



**County
of Huron**

Committee of the Whole



Minutes - March 22, 2007

Special Session

GODERICH, ONTARIO

A SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE met at 10:00 a.m. in the South Huron Recreation Centre, in Exeter with all members present except Councillors B. Dykstra, J. Bezaire and T. Collyer.

1. Draft Budgets

Each committee was presented the draft 2007 operating budgets for preliminary discussion in January and brought back for review in February. The Cultural Services and Seniors Committee conducted their second review at the March meetings because of the cancellation due to inclement weather. These draft operating budgets were forwarded to the February Committee of the Whole for further discussion in the consolidated budget. Treasurer, D. Carey, made a PowerPoint presentation that included: 2007 and Beyond Budget Pressures; What Your Tax Dollars Support; How Much Do These Services Cost; Where Does the Funding Come From; Uncontrollable Increases to the Levy; Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) 3150 and Asset Management and Aging Infrastructure; Service Levels; Reserves, draft 2007 Budgeted Levy; Levy History; and Levy Shortfall.

Public meetings are being conducted in Wingham and Exeter in March with a public forum. Advertisements were placed in all the County papers inviting written comments and questions. Submissions were received up to March 14, 2007 at the office of the County Clerk.

Warden D. Shewfelt welcomed the public to the special budget presentation. County Councillors introduced themselves and the municipalities they represent. Each Senior Manager from each County Department gave a brief overview of their department's responsibilities.

The Treasurer presented the Draft Budget and answered questions of the committee. The floor was then open for a public question and answer period. Discussion took place and the following questions and comments were dealt with:

- Ø County reserves were reviewed in detail, with explanations of restricted and unrestricted reserves.
- Ø There was a comment about conducting the public meeting during business hours and how it limits attendance to those who don't have to work. The Warden accepted the criticism and agreed to consider that for any future meetings conducted.
- Ø Does private enterprise affect the budget? The Highways Department has ongoing discussions with private enterprise concerning tenders. There have been savings in the millions of dollars when Highways tenders early. In January the Planning, Agriculture and Public Works Committee approved the Highways Department to tender 80% of last years approved Highways Capital and Major Maintenance Budget, and the rehabilitation of the Benmiller Bridge, to a maximum of five million dollars in order to take advantage of savings when tendering early.
- Ø Information Technology and computer upgrades were questioned. Do computer upgrades decrease the need for staff? No the staff compliment is usually not affected when upgrading. As computer technology is constantly evolving the County needs to keep pace in order to realize efficiencies in conducting its daily business.
- Ø Differences from inflation rate and municipal increases were discussed. Uncontrollable expenses beyond inflationary rates for the County include fuel costs, asphalt expenses and salaries affected by Union negotiations.
- Ø It was suggested to minimize the reserve contributions for unforeseen snowploughing and return any surplus not used by April so that it wouldn't affect taxes. It was noted that the County needed to be prepared for severe storm whether as it can cost approximately \$50,000 to \$60,000 a day.

- Ø A lengthy discussion on the Waste Management Reserve took place. There was concern that South Huron had purchased property and it wouldn't be fair to be included in any County property acquisitions. It was noted that the County does not own or operate landfill sites. The County assists in the planning operations only. Tipping fees go to the municipality responsible for the day to day operations. The County's portion is used for environmental assessments, engineer work, studies, assistance in offsetting property market values, and for contingency plans. It has been recommended for the last four years that the County increase this reserve or they will not be prepared for the future costs of the needed environmental assessments.
- Ø It was felt that there is a need to attract new people to the County and concern was expressed that the population is down. The Director of Planning would like to see an article regarding the exodus of the population.
- Ø Some wished to donate personally for the proposed CT Scanner for the Alexandra Marine and General Hospital and not be forced to contribute through taxes. It should not be the responsibility of municipal governments, it should be funded provincially.

The County staff was thanked for providing public documents that were easily understood. A resident commented that the Planning Department has a good track record of putting interest groups together and agreed that there is a need for reserves.

Warden D. Shewfelt informed the public that there is the Warden's Economic Development Task Force working to attract industry and tourism. He felt that there is a need to put some focus on immigration. Historically if local councils had not supported financially, the Town of Goderich would not have had a hospital.

It was also noted that the County of Huron has partnered with the University of Western Ontario to bring courses to the County in order to encourage residents to stay in the area. Increasing amenities, such as the Maitland Recreation Centre also helps to attract residents and doctors.

2. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee of the Whole will be held on Tuesday, April 17, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.

3. Adjournment

Moved by B. Dowson

Seconded by D. Kelly

That the meeting adjourn at 12:30 p.m.

CARRIED

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Chair