

Municipality of the District of Chester

HIGHLIGHTS

2017/18 Budget

DESCRIPTION

-) Council priorities emphasize enhanced levels of service, alternate revenue sources, economic and community development, and capital investment as areas of focus.
-) Budget supports these priorities by using long-term financial strategies, building capacity for growth through reserves and lessening debt burden, and investing in key capital projects.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOALS

Fiscal responsibility: Programs and decisions supporting our continued obligation to financial accountability and efficiency.

-) Develop a Debt Management Strategy (continued);
-) Develop an Investment Strategy (new);
-) Improve accountability, budget management, and internal controls by using a purchase order module (continued);
-) Review RFP criteria in the Procurement Policy;
-) Execute succession planning for two executive positions (new); and
-) Increase reserves (\$3.3 million transferred).

Improving municipal services: We want to meet the needs of citizens. In this year's budget, we have accounted for:

-) e-Post delivery of tax bills (continued);
-) Recertification to ISO 9001:2015 standards (continued);
-) Records management (continued);
-) Continued implementation of a safety program to reduce hours lost (continued);
-) Identification of services and levels of service to improve efficiencies and effectiveness (new);
-) Winter road maintenance improvements in the Village (new); and
-) VIC operation through contract (new).

Sufficient infrastructure availability: We are insuring the strength and availability of municipal infrastructure by:

-) Improving the delivery of public sewer use (continued);
 - o Infiltration and video/cleaning program
 - o Upgrades to Chester, Mill Cove, Western Shore and Otter Point systems
-) Upgrading the trail and trail bridges (continued);
-) Investing in a public space at the former Gold River/Western Shore School (new);
-) Constructing Cell 4A at Kaizer Meadow Landfill (new);

-) Conducting a Needs Assessment for a water supply in the Village of Chester (new);
-) Committing financially towards a broadband design (new);
-) Developing a strategy for a visitor information centre (new); and
-) Installing a fire protection system at our property in Mill Cove (continued).

Support for environmental, social, and cultural resources: We all want healthy communities, environmental stability, and opportunities for a better lifestyle. The Municipality working towards these choices by:

-) Continuing with the Municipal Plan Review to give opportunities for the public to shape their communities (continued);
-) Working towards an agreement for a wind generation project (continued);
-) Enacting a PACE By-Law so residents can borrow money to install efficient systems for their home (new);
-) Making community grants available (continued), including for Canada 150 community celebrations (new);
-) Exploring possible roles in affordable housing (continued);
-) Providing property tax rebates for those with low income (continued and increased);
-) Fundraising for PRO Kids (continued);
-) Water monitoring of Sherbrooke (new), Fox Point, and Spectacle Lakes (continued);
-) Assisting Fire Services with
 - o FIT gear (new)
 - o training grants (new)
-) Providing a tax exemption/reduction program to non-profits (continued); and
-) Exploring concept of New Ross Community School (new).

Leadership in public engagement and communications: The Municipality continues to invite public participation in key discussion areas. We will:

-) Refresh our website (new);
-) Develop a public participation program (continued); and
-) Continue to publish bimonthly newsletter (continued).

Economic prosperity: The Municipality continues to make economic prosperity a priority. If we want sustainability, we must attract viable business and productive citizens to our District. We plan to:

-) Make funds available for acquisition of land for a potential Business/Industrial Park;
-) Develop a Marketing Strategy for MODC and targeted marketing specific to Kaizer Meadows (continued);
-) Develop an Investment Readiness Profile (continued); and
-) Continue
 - o Participating in the South Shore REN
 - o Local Business Excellence Awards
 - o Initiatives with Economic Development Sponsorship grants
 - o Working with Sustane
 - o Business retention and expansion program

OTHER KEY HIGHLIGHTS

-) Residential/Resource tax rates increase by .02/\$100 to \$0.705/\$100;
-) Commercial tax rate holds at \$1.53/\$100;
-) All rates and fees remain the same, except
 - o Waste collection area rates are now \$0.10147 (increase of \$0.005/\$100)
 - o Universal Sewer Rate increases by \$50.00 to \$600 per EDU per year.
-) Operating budget is \$26,586.643;
-) Amount of capital projects is \$9.03 million (\$4.3 million funded by borrowing;
-) Rise in net expenditures of 5%;
-) Commercial and Residential tax rates are still among the lowest in Nova Scotia;
-) Wind Energy projects will generate an estimated \$1,382,752 gross in revenue;
-) A total of \$992,023 is forecast as the balance of Wind Revenue Reserve by the end of March 2018, and the total balance of all reserves will be \$12,879,789;
-) Reserves are many times designated for specific capital projects, such as landfill closure and sewer system upgrades; and
-) Wind Tower total costs are budgeted for \$659,857; and

PROVINCIAL STATISTICS

Mandatory contributions towards provincial services equal 63.44% of our general tax revenue or \$7.20 million;

) Education	\$ 4,645,558	<1% increase from last year
) RCMP	\$ 1,821,679	>3.97% increase from last year
) Corrections	\$ 234,641	<0.76% decrease from last year
) Assessment	\$ 340,514	no change from last year
) Library	\$ 70,437	2% increase from last year
) Housing Authority	\$ 20,000	no change from last year

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: It looks like the budget is less this year than last year but the tax rate still went up. Why?

A: We've presented the 2017-18 budget a little differently this year. In the past, we included "capital from revenue" with our expenditures. Capital from revenue is the amount that was designated to capital projects that was funded from reserves as well as the tax rate. ... it's an "accounting thing". Now we have completely separated Capital from Operating and any the only expense for capital we show in the operating budget is when we fund the project using the tax rate or an area rate.

Now that we have separated the two, you can see that our operating budget has actually increased 5% over last year.

Q: Why was the area rate for Solid Waste increased when you anticipate saving money in landfill costs now that Sustane is there?

A: First, the Solid Waste Rate covers expenses not only associated with landfill, but recycling, waste collection (curbside), and septage waste. Second, the Municipality is required to have enough money in reserves to cap their landfill cells that we have in place even if capping doesn't need to happen in the same fiscal year. Because capping a landfill cell costs a significant amount of money, we must put away some each year to cover that cost. One of the benefits of Sustane is that we will not be building anymore landfill cells, thus no more cells to close once we close the ones we have

Q: How much will a 2¢ rate increase be on my overall taxes?

A: A house that is assessed at \$300,000 in the Municipality Chester will pay an extra \$60 per year in residential property taxes and an extra \$15 in solid waste disposal area rates.

Q: Why does it seem like so many of the projects listed this year are the same as last year?

A: Many of the Municipality's operating and capital projects are ongoing (like records management and quality control) or multi-year projects (like the purchase order module). However, there were a few projects that didn't receive outside funding in time to complete last budget year or we just plain ran out of time during the "construction season". Those projects included some sewer upgrades and the Mill Cove Fire Protection System. All of those projects are set for completion this fiscal year.