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"We are faced with no funding source for community pandemic recovery."

City decides against refund of 2019 surplus, will keep for reserves

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By a unanimous vote, council endorsed a report from senior staff that recommended against the return to taxpayers of the \$3 million surplus from the 2019 budget in the form of a tax rebate.

Council instead endorsed a proposal that the money be put into corporate reserves for pandemic recovery and support.

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Director of corporate services Jennifer Stover suggested that after study, an across-the-board tax refund “would not be a good use of the money.”

“It is simply too little,” Stover said, “Depending upon your property you could receive a refund anywhere between 50 cents to \$200 (as the refund would be pro-rated to property value).”

“At the same time we are faced with no funding source for community pandemic recovery,” Stover said.

“If funds were put into a corporate reserve those funds would be available for whatever initiatives council sees fit in the future,” Stover proposed.

Councillor Tracy Richardson supported the staff proposal saying that her neighbours have told her that the money needs to be put where it can be used to benefit the city collectively.

Councillor Ron Ashmore, while supporting the basic idea proposed by staff, hoped that the bulk of the funds would be spent on roads and infrastructure right across the city.

“My constituents want to see a reinvestment in roads and infrastructure,” Ashmore said, with each ward benefitting equally from this budget surplus windfall.

While Mayor Andy Letham did not disagree with Ashmore, he reminded the ward 6 councillor that infrastructure improvements will be part of the recovery package, and unless the councillor has specific roads in mind, the money can sit in corporate reserves until specific projects are suggested at a later date.

Deputy Mayor Patrick O'Reilly supported the mayor saying, “We can come back and look at roads when we normally do in the spring.”

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