

BUDGET COMMITTEE - DECEMBER 14, 2009

2010 ON-LINE BUDGET FORUM RESULTS

Recommendation

The City Manager in consultation with the Director of Budgeting & Financial Planning recommends:

That the following report be received for information purposes.

Contribution to Sustainability

Sustainability by definition focuses on the ability to maintain a function over a period of time. Responsible budgeting allocates resources in a responsible way to sustain the City's operations and aspirations, balancing both current and future requirements. The process of obtaining public input into the budget process is essential to validate the needs of the community and balance them within available resources. The 2010 budget approach seeks to minimize the current year requirements, while continuing to meet the requirements of the future.

Economic Impact

There are no direct implications of this report.

Communications Plan

Comments will be consolidated by Commissioner so they can be received and the comments considered in future planning and decision making within the Commission. Comments relating to other organizations or levels of government will be shared with them.

Purpose

The purpose of this item is to report on the input received from the On-line Public Budget Forum, held from November 23rd to December 6th 2009, and its impact on the overall forum results for the benefit of the members of the Budget Committee and Council.

Background – Analysis & Options

Engaging our Citizens

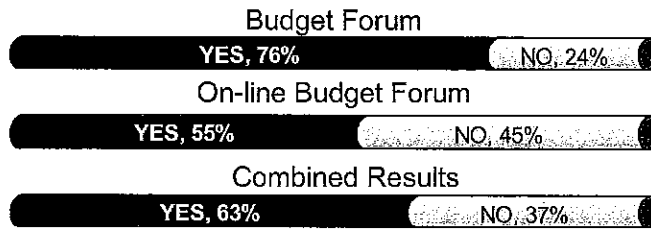
Public consultation and input is an important element of the 2010 budget process. On Monday November 16, 2009 the City hosted a budget forum to educate and inform the public and to receive public input into the 2010 budget process. A report on the results of the public budget forum was provided to Budget Committee on December 1st, 2009.

Recognizing that a number of residents would be unable to attend the Budget Forum and in the interest of obtaining maximum participation and feedback, a video of the Budget Forum presentation, a copy of the hand-out, and a brief survey based on the forum questions were made available on the City's website for public consumption. The deadline to participate in the on-line survey was **December 6, 2009**. This event was promoted on the City's website and through news releases and e-newsletters. The above event is consistent with the City's current and prior year approved budget processes.

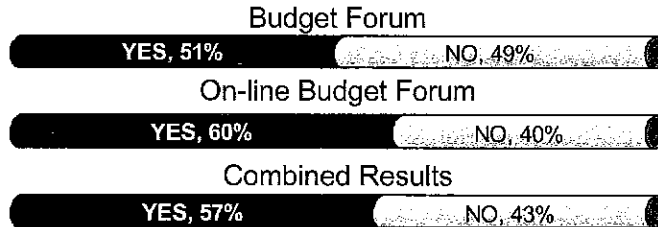
Forum Results & Community Feedback

Approximately 70 residents completed the on-line survey. Of the residents participating in the survey, the majority responded that Vaughan is focusing on the right improvements, taking the right approach, and providing the right local services. These results are reflective of the input received during the Budget Forum on November 16th. Illustrated below are the survey results for both the Budget Forum and the On-line Budget Forum. Also included, is a combined total reflecting all participant responses.

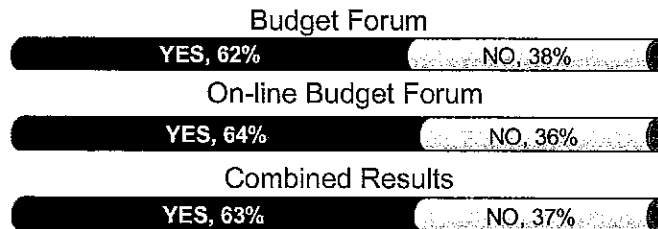
Is the City focusing on the right improvements?



