

## TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES BUDGET MEETING – MAY 12, 2020

Minutes of the budget meeting held on Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 7 p.m., held virtually from the O'Connor Municipal Office and Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Vezina  
 Councillors: Crane, Handy, Loan, Racicot,  
 Clerk-Treasurer Buob (in the Municipal Office)  
 Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Racicot (in the Municipal Office)  
 Fire Chief Henry Mattas (in the Council Chambers)  
 Leadhand Kelly Johnson (in the Council Chambers)

Mayor Vezina called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof: none.

No visitors were online virtually.

Mayor Vezina turned the meeting over to the Clerk-Treasurer to present the draft budget line by line. The Clerk-Treasurer explained how the numbers were presented and how the taxation revenue included in draft #1 budget was determined. The bottom line of the full budget shows the variance required to balance the budget as presented. The revenue taxation in the first draft is based on the same levy amount as 2019. The line items in accounts 4020 and 4040, titled Taxation Arrears are actually the Education taxes for budget purposes. It was noted that the interest earned on taxes is lower this year, as Council has agreed to not charge interest on any outstanding taxes for the months of May, June and July and the final tax billing will not be sent out in June as usual due to the COVID-19, and the possible financial hardships for our ratepayers during this time.

The balance of the revenue accounts was explained. The Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) for 2020 is once again lower than the previous year, \$17,600 less than what was received in 2019. There are still accounts in which we are awaiting actual amounts including the 2018 Policing credit. It was noted that the OCIF funding for 2020 is \$50,000, however, as the total amount of funds will not be spent this year, only the portion to be expensed is included in the budget. The balance will be put into a deferred revenue account, as we wait for the results of a funding application, in which we have agreed to use these funds as our share of the project. The interest earned amount is lower than budgeted last year as any interest earned from funding programs has to be added to the funding account and not to the general fund. As well, due to COVID-19 the interest rates have dropped. As the Community Centre is closed due to COVID-19 the user fees revenue on hall rentals is also down. Money will be pulled from the Fire Department reserve account to cover the washroom renovation in the fire hall. This money was put into the reserve at 2019's year end as the work was not completed in the budgeted year.

The meeting continued with the review of the expenses for the Township. Council meeting expenses were discussed. Due to the COVID-19 less meetings are being held in person and conferences are considering cancelling. It was agreed to remove all expenses for both the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) and the Thunder Bay District Municipal League (TBDML) conferences for this year. The estimates for regular Council meetings are currently based on to-date expenses as well as estimated full attendance at all upcoming meetings. It was agreed that this number could be lowered.

The Administration salaries line does include both full time staff and the administrative assistants' wages. The Miscellaneous wages include the groundskeeper's wage for the Community Centre yard.

The Clerk-Treasurer is still waiting for the renewal rates on the insurance policy. The balance for the year is being estimated and is all in one administration account. Once the actuals are received, the amounts will be distributed to the proper accounts.

The Admin - Finance and Bank Charges line includes the interest of the two loans currently held by the Township. Both loans will be paid off this year.

The Community Centre and Municipal Office buildings expenses were discussed. There

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are no issues or maintenance plans for either building this year. The Outdoor Recreation area was discussed. A well and storage building were discussed previously and were once again brought to Council for discussion during budget. Different options and a cost estimate were briefly discussed.

The Protection and Services accounts were reviewed.

The Disposal Site accounts were reviewed. There are no major issues with the compacting truck so only regular maintenance and fuel are being budgeted. The wages include time to have the site cleaned up and regular caretaker wages. The Recycling expenses continue to increase and one bin does require some minor repairs.

The Federal Gas Tax account includes three resurfacing projects and the finalizing of the Zoning By-law expenses.

Under Professional Fees it was noted that a Request for Quote will be sent out for the next four years audit. At this time the amount is an estimate.

The Joint Board expenses were reviewed. The Lakehead Police Services Board (LPSB) expenses were discussed briefly. A budget for the Board was prepared in January, however due to COVID-19 the second meeting of the Board was cancelled and this number will most likely be amended.

The Government Mandated Programs were reviewed including Land Ambulance, Policing, Property Assessment, Public Health and DSSAB. It was noted that these programs together have increased by \$10,823.16 and with the decrease in the OMPF funding there is a significant hit to the budget.

The Reserve Allocation line includes an amount equal to loan payments for one year for the 4x4 truck that was purchased in 2019, if a loan would have been taken out for three years. As the Township pulled the money from the Road Equipment reserve to purchase the truck, it was agreed to put the money back into the reserve over the next few years.

