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Town of Caledon ?moving in the wrong direction? with its 2020 budget

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Taxpayers in Caledon may be on the cusp of an ?uncomfortable? tax increase in 2020, with the current municipal budget calling for a 5.92 percent increase to the tax levy.

Several items were brought up for discussion during Tuesday night's meeting, held at Caledon Town Hall, which created something of a ripple on effect to overall expenses in the 2020 budget.

The previous 2020 Budget presentation, delivered to Council back on Nov 19, saw the municipality's overall costs sitting at $100.6 million next year, with an increase in spending of $4,442,103. At that time, the tax increase for the year sat at 4.34 percent for the Town portion of resident's tax bill.

?Since Nov 19 the budget open house was held to receive feedback from the public and to provide an opportunity for the public to discuss the budget with Council and senior management,? explains Heather Hare, Treasurer of the Town of Caledon.

Tuesday's meeting was held to further discuss the proposed 2020 budget and bring forward any amendments that Council have put together.

?Going through the budget has been a lengthy process, but it's probably one of the best budgets that has been presented to council to work with. But, saying that, I know there is a couple deficiencies,? stated Mayor Allan Thompson.

The proposed budget resulted in raising the local tax increase by 1.58 per cent from 4.34 per cent to 5.92 per cent.

Several amendments to the proposed budget was presented by counsellors for matters that not only themselves, but members of the community have brought up.

Many items were approved and added to the 2020 budget such as street lights to be installed on Cedar Mains Drive in Bolton for $50,000, $476.838 to bring an illegal trucking task force in which council felt strongly about implementing due to the ongoing issue of illegal trucking in the area. $145,000 was added for Poltawa Country lands to be zoned, and $7,500 to install swings at Beryl Bland park in Cheltenham, $20,000 to upgrade the washrooms at Lloyd Wilson Centennial Arena and $21,930 to make the current part-time role of adults 55+ coordinator into a full-time role.

A new capital project of $451,894 from the tax levy was also added to include a library and pool into the detailed design of the Caledon Easy Community Complex Phase 4. Proposed by Ward 3 and 4 Counsellor Nick DeBoer and seconded by Ward 2 Coun. Johanna Downey. $91,125 from the Library Development Charges Reserve is included as well as well as $769,500 from the Recreational Development Charges Reserve.

?The intent here, is it would piggyback onto the design work that's happening right now in Phase 3, so we don't have to, in about three years' time, go back and redesign to Phase 4 which is the next term of Council project. The idea is to have one design done, to complete the facility next door, so we have a facility in the works with Phase 3 and 4 together,? explains Coun. DeBoer.

Town staff remarks that Phase 3 has just been awarded, meaning if the detailed design of Phase 4 will be approved, staff must go back and cancel the current status, and put together a new plan to include the extra work, as installing a library branch and pool makes for a bigger project. The construction cost for Phase 4 currently sits at $18 million, with 7.5 percent of that for the detailed cost for design.

Members of council began to feel discomfort as they watched the percentage rise as the meeting continued, with the tax increase

rising with every amendment.

?We're going in the wrong direction,? comments Counsellor Tony Rosa.

Council will be gathering again at Town Hall on Tuesday Dec 17 to come to final deliberations and the approval of the 2020 Budget.

For more information about the 2020 Budget, please visit caledon.ca/budget.