

## TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES BUDGET MEETING – JUNE 11, 2024

Minutes of the budget meeting held in the O'Connor Community Centre on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at 7 p.m.

Present: Mayor Vezina  
 Councillors: Crane, Rea, Sobolta, Torkkeli  
 Clerk-Treasurer Lorna Buob  
 Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Erin Laforest  
 Fire Chief Greg Biloski  
 Road Superintendent Kelly Johnson

Due to technical difficulties the Budget meeting was moved from Council Chambers to the O'Connor Community Centre.

Mayor Vezina called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

1. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
 Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING BE APPROVED.**

Carried

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

Mayor Vezina turned the meeting over to the Clerk-Treasurer to present the draft budget line by line. The Clerk-Treasurer explained the numbers as presented in the draft #1 budget and how the taxation revenue included in draft 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 2024 assessment values and the same tax rates used for the 2023 final billing. The assessment values have once again remained the same, with only slight increases for properties with improvements made to them and were picked up by Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC). The line items in 4020 and 4040, titled Taxation Arrears are the Education taxes for budget purposes and are not arrears.

The proposed amounts in the revenue accounts were explained. The Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) for 2024 is once again lower than the previous year, by \$3,700. The Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF) allocation for 2024 is also slightly lower than 2023 by approximately \$560. It was noted that the Ontario Community Infrastructure Funding (OCIF) for 2024 is again \$100,000. The Northern Ontario Resources Development Support Fund (NORDS) 2024 allocation has been reduced by the interest earned by the Township in 2023 on the portion of unspent monies from previous years, which has been saved for the bigger project on Loghrin Road. Any of the unspent revenue balances will be put into a deferred revenue account on the expense side of the budget. An Intern Deputy Treasurer position has been applied for but is not included in the budget as Council is attempting to move forward to hire sooner. Two summer students have been approved for this year, one for the roads and one for the office, and the revenue of 50% rebate has been included. The interest earned amount is lower than the 2023 budgeted amount as the interest earned in 2023 was put towards the program funding rather than the general fund. The Auditor did not recommend that this be done in the same manner for 2024. The transfer of deferred revenue amount includes the funding from the NORDS if Council agrees to move forward with construction in 2024, and a small amount from the ORNGE for helipad maintenance over and above the revenue to be received for 2024. The Other Revenue account includes an estimated amount of revenue for the disposal of the two garbage compactors at the disposal site.

The meeting continued with the review of the expenses for the Township. Council meeting expenses were discussed. The estimates for regular Council meetings are currently based on to-date expenses, as well as estimated full attendance at all upcoming meetings. The Conventions line includes the ones already attended and an estimate for one member of Council attend the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference in Ottawa in August.

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The Administration Salaries line includes the Clerk-Treasurer, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer, Administrative Assistant and an estimated amount for a new Deputy Treasurer if hired July 8, 2024.

The Clerk-Treasurer also explained the payroll costs associated with these salaries and the buyback of OMERS pension for an employee leave in 2023.

Under Conventions, Meetings and Training it was noted that the amount for two employees to attend a Municipal Finance 101 course was included.

The Clerk-Treasurer is still waiting for the actual breakdown for the insurance policy, so the pro-rated expense for all departments has been included in the line for Admin Bonds and Insurance account. Once the breakdown is calculated, it will be distributed into the proper accounts.

The Financial and Bank Charges line includes the annual interest on the loans for Truck #10 and the Garage Shop B construction.

The Administration Equipment and Software includes a new computer and backup system, as well as a new photocopier. The computer program maintenance fees for the tax and accounting program, and the Asset Management Program are also included.

The Building Repairs and Maintenance include the maintenance expenses of the water softener system and the accessible lift in the community centre. It also included the inspections of the fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and fire compression system.

The Outdoor Recreation area includes the repairs and painting of the rink boards.

The Protection and Services accounts were reviewed. The new Provincial Offences/By-law Enforcement Officer's training and wages are included. It also includes the Building Inspector expenses, cemetery and helipad.

The Sanitation/Disposal Site accounts were reviewed. The wages include the casual hours for a student's wage to help have the site cleaned up, Caretaker wages, as well as some time for Road Employees for the time spent there. The recycling expenses are no longer included as the recycling program has changed to where the producer must pay for recycling, not the consumer. There is fuel included for the rented excavator which was used in 2023 for digging last year's new hole. A new hole will also have to be dug in 2024. The Township is waiting for the results of the insurance company's decision regarding the recent fire of the compactor truck, and nothing has been budgeted at this time to replace it.

