



MEDIA RELEASE

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2021-22 Capital and Operating Budget

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MUNICIPALITY OF CHESTER – In a year of uncertainty, residents of the Municipality of Chester (MOC) can be sure of one thing: their property tax rate is not going up. At their May 13th meeting, Municipal Council approved the 2021-22 Operating Budget, and property tax rates for residential and commercial properties held steady for the fifth year in a row.

Several factors, such as general operating requirements and mandatory contributions to the Province, influence the expenditures of the Municipality, but none greater than the strategic priorities set earlier this year. Councillors met during several workshops to discuss the short- and long-term goals they and their constituents wish to achieve during their term in office.

These priorities reflect growth, investment, and service enhancements. Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and perhaps because of them, Council has approved strategic priorities that will see investments in municipal infrastructure, open spaces and active living solutions, and engage in long-term planning that will improve service delivery and provide opportunities for growth.

“The pandemic has certainly influenced this year’s budget,” says Allen Webber, Warden for the Municipality. “We have been, and continue to be, responsive to the needs of our non-profit organizations and our local businesses - both sectors critical to the health of our communities.” He continues, “But, we must also focus on post-pandemic planning, and that includes ensuring we prepare for and attract growth as well as maintain existing operations.”

Specific projects and programs supporting priority areas were highlighted in a presentation to Council during their meeting, infrastructure and economic development a focal point. Among projects to manage, maintain and improve municipal infrastructure, MOC plans to invest in developing a wastewater strategy for its central sewer systems, upgrading the leachate treatment plant and renovating the public drop-off at Kaizer Meadow.

Public infrastructure will get some attention with a washroom renovation at Wild Rose Park, upgrades to trail bridges, and wharf repairs. The Municipality will continue with their commitment to active transportation with sidewalk extensions in several areas and cost sharing paved shoulders to Highway #3 during provincial road upgrades.

2 2021-22 Budget Highlights

Economic development initiatives slated for this year are the development of a sector strategy as well as a concept plan for the EcoPark at Kaizer Meadow. The Municipality will also earmark funds to support high-speed Internet project along with Federal, Provincial, and private sector investments, implement a business park site assessment, and continue to promote MOC as a tourism destination.

Community investment remains strong with almost a half million dollars dedicated to grants to organizations, a financing program for home services put in place, development of a community wells piece in the Municipal Water Strategy, implementation of the Uniform Signage By-Law, and attention to Open Space planning and a traffic study for the Village of Chester.

MOC's partnership with NS Dept of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to rehabilitate J-class roads in the Municipality will continue to be a priority. Required contributions towards provincial services, such as education, housing, and corrections amounts to \$5.47 million. Municipal services provided by others, such as RCMP, libraries, provincial roads and assessment services totals \$2.58 million.

KEY BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- Operating Budget is \$28,270,935, excluding depreciation.
- Capital Budget is \$7,718,316.
- Residential/Resource tax rates hold at \$0.705/\$100.
- Commercial tax rate holds at \$1.53/\$100.
- Solid Waste rate holds at \$0.1205/\$100.
- Universal annual sewer charge increases to \$650 per EDU for future infrastructure costs
- Increase to reserves of \$1,449,000

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