

BUDGET FORUM RESULTS

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

- 1) That the following report be received for discussion purposes; and
- 2) That the Budget Committee provide further direction as necessary.

Economic Impact

There are no direct implications of this report.

Communications Plan

Corporate Communications will be issuing a press release regarding the City's efforts to go into the community to increase public input on the 2007 budget and the results.

Purpose

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

Background – Analysis & Options

At the February 5, 2007 Committee of the Whole meeting Mayor Jackson introduced an item with respect to obtaining public consultation into the 2007 budget process. Previously as part of the City's budget process a series of public Budget Committee meetings have been held at the Civic Centre. This year the objective of the three (3) Budget Forums was to engage the public, in the community, rather than at the Civic Centre. The three (3) locations were the Al Palladini Community Centre, Garnet A. Williams Community Centre and the Civic Centre. Each of the forums were held in the evening.

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

1. Educate and inform the public; and
2. Solicit input from the public.

In addition to the City, the York Region Separate and Catholic Schools Boards and the Region of York were invited to attend.

Although the Forums were generally open to all input from the public the intent was to get feedback with respect to the services provided by the City and whether or not residents believe they are getting value for their property tax dollar. Three (3) 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?

Generally the forums were well attended and helpful feedback was received. 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 or projects. The comments are summarized in Attachment 1. Included with the public input are staff comments where appropriate.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

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 – Budget Forum Comments

Report prepared by:

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Ext. 8475

Respectfully submitted,

Michael DeAngelis
City Manager

Clayton D. Harris, CA
Commissioner of Finance & Corporate Services

**CITY OF VAUGHAN
BUDGET FORUM COMMENTS**

Public Comments**Staff Response**

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| 1. | York Region and other GTA municipalities should not be paying to subsidize the cost of services provided by the City of Toronto. | Over the years the City has lobbied extensively for the Province to eliminate GTA Pooling. During the Forums the Province announced that "Pooling" would be eliminated over the next 7 years. |
| 2. | How much of City's property tax revenue comes from the businesses. | Only 12% of commercial and industrial property taxes paid by businesses go to the City to fund City services, the balance, 88% goes to the Province for Education and the Region of York. Of the City's total operating budget approximately 16% is funded from commercial/industrial property taxes. |
| 3. | What is the City of Vaughan doing for seniors. | The City of Vaughan provides a number of programs and facilities geared to seniors. In addition the City provides an indexed property tax grant to qualifying seniors. In 2007 the City has passed a resolution requesting the Region of York to provide a similar grant and for the Province to provide relief to seniors regarding the education portion of the property tax bill. |
| 4. | The Vaughan Chamber of Commerce believes that the City should protect land zoned for employment and not rezone employment lands for residential purposes. | The City has undertaken a Hwy 400 Corridor Study and in the longer term, the City's comprehensive review of its official plan will identify future employment lands. It should be noted that the OP designates the Vaughan West Enterprise Zone (2500 acres) for future employment lands. In addition there is a Provincial policy which requires municipalities to protect and preserve employment areas for current and future uses. Further, Provincial policy requires that conversion of employment lands within employment areas require a comprehensive review and it must be demonstrated that the land is not needed for employment issues. |
| 5. | Maintain a robust marketing budget. The Chamber has noticed that the radio campaign for the "City above Toronto" seems to have disappeared. The City is probably the only city in Canada without a downtown core or central focus. It is more important than ever to establish the concept of the City of Vaughan in people's minds. | The Economic Business Development department intends to carry out its commitment to our marketing efforts as we have in the past. |
| 6. | Given the decision to fund the subway extension there is no reason for the City of Vaughan to dither any further about the use of the remaining corporate centre lands. There is the possibility to create a downtown or central core at the Corporate Centre. "Has the City duly considered the amount of funds necessary to market and otherwise plan for proper development and expansion of the corporate centre creating an area of density, mixed use (commercial/residential) with retail shops, restaurants and entertainment venues at ground level." | The current Vaughan Corporate Centre Plan was approved in the late 1990's. The Vaughan Corporate Centre Plan will be reviewed through our current OP Review (2007) which will take into account the changing realities brought about by the subway extension.
The Economic/Technology Development department has approached all land owners, developers and related stakeholders in the Vaughan Corporate Centre in order to gather their feedback and build a marketing campaign that meets the needs of all stakeholders. The first meeting of this group is scheduled for the end of May 2007. |