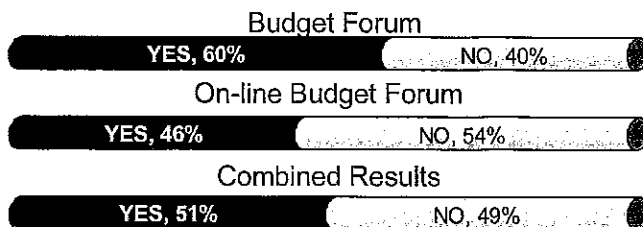
Is the City taking the right approach?



Are we providing the right local services?

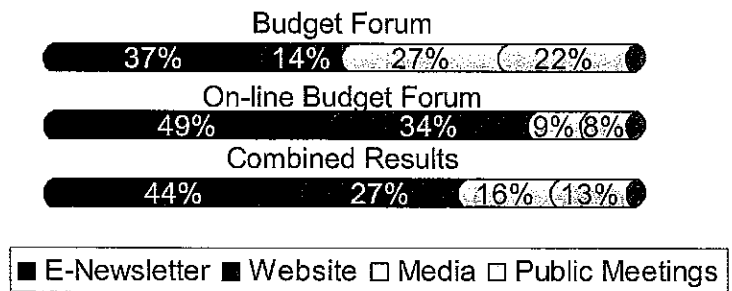


Overall are you getting value for your local tax dollars?



In addition to the above, on-line participants were asked a final question to better understand which method of communication they found most effective. Similar to the Budget Forum results, the majority of the On-line Budget Forum respondents, almost 50%, preferred the electronic newsletter medium as the most effective communication method. Not surprisingly, given the environment of the on-line survey, the City's website ranked second at 34%. Media coverage and public meetings ranked low at 9% and 8% respectively. These results will be useful in planning future events. Illustrated below are the survey results for both Budget Forum and the On-line Budget Forum. For reference purposes, a combined total reflecting all responses is included:

Which method of communication would you find more effective?



Resident Comments

In addition, the On-line Budget Forum participants were encouraged to provide further comments if responses selected to the above questions were either "no" or "false". Most respondents provided comments to one or more of the questions asked. Resident comments are organized by question and provided as *Attachment 1* for Budget Committee/Council consideration. Listed below are the main budget topics provided by residents through the On-line Budget Forum survey.

Reoccurring Themes (mentioned by more than one resident):

- Road conditions
- Traffic congestion
- City development and planning
- City cleanliness
- Job creation
- Many other general comments

Of particular interest are comments received that relate to services provided by the Region of York or Province of Ontario. Although, outside of the City's area of responsibility, the majority of these comments largely focused on the following:

- Regional road network issues i.e. Dufferin, Rutherford, etc.
- Provincial road network issues related to Hwy 7 and 427
- Regional transit issues
- Provincial school board or hospital concerns

Public Engagement

Two-way communication is important. Many opportunities for public input have been and are continuing to be provided throughout the budget process using a mixture of public engagement activities. These are further expanded below.

The Budget Process On-line

The City website is the City's primary communication vehicle. Recognizing that many residents have busy lives and are unable to attend the scheduled budget meetings, an effort was made to make each major step of the budget process available to the community on the City's web-site. Listed below are items posted on the City's Website:

- Summer 2009 - Budget guidelines and timetable with a request for comments on whether the City is taking the right approach.
- On-going - Budget Committee meeting dates, items and extracts
- November 2009 - Budget Forum and feedback survey
- December 2009 - Vaughan Chamber of Commerce presentation
- January - Special Council presentation and final approved budget (This meeting is scheduled for January 18th, 2010)

Chamber of Commerce Event

A draft budget overview was presented to the Chamber of Commerce by the Budget Chair/City Manager to inform and engage Chamber members. This event was held on December 4th, 2009.