The Professional Fees, Joint Boards and Government Mandated Programs were also reviewed. As the new Police Services Board has currently not decided how they will split their budget expenses amongst members, the amount currently included in the budget is using their draft budget and dividing it equally amongst the members. This could be lowered if they decide to distribute by calls instead.

The Previous Year's Deficit is included under Other Items. The reserve allocations include the repayment to the Township's own reserves which were borrowed in the past to help offset some of the costs of purchases and repairs.

The meeting was then turned over to Fire Chief, Greg Biloski, to review the Fire Department's portion of the budget and explain any changes which have been made since the Fire Department draft #1, which was presented on April 8, 2024. He noted that there were no major changes made to the budget since that time. The Fire Department Capital items which were only noted at that time were now included in the budget. Fire Chief Biloski noted that he is still awaiting a price on used SCBA packs with masks. If they do become available, he is anticipating that they will be less expensive than what is currently budgeted.

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The meeting was then turned over to Mr. Kelly Johnson, Road Superintendent, to review the Road Department's portion of the budget and explain any changes which have been made since Road Department Budget draft #1, which was also presented on April 22, 2024.

Mr. Johnson informed Council that he has only made a couple of small changes. He has set the valves on the grader engine and the cost came in lower than was included in the draft budget, so that number has been adjusted to actual. He also noted that he has taken the wing cylinder in for repair and has increased the cost slightly from the draft budget on this item.

As the quotes have been received for the bridge and large structure inspections, the actual cost for this work has been updated. The weed cutting on the sides of the Township roads was discussed. Mr. Johnson highly recommends that it be done this year as it has not been done since 2021 and the brush and trees are starting to grow on the shoulders of the roads.

The Funding Program projects were discussed further. Tenders for Loghrin Road were opened at the June 10, 2024 Council meeting, and the amount from the lowest tender has now been included in the budget for Council to consider.

The Clerk-Treasurer noted that a copy of a report showing the available funds from NORDS, CCBF and OCIF was available on the table, as well as a copy of the 2024 Balance Sheet, showing the balances in the Deferred and Reserve Accounts.

The meeting was turned back to Council and they discussed the options to bring down the current deficit as presented in the draft budget. One of the items for discussion was the asphaltting of Loghrin Road. Council have been saving the funding from NORDS to resurface Loghrin Road, however the funding currently on hand would still not cover the full cost as received in the tenders at the June 10, 2024, Council meeting. Other funding options were considered including using CCBF funding, and the Levy Stabilization reserve, which could temporarily cover the 2025 Allocation of the NORDS funding. It was agreed that 1% of the budget increase would be to cover the additional costs of the project. It was also suggested that the Clerk-Treasurer send a letter to the two commercial businesses on Loghrin Road requesting a contribution equal to 1% of the total cost of the project. It was also suggested that the Clerk-Treasurer look into the possibility of increasing the Tax Ratios for the Commercial and Industrial classes. This will be looked into further.

Other lines items were also discussed and reduced. It was agreed that no one will attend the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference in Ottawa. It was agreed to delay the start date of the new Deputy Treasurer from the estimated date included in the budget by approximately six weeks. The Ditching and Brushing project amount will be lowered slightly. The Fire Department budget amount included for the SCBA equipment was lowered, as well as the number of new radios requested for the Fire Department was reduced. The new cartridge upgrade for air bottles cascade system will be put on hold for this year.

The repayment and transferring from reserves were discussed. The repayment of the Operating Reserve for the grader repair will not be made this year. Reserve transfers will be taken from the Municipal Building Reserve in the amount of \$2,900 for the replacement of garage lighting, the Fire Department Reserve \$10,000 for the used SCBA equipment, the Office Equipment Reserve for a new photocopier, computer and backup system in the amount of \$11,900, the Levy Stabilization, \$38,300 and CCBF \$60,838.42 for the Loghrin Road project. The 2025 NORDS allocation of funding will be put back into the reserves. The Working Fund \$5,000 and Operating Fund - \$5,000 for the Ditching and Brushing project, and \$5,000 from the Road Equipment Reserve to help offset part of the cost of a new riding lawnmower.

The bottom line of the budget was once again reviewed. An acceptable percentage tax increase was discussed.

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The Clerk-Treasurer will continue to look for savings amongst the line items and make the changes as required and bring the Final Budget back for Council's final approval, where the by-law to approve the tax rates and tax ratios will be presented.

Everyone was thanked for their participation in the budget meeting and it was

- 2. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by Brendan Rea

**THAT THE BUDGET MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON JUNE 24, 2024 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE O'CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.**

**TIME BEING: 10:03 P.M.**

Carried

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Mayor

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Clerk-Treasurer