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| 7. | The Chamber is aware that the village of Kleinburg is attempting to reassess its vitality and requires funds to assist in a study with a view to revitalization. | The Budget Committee has recommended funding for an economic study for Kleinburg, subject to OPA 633 being in full force and effect. |
| 8. | The City should maintain Vaughan's competitiveness by continuing to offer lower commercial and industrial tax rates than surrounding municipalities. | Currently the City of Vaughan has one of the lowest commercial and industrial tax rates in the GTA. The Region of York has the lowest tax ratios in the Province. The City must balance the request from businesses and residents for funds to be spent with the desire to keep taxes down. |
| 9. | Undertake a Woodbridge District Heritage Study and implement an interim control by-law to limit development until the study is complete. | Currently there are no funds in the Heritage Reserve. The Budget Committee is recommending the study be undertaken in 2007 when the funds are available. An interim control by-law is not considered appropriate at this time. |
| 10. | Fran Drive and Hurricane Ave. concerns raised regarding the quality of water and the need for road repairs. | Pre-design investigations and public consultation to be undertaken in 2007 including assessment of water and sewer systems. Construction project to be included for consideration in 2008 budget discussions. |
| 11. | User fees for some of Vaughan's Recreation programs are up to 3 times more expensive than those offered in Toronto. | A balance needs to be struck between the amount of funding from user fees vs how much from taxation. With respect to Toronto, they are receiving GTA Pooling funds from all GTA municipalities and requesting additional funding from the Province. for additional funding. These funds, particularly GTA Pooling funds, from places like the City of Vaughan and York Region allow Toronto to have lower user fees. |
| 12. | Vaughan's Parks should be more accessible. | The City of Vaughan currently incorporates varying levels of accessibility into each new play structure that is implemented within our park system. In the past several years, fully accessible playgrounds and waterplay areas have been implemented at MacKenzie Glen District Park, Concord Thornhill Regional Park, Vellore Village District Park, and Hayhoe Park. In addition, Kipling Parkette was retrofit with a partially accessible play structure in 2006. This practice will continue. |

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<u>Public Comments</u>	<u>Staff Response</u>																
13. Provide funding to continue the William Granger Greenway Trail.	The City of Vaughan is committed to the enhancement of the open space trail system as evidenced by the recent approval in principal by Council of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Masterplan. Both the Don River Open Space and Humber River Open Space corridors are integral in this masterplan. Since 1999, the City of Vaughan has committed approximately \$787,000 to the Humber River Open Space which encompasses the William Granger Greenway. The completion of the Woodbridge Expansion Area Open Space Project which includes the Humber River pedestrian bridge crossing, pedestrian trail systems and wetland enhancements/reforestation is anticipated for mid-summer of 2007.																
14. There is a need for a tree by-law to control the destruction of trees on private property.	The City of Vaughan has an OP policy to protect over 300 acres of tableland and woodlots in urban areas. This policy has been in place since mid-90's and is the only one of its kind in Ontario. On April 16,2007 Council directed that a tree by-law applying to all private property be prepared.																
15. Include funding for a part-time employee in Cultural Services to assist with Heritage related matters.	Funding for a part-time Heritage coordinator is included in the 2007 draft operating budget.																
16. Additional parks requested in the Thornhill Woods area.	Currently 3 parks are proposed for development this year and one is in the design phase.																
17. Status of the construction of a sidewalk on the east side of Islington in Kleinburg.	Staff are following up on this request.																
18. There is an opportunity to improve the collection of litter in the City.	Staff have spoken with the staff of the company providing waste management services and will be monitoring on an ongoing basis.																
19. Vaughan Public Libraries – comments were raised regarding staffing and long line-ups.	<p>The following staffing adjustments were implemented in 2006:</p> <p><u>Vaughan Public Library Full Time FTE Increases</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Clerk III (2 positions moved from part time to full time)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Promotions Assistant (1 position moved from part time to full time)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Librarian (position not replaced)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(1.0)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Branch Coordinators (3 new positions filled)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">3.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strategic Development Officer (position not replaced)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(1.0)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Branch Manager (position not replaced)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(1.0)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>3.0</u></td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Vaughan Public Library Part Time FTE Reductions</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Clerk II/Promotions Assistant/Public Service Attendants</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(2.8)</td> </tr> </table> <p>Total Library 2007 Budget FTE Increases over 2006 Budget</p> <p style="text-align: right;">0.2</p>	Clerk III (2 positions moved from part time to full time)	2.0	Promotions Assistant (1 position moved from part time to full time)	1.0	Librarian (position not replaced)	(1.0)	Branch Coordinators (3 new positions filled)	3.0	Strategic Development Officer (position not replaced)	(1.0)	Branch Manager (position not replaced)	(1.0)		<u>3.0</u>	Clerk II/Promotions Assistant/Public Service Attendants	(2.8)
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| 20. | Vaughan Public Libraries – concerns expressed regarding the new software implemented. | The library automated system was implemented in February 2004. There are no plans to replace the software; however, since the implementation several upgrades have been done to improve the system. The Integrated Library System provides enhanced Cataloguing technology, a Peer Review feature to rate and review items and a smart device interface for the online catalog. The 2007 budget includes US\$47,100 for the yearly maintenance contract. Currently the Library is providing retraining for all staff on the new system. |
| 21. | Vaughan Public Libraries – there appears to be a long lead time to get new material. | Library materials are purchased through several different vendors and processed externally. The library collection is assessed and materials and electronic products are ordered by staff or through an Automated Release Plan. The Automated Release Plan includes Best Sellers, Award Winners, CDs and DVDs. |