

King approves 2.59 per cent tax increase

By Angela Gismondi

Taxpayers will be looking at a modest increase this year.

King council approved the 2014 business plan and budget at its first meeting of the new year Monday.

The impact is a 2.59 per cent increase in property taxes for the Township's portion of the property tax bill. For an average home assessed at \$711,902, that means property owners will be paying \$61.18 more than the 2013 tax bill, which works out to about \$5.10 per month.

The Region of York approved its 2014 Budget with an increase of 1.54 per cent and assuming the provincial government remains neutral on the education tax rate, the blended tax increase would be 1.56 per cent. For an average home, in King Township, assessed at \$711,902, this translates into a \$108.84 property tax increase over 2013 levels or \$9.07 per month.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini was pleased to move the budget forward.

"Debt is decreasing, reserves are increasing and we're becoming more efficient," said Pellegrini. "I say it every year, I'm a citizen and I also pay taxes and I don't like when taxes go up but as long as it's used in a respectful and efficient manner, I'm delighted."

Councillor Bill Cober thanked staff for bringing the budget forward so early in the year.

"It's great that we're going to get out the door quickly because we've got some big projects," said Cober. "By concluding the budget process so early in the year, we're getting the best deal for our taxpayers."

Councillor Debbie Schaefer pointed out that if no program changes were made in the budget, the Township would be looking at an increase of less than one per cent.

"That's really remarkable and it speaks to the effort throughout the whole organization to find efficiencies," Schaefer said.

Township CAO Susan Plamondon pointed out that one per cent of the increase is directly related to contributions to the reserve funds. If those contributions were not made, there would have been no tax increase at all.

The business plan and budget was tabled at the Dec. 16 meeting. Since then Township staff added only one additional change to the capital budget prior to the adoption of the plan.

The engineering and public works requested the purchase of an additional 3/4-ton, 4X4 pickup truck in the amount of \$35,000 to be used for road patrol and minor snow removal. The vehicle will be funded through the development charge reserve thus there was no impact on the proposed tax increase for 2014.

The 2014 plan includes an operating budget with gross expenditures of \$28.3 million, a capital budget of \$7.89 million and a 10-year capital plan of \$69.9 million.

The draft budget also recommends program changes in the net amount of \$273,627. Some of the proposed new initiatives and enhancements include winter snow plowing staff, parks students for special events and beautification, a coordinator for marketing, sponsorships and events, building maintenance, program expansion, a Heritage Grant Program, a part-time finance clerk, asphalt maintenance and patching, winter maintenance standby, regulatory road sign inspection, clean-up day enhancement, a technical support analyst, gravel road and shoulder maintenance, a long-term financial plan, guide rails improvements, sidewalk replacement program, an economic development assistant and a preventive maintenance program for parks.

The budget includes capital projects in the amount of \$7.89 million. Some of the major capital projects (with gross expenditures of \$100,000 and greater) being proposed in 2014 are:

Church Street reconstruction (\$2.80M); Dufferin Street bridge (\$2.02M); watermain at Highway 27 at Parkview and King (\$370,000); Nobleton Pool retrofit (\$320,000); Laurier Park Splash Pad and various park improvements (\$310,000); Graham Bridge design work (\$280,000); purchase of a tandem dump truck and plow (\$200,000); purchase of single-axle dump truck (\$200,000); culvert 219 replacement (\$200,000); asset management program (\$130,000); water meter replacement program (\$120,000); purchase of a backhoe (\$100,000).