at 9:00 a.m. with Mayor Palmer presiding.

2. Approval of Agenda

Resolution #1

Moved by Shawn Gear, seconded by Lynne DePlancke:

That the Agenda be accepted as presented.

Carried

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

No disclosures were reported.

4. Closed Session

9:02 a.m.

Resolution #2

Moved by Shawn Gear, seconded by Adrian Couwenberg:

That pursuant to the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended, Chapter 25, Section 239(2), Council convene in a meeting closed to the public to discuss: personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees.

Carried

- 4.1 Litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the municipality or local board.
Confidential Report MED 2024-03
Re: Physician Contract**

- 4.2 Closed Meeting Minutes
Re: December 12, 2023**

9:15 a.m.

Resolution #3

Moved by Lynne DePlancke, seconded by Shawn Gear:

That the Council do now reconvene in open session.

Carried

Resolution #4

Moved by Lynne DePlancke, seconded by Shawn Gear:

That Council approves a budget adjustment increase to the Draft 2024 Operating Budget for the Medical Centre in the amount of \$39,600.

Carried

5. Introduction

5.1 2024 Draft Operating Budget Introduction

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of the process and explained the overall budget impacts includes the Capital and Community Grants portions which have been previously approved. He further explained that the 2023 actuals presented in the budget are unaudited as the 2023 year-end is not yet completed.

6. Reports

**6.1 Required Disclosure Re: Budget Implications
Report FS 2024-02**

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of the report, replacement cost vs amortization expenses and explained the extra 1% increase that has been included in the budget since 2016 to reduce the infrastructure gap to enable asset replacement.

Resolution #5

Moved by Shawn Gear, seconded by Lynne DePlancke:

That Report FS 2024-02, Required Disclosure Re: Budget Impacts, be received as information;

And further that the information be approved as presented.

Carried

7 Operating Budget

7.1 2024 Draft Operating Budget Package

Mr. Johnson explained that the Operating Budget, Capital Budget and Community Grants Budget are all combined to determine the overall levy. He further explained that the budget package contains a summary of operating expenses and revenues, advising that continued growth and revenues offset inflationary pressures and expenses required to be covered by the levy. The 5-year history of levy increases, adjusted for growth, have been under 3% for years, but now are at 9.91% which is driven in part by inflation and in part by the capital budget.

In response to questions from Council, Mr. Johnson explained that winter control costs are based on a 5-year average, however the Township may look at different models depending on changes to weather trends. He also explained that insurance costs have increased based on increased instances of theft and property damage, as well as inflation. Further to this, Mr. Johnson advised that area treasurers were looking at exploring insurance options to determine if there was a more cost-effective solution for insurance coverage.

In response to questions from Council, Ms. Robinson clarified that the cost increase for benefits was from an increase in premiums, not an increase in the benefits.

7.2 General Government

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of general expenses such as: professional consulting services, by-elections and insurance costs increases.

There were Council inquiries and discussion regarding: payroll burden calculations, consulting services expenses and the OMERS benefit pension.

7.3 Protective Services

Chief Van Patee provided an overview of operating expenses, including: equipment, supplies, data entry software startup fees, shared services staff and GovDeals

revenues. He also advised that additional revenues were realized from; user fees, inspection, enforcement activities and sale of equipment.

He further explained that fire training expenses include a joint training officer that is shared between five municipalities, and that courses can be attended by outside fire staff, resulting in a small revenue.

In response to questions from Council, Chief Van Patee explained that there are no outstanding fire insurance claims and that revenues collected for DZ license training are cost neutral. He further explained that rust-prevention is not applied to fire apparatus as it is not cost effective due to most end-of-life costs being related to pumps and other equipment, not issues with rust on the bodywork or chassis.

Mr. Johnson explained that the policing budget reflects an increase of \$30,000 based on a reconciliation from the previous year and the enhanced officer has an increase of \$6,700 due to salary increases. In response to Council discussion, Ms. Robinson advised that a discussion regarding the enhancement officer contract may be brought before Council for the first meeting in March.

Council recessed at 10:23 a.m.
Council resumed at 10:35 a.m.

