

Town Council approves 1.61 per cent tax increase

After months of work, they're calling it a budget.

Oakville's Town Council voted to approve the Town's Operating and Capital budgets, Monday evening during a Town hall meeting that saw the approval of the hard-fought plan.

As things stand now, the Town is looking at an operating budget of \$205.8 million and a capital budget totalling \$118.4 million with \$125.7 million required from the tax levy.

This translates into a 1.61 per cent jump in property taxes or \$16.50 per \$100,000 of assessment or \$66 per

\$400,000 of assessment.

The 2010 budget for Halton Region calling for a zero per cent property tax increase was approved yesterday.

The proposed municipal budget initially called for a 2.1 per cent increase, but this was dropped to a 1.35 per cent increase as a result of higher-than-forecast assessment growth.

The total was further amended to a 1.61 per cent increase after the committee decided to strike down a proposed transit fare increase that would have trimmed \$225,000 from the budget.

Budget committee members also added

\$12,000 to the budget by reinstating the Oakville Galleries' capital grant for art collection.

Other add-ons included loose leaf pick up for the Glen Abbey, River Oaks and Clearview communities at a cost of \$74,900, additional funding for hot-mix paving at \$250,000 and traffic-calming measures for Postmaster Drive and Eighth Line at a cost of \$75,000.

Funds from the capital budget will also go towards 2009 commitments, such as \$15 million for the new transit facility; \$13.3 million for the new North Park quad pad; \$12 million for the QEP Community Centre; and \$16.4 million for expansion of road capacity.

"We received very valuable input from our residents throughout the budget process with a common theme asking us to deliver value for the taxes paid. This is reflected in Council's decision to accelerate our hot-mix paving program and set a goal of reducing the percentage of roads with poor pavement quality to zero by

2021," said Councillor Tom Adams, chair of the 2010 Budget Committee.

"Our performance-based, program-based budgeting process is geared to ensuring we target spending to measurable outcomes."

The budget was not without its opponents with area resident John Scheel accusing the municipal government of wasteful spending.

"The Economic Development Department, that's a new thing in Oakville," said Scheel.

"We're a bedroom community, 10 per cent of our taxes come from industry. People move here with cars, we sleep here. We don't need an Economic Development Department. There's real estate agents trying like hell to fix the problems here and fill the empty buildings that we've got on the North and South Service roads all over the place."

For more information on the 2010 Budget, visit www.oakville.ca

— Story by David Lea, Oakville

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