

**2008 BUDGET FORUM RESULTS**

The City Manager and the Deputy City Manager/Commissioner of Finance & Corporate Services recommend:

That the following report be received for discussion purposes.

**Economic Impact**

There are no direct implications of this report.

**Communications Plan**

N/A

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to consolidate the input received from the three (3) public Budget Forums and staff comments for the benefit of the members of the Budget Committee

**Background – Analysis & Options**

As part of the City's approved 2008 budget process and consistent with the 2007 process, three (3) Public Information/Consultation Forums were held throughout the community to receive public input into the 2008 budget process and as well educate and inform the public. The three (3) forums were held at the following locations:

- Vellore Village Community Centre – Monday October 22 – 7:00 pm
- Civic Centre – Tuesday November 20 – 7:00 pm
- Garnet A. Williams Community Centre – Monday November 26 – 7:00 pm.

To achieve the maximum benefit from the forums, the objectives were two-fold as follows:

1. Obtain input and feedback from the public with respect to the local services provided and their value.
2. Educate and inform the public regarding the budget process, including municipal issues, city services & costs, and their relationship with property taxes.

In addition to the City, the York Region Separate and Catholic Schools Boards and the Region of York were invited to attend. Mr. Lloyd Russell, Commissioner of Finance and Treasurer from York Region attended the second and third forums. There was no representation from the School Boards.

Although the Forums were open to all input from the public, the intent was to get feedback with respect to the local services provided by the City and whether or not residents believe they are getting value for their property tax dollar. Four (4) questions were posed to the audience:

1. Are we providing the right **local** services?
2. Are **local** services provided at the appropriate level?
3. Are you getting value for your **local** property tax dollar?
4. To cover the costs of running the City, which would you support?  
Tax increases? Fee / Charge increase? Service level reductions?

As a general overview residents did not express any concern with the overall services provided or the administration of the City. The comments tended to relate to very specific issues related to GTA Pooling. The comments are summarized in Attachment 1. Included with the public input are staff comments where appropriate.

### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020**

The process of obtaining public input into the budget process is critical. The budget process is where Council allocates resources and establishes priorities to achieve its vision.

### **Regional Implications**

There are no regional implications as a result of this report.

### **Conclusion**

The report on the outcome of the forums should be received for discussion purposes.

### **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – 2008 Budget Forum Public Comment Summary

### **Report prepared by:**

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Respectfully submitted,

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Michael DeAngelis  
City Manager

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Clayton D. Harris, CA  
Deputy City Manager/Commissioner of Finance & Corporate Services

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**Public Comments****Staff Response****REGIONAL ISSUES****1.****GTA POOLING**

- o GTA Pooling – Many questions and comments were brought forward regarding this subject, including the position that money should be returned to the citizens of the City of Vaughan and that GTA Pooling is a specific tax.

City of Vaughan has lobbied extensively to have GTA Pooling eliminated and subsequently to have the savings shared amongst the upper and lower tier municipalities within York Region on a 50/50 basis. Vaughan's representatives on Regional Council introduced a resolution at the Region that was intended to have savings shared on a 50/50 basis with the Region and the area municipalities.

In addition, the City of Vaughan's City Manager provided a memo with background information and the City's position, dated September 05, 2007 to all CAO's within York Region.

- o Question on the legality of York Region holding on to GTA pooling.

The Legal department provided a response on this matter to Council on November 12, 2007.

**TRANSIT**

- o Question concerning VIVA and support funding from the Province and the Federal Government, including expansion, bus only lanes, road widening to accommodate bus only lanes, and transit facilities.

Mr. Lloyd Russell, Commissioner of Finance and Treasurer from York Region addressed the questions.

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**MUNICIPAL ISSUES**

2. Asked for clarification regarding the slide entitled "Spring Forum Actions". What was incorporated into the 2007 budget as a result of the previous budget forums?
- As a result of the Spring Forum the following were incorporated in the 2007 Capital budget.
- Woodbridge District Heritage Study
  - Fran Drive/Hurricane Ave pre-design
3. Opinion expressed that the City did a poor job of advertising forums. In addition, disappointment expressed with citizen turnout numbers and lack of Regional and Provincial representation.
- City of Vaughan did extensive advertising in a prudent fashion, including posters, mobile signs, directly inviting rate payer associations, and advertising extensively in local papers.
- Invitations were extended by the City of Vaughan to the Region of York and to the Board of Education (Province). Unfortunately, no representatives were available to attend the first budget forum. Mr. Lloyd Russell, Commissioner of Finance and Treasurer from York Region, attended the final two public forums.
4. Citizen wanted to know where the taxes go – claims tax increase is 31%.
- City of Vaughan tax increases have basically kept pace with inflation over the last 15 years (average tax increase of 2.39% per year over the last 15 years). During this period the City has also expanded and added services. Information on where you tax dollars go was provided in the presentation.
5. Road and traffic concerns for the Maple area. It is difficult to get around and it is taking twice as long to get around.
- The Region of York is undertaking improvements to its system, for example Teston Road between Jane St. and Weston Rd. is being widened and includes a new interchange at Highway 400. The City is also implementing new road sections to provide additional outlets (e.g. McNaughton Road East). The City is also undertaking a Transportation Master Plan.