Mr. Smale provided an overview of the building services operating expenses, advising that telephone costs are down slightly due to contract changes and the \$39,000 IT maintenance was due to contract items with Cloud permit for which payment was withheld until those items were resolved. Mr. Johnson advised that building services salaries were lower due to reallocation of a portion of those salaries to planning services, which ensures the appropriate costs are allocated to the appropriate service.

7.4 Transportation

Mr. Farkas provided an overview of expenses, including; road patrol, road and roadside maintenance, vehicle upkeep and winter control. There were Council questions and discussion regarding: road patrol, reallocation of salary amounts, grass mowing, ditch and catch basin maintenance, litter pickup, line painting and LED streetlight maintenance costs. Council were advised that approximately \$15,000 per year is spent replacing stolen signage.

In response to questions from Council, Mr. Farkas explained that road patrols are mandated by legislation, categorized by road class. Patrols include physically driving down roads and can be carried out by any public works staff. Ms. Robinson further explained that the costs were never split out for this in previous years and Mr. Johnson explained that these costs represent a reallocation not an increase.

Mr. Smale provided an overview of the drainage budget, advising that the expenditures are consistent with previous years and that the service is revenue neutral with no revenue increases projected for 2024.

In response to questions from Council, Mr. Johnson explained that the Bishop Drain and Longworth Drain costs were paid in the same year, with reserves prepared to cover those costs.

7.5 Health Services

Mr. Wells explained that there were some budget implications due to the recently hired doctor leaving the medical centre. He also advised there were some savings realized from reduced payroll burden and overhead costs. There was Council discussion with respect to the medical centre progressing towards self-sufficiency and that over time it has greatly reduced its dependency on the levy.

7.6 Recreation and Culture

Mr. Hovorka provided an overview of operations, including: municipal cemeteries, recreational facilities, arena, parks, halls, libraries and the pool. He advised that there were no new levels of service or staffing proposed in the budget and some efficiencies had been realized through a grass cutting tender allowing staff to be reallocated to other service areas. He also advised that there were increased revenues from the arena returning to a full-time schedule post-COVID.

There was Council discussion with respect to advertising revenue and hall utility costs.

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of the planning services expenses and explained that reallocations to planning have been budgeted for to better reflect the costs more accurately. He also advised that there will be additional discussion regarding planning fees later in the year.

With respect to Economic Development, Mr. Johnson advised that due to lack of use over the last ten years and the availability of other programs for small businesses, staff are recommending the elimination of the Façade Improvement Loan Program and reallocation of the \$20,000 reserve for that program to the election fund.

Council recessed at 12:00 p.m.

Council resumed at 12:38 p.m.

Mr. Johnson explained the overall estimated taxpayer impacts and the overall levy including the municipal, county, and education amounts. There was Council discussion with respect to the MPAC assessment values, the County levy increase, infrastructure costs, residential and farm tax classifications, and service level cuts.

Council members expressed their gratitude to staff for all their hard work preparing this budget document amidst many challenges.

Resolution #6

Moved by Lynne DePlancke, seconded by Shawn Gear:

That the 2024 Township of Norwich Operating Budget be adopted as presented.

Carried

8. By-Laws
No. 15-2024 To Confirm All Actions and Proceedings of Council

8.1 First and Second Reading of the Following By-law
Resolution #7
Moved by Adrian Couwenberg, seconded by Shawn Gear:

That the following By-law as listed, be introduced and taken as read a first and second time:

No. 15-2024 To Confirm All Actions and Proceedings of Council.

Carried

8.2 Third Reading of the Following By-law
Resolution #8
Moved by Lynne DePlancke, seconded by Shawn Gear:

That By-law 15-2024 be taken as read a third and final time and passed and signed by the Mayor and Clerk and the Corporate Seal be affixed thereto.

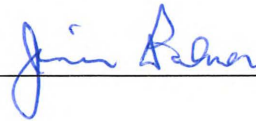
Carried

9. Adjournment – 1:33 pm
Resolution #9
Moved by Shawn Gear, seconded by Lynne DePlancke:

That this Council do now adjourn.

Carried

These minutes adopted by way of Resolution No. 2 as approved by Council at its meeting on the 12th day of March, 2024.



Jim Palmer
Mayor



Kimberley Armstrong
Director of Corporate Services/Clerk