



## **TOWN BUDGET PUBLIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **PARKS & RECREATION QUESTIONS**

#### **QUESTION**

- What is the cost of operating the one ice surface in 2022/23 season and how much of a deficit did the municipality end up with not including any revenue from board advertising or canteen sales?

#### **ANSWER**

- As the budget is created for a calendar year and not an arena season it would be extremely difficult to determine a cost of just the ice surface. Certain bills are associated with the whole facility and not arena specific. A detailed cost analysis will occur after one season of ice operations ahead of the 2025 budget process.

#### **QUESTION**

- What's the projected cost of operating two ice surfaces for the 2024-2025 season (just refrigeration)?

#### **ANSWER**

- The Town will have a better sense of operating costs after using the two ice surfaces for half a season. One of the recommendations from the Financial Services Review and Ma-te-Way Third Party Review is to have a financial analyst who has been hired to do detailed budget forecasting. New budgeting, financial and asset management software will be purchased in 2024.
- Budget is based on a calendar year and not arena season. All costs for the full building will need to be determined and then divided by square footage. This will be completed after a full year of use has been utilized to capture all expenses more accurately.

#### **QUESTION**

- With less than 10% of the population of Renfrew using ice surfaces in Renfrew, is Council planning to recover the full cost of operating from the user groups instead of expecting the 90% of non-using taxpayers to pay for the deficit of running these facilities.

#### **ANSWER**

- Recreation agreements with neighbouring Townships have expired and will have to be re-negotiated to increase cost recovery for recreation facilities. A review of usage by municipality will occur following a full-year of operation.

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## **TOWN BUDGET PUBLIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **QUESTION**

- With a \$17M debenture over 30-years to pay for construction cost overrun, how much interest will be paid during the lifespan of the facility?

### **ANSWER**

- The interest on the Ma-te-Way debenture is estimated at \$15M.
- The full cost of the debenture has not yet been determined.

### **QUESTION**

- What oversight put in place to monitor operating costs and further costs of the myFM Centre going forward and on an ongoing basis.

### **ANSWER**

- A Working Group was established with Council and staff to review the project mid-2023. Colliers was hired to assist with project management. With the addition of the financial analyst has added capacity in finance department for regular reporting and forecasting to Council, the public and senior management.

### **QUESTION**

- The Town holds \$360,000 designated for an Aquatic Centre. As well, there is \$160,000 held by the Ma-te-Way Aquatic Centre Development Project Corporation formerly the Ruth Burwell Fund. How much is going into reserves for a new aquatic centre?

### **ANSWER**

- The Town continues to hold these funds in reserves untouched. No additional contributions to reserves for an aquatic centre are planned in 2024. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be updated later this year which would speak to an aquatic centre and a long-range capital plan would also identify any future aquatic centre.

### **QUESTION**

- What's the plan in the lobby at the myFM Centre?

### **ANSWER**

- There's no change to the lobby proposed in the 2024 budget.

### **QUESTION**

- What happened to the fitness equipment from the Recreation Centre?



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### **ANSWER**

- The fitness equipment from the Recreation Centre was traded in as part of the procurement of the new equipment for the McGrimmon Fitness Centre with a \$10,000 credit.

### **QUESTION**

- What is the proposed timeline for the construction of an Aquatic Centre?

### **ANSWER**

- The Parks & Recreation Master Plan will address this matter. The plan is expected to be finalized later in 2024.

## **WATER & SEWER QUESTIONS**

### **QUESTION**

- How much is my water and sewer bill going up?

### **ANSWER**

- Approximately 2.5% based on recommendations outlined in the 2021 water study from Watson & Associates.

### **QUESTION**

- Why are water rates in Renfrew so high compared to neighbouring municipalities?

### **ANSWER**

- The Town of Renfrew has long-term debt repayments on the water and wastewater treatment plants. Water and sewer projects can't be funded through taxation.

### **QUESTION**

- What is the yearly contract amount for water and sewer?

### **ANSWER**

- In 2024 the water contract with OCWA is budgeted at \$1,064,661
- In 2024 the sewer or wastewater contract with OCWA is budgeted at \$1,212,918
- OCWA services include treatment (plants), distribution and collection (piped services).

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## **TOWN BUDGET PUBLIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **QUESTION**

- When I raised concerns about the water and sewer rates seeing an 11% tax increase, I was told we are only looking at a 2-3% rate increase?

### **ANSWER**

- Water and sewer rates have been increased according to the Watson Sewer/Water Study and will increase by 2.5 %in 2024 while the tax levy increase in 2024 will increase to 11.22%.