Budget Committee Meetings

Throughout the budget process, scheduled Budget Committee meetings were open to the public. A number of Vaughan residents attended these meetings and provided their input into the process through deputations and discussion. These meetings were held on the following dates:

Scheduled Budget Committee Meetings

- Nov. 3 9:00 – 11:30
- Nov. 10 9:00 – 11:30
- Dec. 1 9:00 – 10:30
- Dec. 7 9:00 – 11:30
- Dec. 14 11:00 – 1:00

In addition, the City of Vaughan is undertaking a number of strategic initiatives, which incorporate significant public engagement. Although separate processes, public feedback obtained through these events have migrated into recommendations and the budget decision-making process.

Special Council – Final Public Input Meeting Before Adopting the Budget

In addition to the Budget Committee meetings and budget forum, there is a final opportunity for the public to provide input at a Special Council meeting scheduled before the budget is approved. This meeting is scheduled for January 18, 2010. To ensure citizens are aware of this event public notification consistent with the City's public notification by-law will be provided.

Communicating to the Community

The City will be communicating key messages on the budget through various communication vehicles. They will be used to inform residents, businesses and the media on budget developments, successes, and key highlights.

Editorial coverage – The budget process will be featured in several stories for publication, including Council columns in local newspapers. As the budget process unfolds, editorials and updates will be added to the City's website to keep the public informed.

E-newsletter – The corporate e-newsletter list, with its current circulation of approximately 6,000, will be used to issue e-blasts or bulletins on budget successes and developments. E-newsletter content may also be included in newsletters from Council.

Media Relations - The media will be informed of any related events through media advisories and news releases will be issued for all major milestones of the budget process.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020 / Strategic Plan

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

As part of the City's 2010 budget process and consistent with the previous year's process, a Budget Forum was held to educate and inform the public and to receive public input into the 2010 budget process. To obtain maximum community feedback a video of the public forum and a survey, based on the budget forum interactive questions, were created and posted on the City's website.

The Budget Forums were open to all citizens and 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. Citizens were engaged through the use of audience response technology, on-line survey and deputations. Overall, the majority of residents participating in the events responded that:

- Vaughan is focusing on the right improvements
- Vaughan is taking the right approach
- Vaughan is providing the right local services
- Residents are getting value for their tax dollars

The resident feedback indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the City's operations and the efforts of Council and staff. However, there were a number of resident comments provided for Budget Committee and Council consideration. These are provided in the enclosed attachment.

Attachments

Attachment 1– 2010 On-line Budget Forum Resident Comments

Report prepared by

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Director of Budgeting & Financial Planning
Ext. 8348