The meeting was then turned over to Fire Chief Mattas to discuss any changes made to the Fire Department budget since the previous budget meeting held on May 4, 2020. Fire Chief Mattas presented an Equipment Report to Council. The report included the detail of each piece of equipment including purchase date, mileage from purchase to date, as well as any major repairs that have been done to them. A list of purchases that the Fire Department Auxiliary has made in 2019 and to date in 2020 was also presented. Fire Chief complimented the Auxiliary on all the hard work they do to raise money to improve the Fire Department. It was suggested that the dress uniforms which are currently in the budget be brought to the Auxiliary to see if they would consider purchasing them, however due to COVID-19 they have not had any meetings. The total number of uniforms will not be confirmed until a decision has been made whether or not they will be purchased.

The Auxiliary did buy two AED's in 2019 for First Response Members to keep at their homes at each end of the Township to be able to respond quicker to those areas. There is also one in the First Response vehicle. Council suggested that one more be budgeted each year to ensure that each of the main responders have one, as minutes can save a life if needed. This could be considered next year. Fire Chief Mattas was thanked for the update.

The meeting was then turned over to Mr. Kelly Johnson, Leadhand, to review the Road Department's portion of the budget and explain any changes which have been made since draft #1, which was presented on May 4, 2020 also.

Mr. Johnson informed Council that he has since looked further into the price of a new truck for the Road Department and his number of \$285,000 previously included in the budget is slightly lower than the actual cost. The amount should be increased by approximately \$10,000. No other changes were made at this time.

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Other items to consider as presented by the Clerk-Treasurer were discussed. Mr. Johnson discussed some options and prices associated to the installation of a well and storage building for the outdoor rink, as per Council's request. A question of using the existing well for the community centre and office was also discussed. It was agreed to not use the existing well.

A request for a new street light on the corner of Garbutt and Highway 590 was discussed. The Clerk-Treasurer has spoken with the Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge who have installed several lights over the years and they provided information and cost estimates. There are engineering studies required before an installation and hydro costs for an installation have increased significantly and they are no longer installing any new ones. The Clerk-Treasurer asked Council if they would like her to pursue the matter further and get actual costs. A discussion was held as to whether or not this was a safety issue. It was agreed that this intersection is no different than several other intersections in the Township and if one is installed at this intersection we could get several other requests for other intersections. It was noted that the Ministry of Transportation is actually removing some street lights from different intersections. It was agreed that a new light is not a priority at this time. A reply letter will be sent to the requester informing her that the Township would not be installing a light.

The balance of the Reserve and the Deferred Revenue accounts were reviewed.

The budget bottom line was once again reviewed and line items discussed further.

The purchase of a new truck was again discussed. Currently the purchase of a new truck is included in the total. Loan options were reviewed, including the number of years for a loan, if a down payment was made using reserve monies, etc. What the risk of not buying a truck this year is, or is a second hand truck an option. Mr. Johnson confirmed that currently both trucks are running well and it was agreed that the purchase would be removed from the budget at this time. As the current loans will be paid for in nine months the amounts equal to three months of loan payments would be put into the Road Equipment reserve to start saving for the purchase in another year.

Council agreed to remove the outdoor recreation well and storage building. The Fire Department dress uniforms will be removed as the budget is very tight and currently there is nothing going on that they would require them right now. The Road Department budget line items were discussed. It was agreed to remove unknown miscellaneous items from a couple of accounts. A discussion was held as to whether or not the inspection of the bridges and large structures was required. It was explained to Council that every two years these structures are required to be inspected and currently we have the total of ten structures divided into five to be inspected each year. The cutting of the weeds along the sides of the roads was also discussed and whether or not it is required to be done. Mr. Johnson noted that there are areas that if they were not cut could become a safety issue. Council would like confirmation as to whether or not the Township is legally required to cut them each year.

Time being 10:30 p.m., as Council have previously discussed delaying the tax billings this year due to the COVID-19, Council agreed to end the meeting at this time and continue discussions at a next regular Council meeting. The Clerk-Treasurer will make the changes as agreed to so far, as well as continue to get more actual costs for the accounts we are still awaiting numbers on. Everyone was thanked for their participation in the budget meeting, and it was

1. Moved by Jerry Loan  
Seconded by W. Handy

**THAT THE BUDGET MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY ON MAY 25, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M. FROM THE MUNICIPAL OFFICE AND O'CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.  
TIME BEING: 10:30 P.M. Carried**

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Mayor

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Clerk-Treasurer