

DISTRICT OF SAANICH
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
FINANCIAL PLAN
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS
SAANICH MUNICIPAL HALL, 770 VERNON AVENUE
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2015 AT 7:30 PM

Present: **Chair:** Mayor Atwell
 Council: Councillors Brice, Derman, Haynes Murdock, Plant, Sanders and Wergeland
 Staff: Andy Laidlaw, Administrator; Valla Tinney, Director of Finance; Paul Arslan, Senior Manager, Financial Services; and E. van den Hengel, Committee Clerk.

5280-20
2015 Budget

PUBLIC INPUT

B. Furber, Arbutus Road stated:

- Questions how the budgeting process works and how the Saanich budget is determined.
- Municipal expenses tracked by the Municipal Price Index (MPI). The MPI over the previous three years has been 3.6%. In addition to the MPI Saanich sets additional funds aside for budget shortfalls and monies for new programs. These two areas in combination with the MPI have resulted in a tax increase of 4.96% this year.
- Historically Saanich has had a 5.00% yearly tax increase. Is this tax increase justifiable or are there cost saving opportunities that have not been explored?
- Have all Saanich departments undertaken a critical evaluation of their expenses and potential cost saving areas to ensure that the tax payer receives the "biggest bang for their buck?"
- How do tax payers and Councillors verify that critical evaluation of departmental budgets has been carried out prior to attending a Council meeting?

P. Korby, Judge Place stated:

- Families and the elderly are struggling with affordability in Saanich.
- Over the past ten years, Saanich yearly tax increases are above cost of living increases.
- Saanich should look to increasing/widening the tax base to keep the tax rate down and fully realizing its tax revenue.
- As population density increases if the infrastructure is not upgraded accordingly then it becomes difficult to increase the population along with the associated increase in tax base.
- All revenues need to be collected from the tax base so the municipality is provided with the funds that are required to provide services to its citizens, that the tax payers have an equitable system and all pay their fair share.
- Currently there are a large number of non-conforming developments that are not part of the tax base. This is a revenue loss to the municipality.
- Equity within the marketplace. All homeowners should be held accountable for non-conforming development. In Saanich, this loss of revenue could be conservatively in the area of \$2.4 million in unrealized tax revenue to Saanich.

- A partnership with BC Assessment could be explored and an update of Saanich property assessments could be conducted.

5660-25
Greater Victoria
Public Library Board

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD – 2015 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Letter from the Chair, Greater Victoria Public Library Board, dated February 20, 2015 submitting their 2015 budget request in the amount of \$5,263,910.

K. Murdoch, Chair, Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) Board, M. Sawa, CEO, and D. Phillips, Director of Finance, Greater Victoria Public Library, highlighted the following:

- The GVPL has the highest per-capita circulation rates in the country, with 6.1 million items circulated in 2014.
- Library programming and outreach activities have increased by 32% over the past three years mostly due to collaborative partnerships and cooperation with local community groups.
- The final operating budget for the library system for 2015 has been limited to a 3.94% increase over 2014; the Saanich funding request for 2015 represents a \$1.89 per capita increase.
- People visit the library to socialize, learn, connect, share and create. In 2014, there were 2.5 million visits to a GVPL library branches.
- Staff have succeeded in finding further efficiencies and alternative revenue sources without negatively impacting public service.

Questions from Council answered.

5660-25
Horticulture Centre of
the Pacific

HORTICULTURE CENTRE OF THE PACIFIC – 2015 GRANT REQUEST PRESENTATION

Letter from the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific dated January 26, 2015 requesting a 2015 grant in the amount of \$145,000.

R. Cox, Board Chair, Horticulture Centre of the Pacific (HCP), stated:

- Highlights of the past year include joining the Botanic Gardens Conservation International (Kew, England), becoming an internationally recognized botanical garden, implementation of two plant research partnerships, and conducted a very successful pilot project with 14 students from China arriving at the HCP for an intensive two-week course on garden design and maintenance.
- The goal for 2015 is to provide further education to the public and become a place of horticulture enlightenment through ongoing events and festivals.

Questions from Council answered.

5660-25
Swan Lake
Christmas Hill Nature
Sanctuary

**SWAN LAKE CHRISTMAS HILL NATURE SANCTUARY – 2015
MANAGEMENT FEE**

Letter from the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society dated November 28, 2014 requesting a 2015 management fee in the amount of \$340,000.

T. Morrison, General Manager and S. Moysey, Board Treasurer Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society, stated:

- 2015 will mark the 40th anniversary of The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Society and this milestone will be leveraged into all aspects of their work, through fund-raising events, launching the replacement of the aging boardwalk, and membership drives. The Land Management Agreement with the District of Saanich governs the operations of the Sanctuary.
- Highlights of the past year include the establishment of a preschool in the Nature House and renovation of the heritage Martelli House which will accommodate staff.
- Objectives for 2015 include: The hiring of a fundraiser and the appointment of a Board member with fundraising expertise, are expected to result in increased revenues.
- The funding request for 2015 is requested for the land management fee (\$340,000).

Questions from Council answered.

5660-25
Saanich Heritage
Foundation

**SAANICH HERITAGE FOUNDATION – 2015 GRANT REQUEST
PRESENTATION**

Application from the Saanich Heritage Foundation dated January 28, 2015 requesting a 2015 grant in the amount of \$42,000.

K. Johnson, President, Saanich Heritage Foundation, stated:

- The Saanich Heritage Foundation (SHF) will process five grant applications in 2015, totaling \$78,760 in work.
- The potential contribution from the Saanich Heritage Foundation grants program is estimated to be \$27,566 (35% pending funding approval).
- The funding request in the amount of \$42,000 is to cover the cost of the grants, management of the homes, administration costs and set aside \$2000 for Continuing Education for Foundation members for the year ending 2015, and to further promote public awareness of the benefits of heritage designation.

Questions from Council answered.

5280-20
2015 Budget

2015 BUDGET RECAP AND COMMITTEE DELIBERATION

The Mayor stated that this is an opportunity for Council to deliberate and provide feedback on the budget.

Proposed Budget

Council members discussed the proposed budgets and staff members responded to various questions and comments.

**MOVED by Councillor Murdock and Seconded by Councillor Plant:
“That Saanich staff prepare a report on the implications of
establishing defined tax rate increase targets for future years
including information on the experiences of other municipalities that
have used this strategy.”**

CARRIED

Adjournment

On a motion from Councillor Derman, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

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CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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MUNICIPAL CLERK