Respectfully submitted,

Clayton D. Harris
City Manager

Attachment #1

**2010 On-line Budget Forum
Resident Comments**

Question 1: Is the City focusing on the right improvements?**Resident Comments**

Note - Some participants did not respond to any or all of the questions

Ref.	Comment
1	All main roads in vaughan including Hwy 7, Glen Shields and other areas of Vaughan should be upgraded. Maintenance is lacking at the all residential sewers (ie. smell, grass growing around which water or snow cannot draing)
2	Area of Hi-way 7 between Bathurst and Yonge Street needs a proper repair - not the occassional patch up job. Has been like this for at least 3 years. Necessary alternative route for those who can't afford 407 tolls.
3	City should more clean.
4	Hwy 427 extension is taking too long to begin, city needs to put more pressure on who ever is responsible for this delay.
5	I don't realy know what the focus is. I would like to see improvments on traffic, commute, school
6	I think improvements need to be made at the mail boxes, there is too much paper being thrown into the floor and possibly paper boxes (slots that fit only paper) should be implemented at each one.
7	I will say yes when the highway #7 is widen from Martin Grove to Pine Valley, the 427 highway extanted to Bolton before another live is lost due to poor planning.
8	I would like to see more parks and trees. Vaughan is turning into a concrete jungle. Its seems any piece of land that can be found is being paved over.
9	It wasn't necessary to build such an elaborate and, no doubt, expensive median down Dufferin from Centre to Steeles. Why not fix up a few extra roads in the area with that money.
10	More planning from vaughan should be on road congestion and work with the region on transit for the area. Let's get people out of cars. A community centre is nice, but it should be funded and developed by the developer not the city. I do not think the cur
11	new subdivision do not have the same involvement from the city as old one do.
12	no, the only improvement needed is spending and project cuts.
13	Providing more green space and reducing traffic congestion would be good start. It seems that any farmland in Vaughan automatically gets bought by a developer and converted into more low-density housing units to over budren our already strained infrastruc
14	Should really focus a little bit more on keeping our streets clean. It is pretty pathetic to see so much garbage around. More efforts needs to be put into this project. It's a real shame to have such a beautiful city looking like a dump.
15	Streets need more lanes for car traffic
16	The City councilors and mayor need to improve themselves in the manner they spend tax payers money and behave. Too often we hear about petty squabbles and irresponsible behavior coming out of City Hall. Please own up to your job and show us that we did no
17	The City of Vaughan is spending too much money on road construction and right now job creation should be the focus. Too much taxes and not enough done in every community!
18	The City of Vaughan is wasting too much time and money on illegal stuff amongst their staff! We are waiting far too long for a train system to connect Vaughan to Toronto!! If the Vaughan transit were faster the elderly would use the system much more, but t
19	The city should be focusing on errors they made previously on the improvements like building tons of residential houses and not thinking of accomodating all the traffic that would cause on the little one or two lane roads we had

Question 1: Is the City focusing on the right improvements?**Resident Comments**

Note - Some participants did not respond to any or all of the questions

Ref.	Comment
20	the landscaping and garbage collectors just throw pieces of recycle parts, garbages not properly and just wrecks the parks and pond areas.
21	there are areas that can certainly improve movement of traffic. e.g;corner of hilda and steeles having an advance light so that it is easier to make a left hand turn,making keele and hwy 7 westbound 2 lanes so it is easier to make left turn and move more
22	I questions some ofthe street enhancements on Dufferin, sewer system are needed and being addressed. The land development practices of the city are questionable at best.
23	thornhill woods ugly road barriers are ugly and a waste of money...new comm. centre should have a rink...streets are too small and homes are too close together...mail boxes should be removed as they are messy and ban any mail delivery except direct home d
24	Too much focus and money is placed on Civic Centres and Community Centres. The traffic in the City of Vaughan is outrageous. The roads are not equipped to handle the hundreds of thousands of homes that have been built. Eg. Major Mackenzie from Keele to Pi
25	too much high rise buildings in residential places; you must plan the urban sprall with more thought. Our traffic jams already stinks.
26	Too much money is being spent on items such as plants (outside community centres, on street corners, as well as the middle of Dufferin street (recent renovations)). Funding for other services are being reduced (some are Ontario government based (such as S
27	traffic calming is badly designed .mediums on dufferin for example are too lavish and expensive.
28	We have very poor lighting on Bathurst N of Autumn Hill and Ner Israel Particularly in that stretch of pavement. Also there is a real danger in that intersection due to heavy traffic build-up. Cars are held at a very slow speed going N towards Rutherford
29	We need to improve transit specially Viva system on Centre Street. Why can't we not have already a street car line on Viva Purple, instead of doing the BRT and then the Street Car?

NOTE: Comments were limited to 255 characters and may appear cut-off.

