

Town's 2016 capital budget to focus on road, equipment and bridge repair

By **Melanie Hennessey**
Special to The IFP

The Town is looking to dish out almost \$13 million next year in capital expenses on everything from road repairs to new snow plows.

The municipality's 2016 capital budget was endorsed by the budget review committee last week and will be up for council approval at the end of the month.

The \$12.7-million budget will fund the cost of building and renewing municipal facilities and infrastructure. Reserves are a major source of funding for capital projects, along with development charges.

"I think it's a very financially viable budget for 2016 to fully fund the capital program," said Town Commissioner of Finance and Treasurer Ed DeSousa.

A report from the Town's top number crunchers shows the majority of the budget— \$8.9 million— is devoted to the Planning and Infrastructure department.

That amount contains the five biggest expenses of the capital budget:

- \$2.3 million for road resurfacing on: Rexway Dr., Gibbons Pl., Crombie Pl., Terry Ct., Heslop Cres., Dale Gt., McIntyre Cres., Delma Ct., Norton Cres. and Garnet Dr.
- \$1.2 million for equipment replacement, including two new snow plows, a back hoe and variety of lawn mowers
- \$990,000 for bridge rehabilitation on Tenth Line, north of 22 Sideroad
- \$750,000 for culvert replacement on Fifth Line, south of Five Sideroad
- \$650,000 for Churchill Rd. resurfacing from Queen St., north to the Acton urban boundary.

The budget also devotes \$72,000 to council, \$190,000 to the CAO's office, \$246,000 to the fire department, \$406,000 to libraries, \$415,000 to the finance department and \$2.6 million to community and corporate services, which

will be used to upgrade facilities, sports fields, play equipment and trails.



The budget committee made one slight change to next year's program by removing the proposed \$75,000 Barber Mill land use study.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said he and his council colleagues felt the study was premature as there's currently a conceptual plan for the

property in the hands of planning staff.

"We thought we would wait and see how far it goes," he said.

Studies that will be funded next year include a Cedarvale Community Centre feasibility study, truck traffic strategy and post-2031 intensification opportunities study, along with updates to the Town's long-range financial plan, library services strategic plan and development charges bylaw.

The committee also endorsed the 2017-2025 capital program forecast in the amount of \$128 million. The forecast will be subject to annual review.

Next up for review is the operating budget, which will be on the committee's agenda at its Dec. 7 meeting.

The proposed \$42-million operating budget would result in a tax levy increase of 3.9 per cent, consisting of a base budget increase of 3.3 per cent and dedicated fire services levy of 0.6 per cent. This would translate into an additional

\$60 for the average Halton Hills home assessed at \$400,000.

Paired with the Region's potential tax increase of 2.3 per cent, or \$28, and a typical homeowner could be paying an extra \$88 in taxes next year.

Pressures on the Halton Hills operating budget include an additional \$1.2 million needed for staff compensation adjustments, a seven per cent increase in Hydro charges for facilities totaling \$124,400 and an insurance premium hike of \$111,000 due to inflation and higher claims settlements.

Operating budgets are largely funded by tax dollars and cover everything from the cost of running facilities like arenas to staff salaries.

Council will consider the capital budget at its Nov. 30 meeting and the operating budget at its Dec. 14 session. The budget documents are available at www.haltonhills.ca within the budget review committee agendas.

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