### **QUESTION**

- Is it true that the contractor doing the sewer and water is pushing for millions to be spent on upgrades or new pumping stations (O'Brien Road for one)?

### **ANSWER**

- Planned capital work for the water and wastewater systems are being proposed by staff to ensure future capacity for growth and to address lifecycle and asset management.

### **QUESTION**

- How many years did the Town sign into this contract for water and sewer at what percent yearly increase?

### **ANSWER**

- The agreement with OCWA is for a ten-year period. Costs are budgeted and confirmed annually. The OCWA contract was adopted by by-law and publicly available.

### **QUESTION**

- What is included in the water and sewer contract?

### **ANSWER**

- OCWA runs the Town's water and wastewater plants as well ad the collection and distribution systems.

## **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

### **QUESTION**

- What's the purpose of doing a budget if you're going to go over?



## **TOWN BUDGET PUBLIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **ANSWER**

- The municipal budget helps effectively manage and allocate financial resources to meet the needs and priorities of the Town of Renfrew. Projects are subject to competitive bidding processes and subject to market value. Regular financial performance reporting and forecasting will be implemented with the hire of the financial analyst role.

### **QUESTION**

- What would the increase be if contributions to reserves and operating costs were not reduced?

### **ANSWER**

- If contributions to reserves were not reduced the impact to the tax levy would be 14.07% with all the other savings that were completed in the 2024 budget process.

### **QUESTION**

- Is the tax levy increase artificially low?

### **ANSWER**

- The tax levy is set at 11.22% as Council re-allocated an additional \$400,000 to reserves. Contributions to reserve in 2024 are \$280,000 less than 2023, which will need to be addressed in future years.

### **QUESTION**

- With an 8.7% increase for staffing and only 2% cost of living increase, what's the remaining impact from?

### **ANSWER**

- Three new positions are being funded at the myFM Centre, the Town will assume operations of the McDougal Mill Museum including staffing, by-law enforcement is moving from contracted services to in-house, and additional staff have been added in the finance/treasury department based on recommendations from the Ma-te-Way Third Party Review and Financial Services Review.

### **QUESTION**

- How many years does the Town use their tandem dump trucks before they are replaced and are you replacing any dump trucks in 2024?



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### **ANSWER**

- No fleet will be replaced in 2024. A fleet policy will be developed to determine useful life, lifecycle replacement, and a 10-year capital plan.

### **QUESTION**

- How many additional staff have been added to the payroll during the last year or the coming year 2024 and what is their responsibility? Also, how many tax dollars are required to finance these positions?
- The Public Meeting presentation outlined new positions and changes in staffing.

### **QUESTION**

- What cuts were made from the original budget to get the present budget down from 28% to a 9.4% tax increase.

### **ANSWER**

- Contributions to reserves have been reduced. A number of other operating reductions were made to reflect more accurately the needs of the Town at this time. Council also approved a reduction of two full-time equivalents (second By-law Officer and Project Specialist).

### **QUESTION**

- How much did the Town spend on legal fees in 2023?

### **ANSWER**

- The legal fees for all departments are provided on the first page of the budget and listed under Account 064-031-3530.

### **QUESTION**

- Why did the Town budget \$500,000 in revenue from solar panels and only enter \$600?

### **ANSWER**

- In 2023 the budget for Solar Panel revenues was \$82,000 and the to date amount is \$61,480. The final numbers have not been confirmed yet as the year end adjustments have not been completed.



## **TOWN BUDGET PUBLIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **QUESTION**

- Was the Town invoiced over \$60,000 for upgrades to the sewer and water service truck by the contractor after they took it over?

### **ANSWER**

- Transition to OCWA from in-house resourcing is on-going. Two vehicles were transferred. Tools and other supplies are being repurposed and transferred to OCWA.

### **QUESTION**

- How has the furniture from Town Hall been disposed of?

### **ANSWER**

- Where possible, furniture was repurposed. Some furniture dated back to the 1970s and do not meet today's ergonomic and health & safety requirements. Certain furniture in poor condition were disposed of.

### **QUESTION**

- Where does the dollar value for CAO department fall in the budget?

### **ANSWER**

- **The CAO and the Clerk's department are all within the Clerk Administration budget.**

### **QUESTION**

- Why are the audit numbers \$0 in 2023?

### **ANSWER**

- The information is unaudited currently and the numbers that are presented are accurate, but certain invoices are still outstanding for 2023.

### **QUESTION**

- What can we live without this year to reduce the impact to taxpayers in Renfrew?

