

Council ratifies Town's 2017 budget Tuesday without changes

By Bill Rea

In the end, there were no changes, as Caledon councillors Tuesday night ratified their 2017 budget that had been approved in committee two weeks before.

The budget as passed calls for a 4.67 per cent increase in the Town's share of the municipal tax bill. But when those figures are combined with the tax increase approved by Peel Regional council two weeks ago, Caledon residents are going today 2.45 per cent more. Assuming there will be no increase in the taxes collected by the local school boards (that won't be known until the spring), acting treasurer Heather Haire said the total bill will be going up by \$112.87 for the average Caledon home assessed at \$522,000. There was an attempt on the part of Councillor Barb Shaughnessy to add a capital expenditure of \$45,000 for a Caledon Village Study to look into land-use, traffic and servicing issues along the Highway 10 corridor. She had also made a similar attempt at committee.

Shaughnessy had stressed this matter has been on the table for years.

Councillor Nick deBoer had problems with spending money on a study when there was no guarantee it would provide any useful information.

"I really don't think it's going to provide anything of value," he remarked.

But Mayor Allan Thompson was more sympathetic, commenting this has been discussed since he's been on council, adding the Town can't just wait for something to happen. He added something proactive needs to be done. He pointed out the Province has previously refused to act on this, but has indicated it might be willing to work with the Town if there's some clear idea of what is needed.

"I think it's a good investment of 45 thousand," he said.

"I've got to admit I'm torn," Councillor Rob Mezzapelli remarked, pointing out he understood what Caledon village residents along Highway 10 are going through.

Thompson had pointed out there are a lot of seniors living in those homes. They can't sell them because few people want to live on a four-lane highway, but the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is reluctant to permit more accesses to and from the road, or more industry in that area.

He added if MTO was ready to respond to a Town initiative, it was time to make some commitment.

Mezzapelli was reluctant to commit further dollars without more details.

General Manager of Community Services Peggy Tollett told Mezzapelli that apart from the widening of the highway, she was not aware of MTO taking any responsibility for the irritation the residents were experiencing.

Shaughnessy countered the Ministry had acknowledged some sidewalks had gone on private property, and there was some money going to these people.

She also stressed MTO is not prepared to do anything unless the Town initiates some action.

"There are no guarantees," she declared, adding there's no point in putting this off either. She said the village is "frozen in time."

"Take a leap of faith and say 'Let's try and do something,'" she urged her colleagues.

Haire told councillors adding this \$45,000 project to the budget would add \$1.59 to the average property tax bill.

"There has to be a little better understanding of exactly what we need to accomplish," deBoer maintained.

Councillor Johanna Downey pointed out this idea was proposed after the budget had been decided upon. She added all councillors have items they would like included in the budget.

Councillor Jennifer Innis said she has residents and business people in her ward wanting similar work done, and she has to tell them they have to pay for the studies.

Shaughnessy was "awe struck" at the lack of support she was getting.

"This village doesn't have any opportunity, guys," she declared. "You guys have your minds made up, and I'm really disappointed."

"If we provide nothing, then nothing will happen," she added.