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| 6. Asked that the roads be finished before the new development is started.  | A Condition of Development approval does require road upgrading prior to completion of development.   |
| 7. Request to illustrate impacts on commercial / industrial property.   | Presentation was updated for subsequent public forum to include the requested information. Slides were added to illustrate a commercial property valued at \$500,000, breaking down the percentage retained by the City, the Region, and School Boards. |
| 8. The newly constructed median at Southview Drive and Jardin needs:  | A centre median is under construction and had not been completed and marker signs not yet installed. There are street lights in the area. Staff will review to determine if additional illumination or signage is warranted.                            |
| a. A Street light so that residents can clearly see it during foggy, snowy and rainy evenings.  |   |
| b. Brackets on the above noted street light for hanging baskets.  | Parks staff will meet with the Ratepayers group in 2008 to address their request.   |
| c. Removal of current hanging basket post at Southview and Jardin.  | Parks staff will meet with the Ratepayers group in 2008 to address their request.   |
| d. A stop sign on Jardin Westbound at Southview Drive. Making this intersection a 3 way stop.   | Traffic Engineering staff will undertake a review to determine if an all-way stop is warranted.   |
| 9. Southview Park needs:  |   |
| a. Park benches (2); additional trees (6); replacement of sand in swing area with special cushion-type flooring; resurfacing of tennis court flooring; and replacement of chain link fence with aluminum/iron fence enclosing the CN entryway to the rail tracks. | Parks staff will meet with the Ratepayers group in 2008 to address their request.   |

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10. Lakeview Ratepayers Association's Requests:

Road Repair – Conley Street (east of New Westminster) be repaired; speed hump study for Conley, Whitney, and Thurman Streets; snow removal on Conley Street, east of Thurman is often missed – please review.

A portion of Conley Street east of New Westminster was part of the 2007 resurfacing program based on the findings/recommendations of the City's Pavement Evaluation Program. Based on inspections conducted in 2006, the balance of Conley (east of Thurman) is scheduled for resurfacing in 2010. Staff will review the warrants for traffic calming measures in 2008

11. Vaughan Growth funded by Growth is a nice theory-impractical. We may have to go into temporary debt to make our communities more liveable and desirable. Short term pain may be needed for long term gain.

General comments.

12. Provincial aid is needed for decaying facilities. Aid is needed to remodel or modernize facilities. (Why did Bathurst Clark Library have to wait another year?) Thornhill Woods & Vellore Woods will need Libraries soon as they conform to the VPLB plan in 2004. I believe, it was approved in principle by Council. When can they expect to see service delivery-even if they get rooms added into their community centres? When will phase II of City Hall begin so that the library in Maple can be moved there & made into a business resource centre?

There is general agreement that Provincial aid is needed for infrastructure. Senior Library staff were in attendance and made note of the Library specific questions.

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13. Some residents want twice a week garbage pickup all year. When they move out of their homes they may need many garbage tags-the limitations otherwise is OK.

Twice per week garbage collection is unnecessary given that the City provides weekly collection of blue boxes for recyclables, and weekly collection of green bins for all organic materials. The average amount of residual garbage remaining after using the City's current waste diversion programs has been proven to be less than 2 bags per collection on an every other week basis.

14. In Thornhill, walkways are not being cleaned of leaves & debris regularly. Sidewalks are not being sanded soon enough after storms. I have phoned my Councillor to correct this situation. Who monitors this situation? How can this be corrected?

The Parks department mulches leaves on city property throughout the City of Vaughan and in some cases the leaves need to be blown on turf to do so. This procedure continues until snow cover and in some cases are further mulched the following spring.

Debris pick up on the City grounds is completed prior to cutting grass on a 10-14 day rotation. Debris cans are emptied on weekly or more frequently in height profile locations.

When ice forms on sidewalks a salt material is applied. This is first done on primary sidewalks within 24 hours and if the temperatures remain below freezing then salt is applied to secondary streets as well. Primary sidewalks are those that are main roads and may include a transit bus route or contains a school on the street.

15. Why is there an annual budget process instead of a 5 or 10 year operating plan to provide sustainable funding and longer term planning? Why must depts. come hand in hand each year for money? Why does it take over 6 months to do a budget? Why does the final form look so much like the original draft?

The City of Vaughan is a very high growth municipality and as such subject to many frequent changes and pressures. For these reasons budgets are reviewed annually. However, Vaughan is in the process of finalizing a 25 year long-range financial plan, which will complement the existing process.

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**16.** How can the City & Region plows co-ordinate in snow removal so that the walkways can be plowed & connected between the local streets & the major arteries? (ie. Thornhill-Campbell-Bathurst walkway). Can plows be fitted with a "lift gate" so that snow does not plug up driveways after major snowfalls?

We currently provide a City-wide windrow clearing service that is usually a few hours behind the snow ploughs. It is not efficient or practical to try to equip the truck ploughs used by the City with a gate to prevent snow from going into driveways. In terms of coordinating sidewalk and street ploughing, the machines operate at different speeds, have different levels of service and have different priorities to deal with during a storm.

**17.** When will a sidewalk slab be added for pedestrians on Bathurst Street east side at Beverly Glen stoplights? A bus pad might be useful there for a future stop. How can Thornhill get its fair share of roads & transit? How can we borrow on Development charges to ensure facilities are available when needed?

Engineering Services staff will review the request for a sidewalk and the appropriate action in the spring 2008 and will follow up with York Region Transit on the suggested bus stop.

The Region of York is responsible for the upgrading of regional roads and the provision of transit and are responding through review of their road and transit programs.

Development charge projects are identified through regular review of the DC projects list and implemented when appropriate.