### **ANSWER**

- All departments have reviewed and adjusted according to the needs of the Town which resulted in a 16.28% decrease in the 2024 levy.

### **QUESTION**

- Why did staff development go from \$7,000 to \$23,000?



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### **ANSWER**

- As per the discussion at the February 21<sup>st</sup> meeting this was in reference to the Council staff development which is within the per councillor allotment to ensure Council are fully educated on topics that they may not be familiar with. This is dependent on what councillor is able to attend conferences or training during the year.

### **QUESTION**

- Why are shipping and mailing budgets over from \$500 to \$5,000?

### **ANSWER**

- The Office of the CAO and Town Clerk are now responsible for mailing out death registrations. Staff are looking at bulk mail options to reduce the amount of shipping required in 2024.

### **QUESTION**

- Why are publications and subscriptions going from \$500 to \$6,000?

### **ANSWER**

- There is more software required for staff to use in 2024 requiring subscriptions.

### **QUESTION**

- Who are the staff in the CAO office?

### **ANSWER**

- The Office of the CAO and Town Clerk is comprised of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Town Clerk, Executive Assistant and Communications & Engagement Coordinator. The number of staff is the same as 2023.

### **QUESTION**

- What is happening with the red Town of Renfrew Fire Chief truck?

### **ANSWER**

- The truck has been repurposed and will be used by the Town of Renfrew By-Law Officer.

### **QUESTION**

- What's the plan after the grant funding runs out for the Connection Centre?





## **TOWN BUDGET PUBLIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **ANSWER**

- The Connection Centre is operated under the Police Services Board and details will be provided to Council as information is made available.

### **QUESTION**

- Why are Council going to conferences and wasting money?

### **ANSWER**

- Members of Council attend conferences to meet with Ministers to discuss issues impacting Renfrew. The cost of attending conferences is covered in the Council remuneration.

### **QUESTION**

- Why is the Town spending money on master plans when former master plans have not been looked at?

### **ANSWER**

- Master plans help guide the work that staff do. A strategic plan was passed in 2023 to guide the Town of Renfrew over the next 10 years and completed by staff. Master plans support the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan. Detailed reviews were also undertaken for summer/winter maintenance, financial services and the Ma-te-Way expansion to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

### **QUESTION**

- Can any part of a debenture be pre-paid or are there penalties?

### **ANSWER**

- A debenture is locked in for the term and has been set up this way to ensure that municipalities can access lower than bank rates when borrowing for projects through Infrastructure Ontario. The Town has also inquired with the Minister of Finance about the new Ontario Infrastructure Bank.

### **QUESTION**

- What's the interest rate on the Ma-te-Way debenture?

### **ANSWER**

- The interest rate for a 30-year debenture is currently 4.83%. Staff are hoping to lock in at a lower rate when total construction is complete.



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## **TOWN BUDGET PUBLIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **QUESTION**

- Will the Mayor consider resigning his position to facilitate a fresh start?

### **ANSWER**

- The Mayor retains his statutory duties under Section 225 of the Municipal Act including representing the Municipality at official functions and presiding over Council meetings.

### **QUESTION**

- Why does Renfrew have such a high tax rate?

### **ANSWER**

- Within the County of Renfrew all the urban areas and most urban areas within Ontario have a higher tax rate as they provide more services such as infrastructure, facilities, and recreational activities. In larger areas the tax rates are offset by user fees for all extras provided by the municipality. A comparison within Renfrew County will occur prior to adoption of tax rates this spring.

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### **QUESTION**

- Does the budget include any HR claims?

### **ANSWER**

- The budget includes all HR costs associated with individual employment-related agreements and collective bargaining agreements.

### **QUESTION**

- What amounts have been paid by the Town in 2023 which are referable to former employees?



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## **TOWN BUDGET PUBLIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

- What amounts in the 2024 Budget are referable to payments to former employees?
- What is the Town's "two-year" payment policy for retired employees and when and how did it arise? Is it a policy or a form of settlement?
- Please identify the names and/or positions to which the above noted amounts relate.

### **ANSWER**

- By-Law 32-2017 speaks in Article 12 about continuity of employment with reference to the 24 months for the former Senior Management Team.
- Authorizing Agreement By-Laws were adopted in 2021 and early 2022 with the individual members of the former Senior Management Team. As noted in each of the by-laws, the agreements are confidential.
- In terms of 2023 and 2024 budgets, the following costs are included for senior management transition funded from the Unallocated Reserve: \$539,369 (2023) and \$519,068 (2024).