Question 2: Is the City taking the right approach?**Resident Comments**

Note - Some participants did not respond to any or all of the questions

Ref.	Comment
1	The City of Vaughan is spending too much money on road construction and right now job creation should be the focus. Too much taxes and not enough done in every community!
2	Again, very broad. Overall yes. I am embarrassed at times with all the conflict of interest and lack of transparency in the dealing of the elected officials.
4	Cater to the needs of citizens, not developers who seem to dictate the pattern of development in this town.
5	City has to create more job. City put more time to create more job.
6	Focus on community services such as social services, garbage and recycling (though the Vaughan program seems to be much better than the City of Toronto's program) and less on greenery.
7	get your traffic engineers out into traffic, and let them make improvements on the job instead of doing it behind a desk
8	I asked for the street light to be fixed 2 months ago. Nothing happened.
9	increase revenue through users fee (I like the formula) as long it applies to wage increase as well, unionized or not, white or blue collars, and eight hours pay for eight hours work. a good portion of us leaves on a fixed income, I wonder how much longer
10	I'm glad to see the City is moving towards transparency and accountability.
11	I've seen too many violations of so called by-laws and drivers just drive right by. I don't see why I would have to call individually for each problem, do workers not have eyes??
12	Need to use more of our tax dollars to hire more staff to clean up.
15	no!!! stop spending
17	same as above and more... get traffic flowing , remove all barriers all 4 way stops signs and create a flow that have 2 way stops letting the busier of the street have the right of way or if major intersection put in lights. remove all speed bumps more tr
18	Stop wasting money and make sure to care for the residents of Vaughan and not yourselves and your personal interest.
19	The city should be ahead of the development and services should be in place to accommodate all the changes before they happen.
20	There are more condos and buildings being constructed and not enough road construction
21	Vaughan is only thinking about the big developers and does not care about the residents,
22	We need to reduce expenses now .The city is spending at too high a rate
23	Whereas I am very satisfied with the efficient service that the City of Vaughan provides in general, I think a more thoughtful approach is needed for development. I understand the need for development, but I would like to see a better plan for controlling

**Question 3: Are we providing the right local services?
Resident Comments**

Note - Some participants did not respond to any or all of the questions

Ref.	Comment
1	A service or put hole has to be fulfilled for the safty of the residents. it should not go through a dozen committee and endless meetings. We all know the price of a cubic metre of concrit and laborer costs. let the manegment and contractor be accauntabl
2	Aditiional Community Safety Support (Bad Stop Sign areas and Safe Community Programmes, etc). Playground Safety and By-Law enforcement could also be improved upon.
3	Again, way too much passing the buck to finally get something done.
4	Buses are too few from the N of Bathurst side. Is there a possibility of more buses at the peak periods- say every 10-15 minutes- and 15-20 minutes in non peak periods. A shelter should be placed on the Autumn Hill and Bathurst -NW side.
5	Have seen no visible signs of updating and improving Nashville eg: Lighting, sidewalks, landscaping.
6	I would like to see the cost of gym membership come down. The city should be encouraging residents to stay healthy by offering very cost effective gym membership. Currenty I think its \$10 just for a day pass!
7	Near school areas not enough street signs
8	no!!! too many services and major tax waste.
9	Our property taxes go up.....but our services are cut...like from once a week garbage pick up to every other week (especially during the summer months when you can really smell it). Should really go back to once a week pick up!
10	public transportation needs to be reviewed and made more accessible in certain areas
11	Road and traffic concerns need to be address properly before any development gets passed or started.
13	see above and more taxes are way too high on a 41ft lot X 90 ft the reasonable price for taxes should be around 3500 to 4200 I pay over 5300 per year... my pay did not go up 30% but your tax bill did.
14	Seems like there is no real plan just build and build and not worry about sustaining the buildings
15	sometimes not reacting fast enough to local resident needs eg traffic circles on summeridge dr. King High re=opening due to pressure of a few where there was no need. Please note that Centre & dufferin light is much better, just took too long.
16	TO PROVIDE MORE PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH.
17	traffic circles in Thornhill Woods are a desaster and the councilor did not provide a satisfactory answer (although she did communicate a lot)
18	we do not have a library in our new community center. wa have too many kids in the schools. kids from other neighborhoods should be directed to other schools
19	we need bus service in the weekend also.we need traffic light on jane and kirgy intersection. increase speed limit on magnogton. we need a hospital closeby.
20	We need more libraries, especially in the North Thornhill area. We need more outdoor swimming pools. We need more fitness centres.
21	we should not traffic jams in this city
23	Yes, but concerned that fees for activities at community centres under "Thornhill" are without exception more expensive than same/similar activities at community centres under "Richmond Hill".
24	Your are not making enough programs available for kids like swimming and dance, karate.

NOTE: Comments were limited to 255 characters and may appear cut-off.

Question 4: Overall are you getting value for your local tax dollars?**Resident Comments**

Note - Some participants did not respond to any or all of the questions

Ref.	Comment
1	because we dont have any good grocery store like nofrills close to us
2	Definately FALSE! From snow removal to grass cutting...I still haven't been compensated for some young guy with a summer job of cutting grass at the park next door and wacking down plants, obvious flowers, not knowing what he was doing, that I planted! I
3	Got pats not children do not see enough done regarding this issue. Subdivision roads not cleaned
5	I am so disgusted with the allegations and lawsuits, regarding the City of Vaughan's mayor and representatives that I truly regret voting for. Stop wasting taxpayers' money on juvenile nonsense.
6	I do get services but taxes are very very high
7	I don't understand why Vaughan citizens - who deserve a hospital- are being taxed on top of our already excessively high property taxes for the proposed construction of a new hospital. Did Toronto residents have the same experience when new hospitals were
8	I feel that West Woodbridge is not getting the attention that north and east woodbridge is getting.
9	I like the direction the city is moving in but I'm still surprised at the amount of sprawl. The city keeps growing but I don't see any plans to reduce traffic.
10	it is time this city starts restraining themsekves from rampant spending, and starts to cut the budget with these hard times every department should be able to reduce the budget by at least 5%
11	Its time for fiscal restraint.
12	My answer is false because we have been asking for the road repairs in our area - Conley St (Ward 5)for several years now but to no avail. Conley St. (Ward 4) had been repaired few years ago. Also our street lights need to be replaced with energy savers I
13	My taxes are constanly increasing due to the prices of houses in my area. I expect to pay based on what the original price was. Once I sell at the higher price then the new owners can pay the higher amount. I do not understand why I need to pay more. My s
14	No Water or sewage Home is surrounded by acreage with ever expanding illegal trucking yards that probably contribute little to tax coffers.
15	No! My above statement describes how I feel. I believe that Vaughan spends alot of money trying to make the city look good but where else is the money going...people need to see less bickering among the politicians and more work done! I also feel that whe
16	Not always, lots of room for improvement.
17	Our tax dollars are always increasing with all the new building, but no new services are given in the area. It seems that you are always playing catch-up with planning and it always follows development. Look at all the congestion that all the building has
18	Propoerty should not increase this year. It s/b/ same. In the Woodbridge is not many jobs.
19	stop spending so much
20	That's another thing I totally disagree with....if I do not have any children in school...then why am I paying for school taxes? I also believe the senior citizens should not have to pay property taxes at all. The city should take into consideration that
21	The essential services need to be more available and more easily reached.
22	this city is low on services, low on law enforcement, low on looks and quality of living and super high on taxes. worst place i have ever lived. and ugly to boot
23	Too much time and money is being on political housekeeping such as election infractions and audits. If you don't play by the rules don't play. This would defenity direct our tax dollars to benefit the taxpayers enjoyment and amenities.
24	Unnecessary greenery.
25	We are paying to much residential taxes and not enough value for these taxes.
26	We are paying too much compared to Toronto and we are currently in a recession. We should pay less for once.

Question 4: Overall are you getting value for your local tax dollars?**Resident Comments**

Note - Some participants did not respond to any or all of the questions

Ref.	Comment
27	we are paying too much. the fact that we have paid too much on our houses isn't a reason for us to pay too much property tax.
28	we don't get door to door mail service, not enough education on what the government does and what joe public can do to defend themselves.
29	We hire and pay police officers to serve and protect the citizens not to difent themself in cort day in day out while all this traffic colming strategy is killing our economy injuring our back for a handfull of bad drivers in which the police are geting p
30	we just need more education on environmental issues.

NOTE: Comments were limited to 255 characters and may appear cut-off.