

Where the Town will spend your money in 2007

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Staff Writer

Halton Hills council approved the 2007 Town's operating budget of \$22,327,200 at Monday's meeting.

Among the highlights were:

- Taxes will go up by \$50 for the average household with a home assessed at \$300,000 in 2007.
- That represents a 5.4 per cent increase over last year's budget.
- It includes a 2.1 per cent increase over

the base budget, 2 per cent dedicated solely to the pavement management plan, and 1.3 per cent for the hiring of four full-time firefighters.

- Combined with the Region tax hike, and education taxes, which remain at the 2006 level, the tax increase for the average Halton Hills taxpayer is 2.7 per cent (\$82). "It (the total increase) is coming under the rate of inflation," said Mayor Rick Bonnette, citing 3 per cent used as the rate of inflation.
- A taxpayer with a home assessed at \$300,000 will pay \$3,074 in taxes—\$980 for

town services, \$1,302 for regional services (including police) and \$792 for education.

- Budget committee also approved the 2007 capital budget of \$11.1 million and a 2008-2016 capital forecast of \$91.6 million.
- Assessment growth in 2007 is anticipated to be 3.6 per cent, generating about \$850,000 in extra taxes for the Town. In 2006, it was 4.4 per cent.
- Bonnette complained about the cost of programs mandated by the province and their affect on municipal taxes.

"We're more or less backed into a corner.

We've seen some of the budget items that were approved which are downloading from the Province," he said,

Some of the items included the hiring of a finance analyst (\$65,000) to deal with a provincially-mandated accounting standards and \$500,000 for computer software to implement it.

• Committee did cut \$61,600—mainly in office supplies, public relation accounts and hours for part-time firefighters.

Below is a further breakdown of where tax dollars will go in 2007:

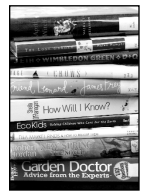


FIRE SERVICE

• Acting Fire Chief John Martin assured committee members that a 4 per cent reduction in the overall hours of the part-time firefighting force will not jeopardize the safety of residents. The \$34,000 reduction equates to about 900 hours or 10 hours per part-time firefighter.

LIBRARY

• Once again, Halton Hills Public Library Board's request for funding (\$69,000) for Monday openings was overlooked. A survey of library patrons revealed that 95 per cent want Monday openings.



However, the hiring of a part-time administrative assistant for the library was approved (\$20,200).

RECREATION

• A \$35,000 donation from HHORBA (Halton Hills Off Road Bicycling Association) was added to a \$72,000 budget to build a BMX Challenge Park, a specially designed area to provide challenge bicycle riding for youth. A future report will formalize the location and scope of the project.

• \$181,000 was included for the Gordon Alcott Arena glass and boards to be replaced by a new metal/glass system. It will put the arena out of commission for six to eight weeks in the off-ice season this year.

• The Recreation and Parks Department also included \$500,000 for future property acquisition for park or facility development. Amounts of \$310,000 each were included in the 2008 and 2010 capital forecast and \$415,000 in the 2012 forecast.

"In reviewing what we already know to be potential property acquisitions in the ensuing year, the CAO (Dennis Perlin) felt it would be better to provide an actual allowance—not listing the details for obvious reasons," said Director of Recreation and Parks Terry Alyman. However, on the Recreation and Park's unfunded 2007 wish list totalling \$57 million is \$1.6 million allocated to the purchase of land for a new arena.

• Budget committee refused staff-recommended cuts that involved closing the Dick Licata Outdoor Pool for the month of August and closing the summer washroom facilities at the Georgetown Fairgrounds and Acton's Prospect Park



and replacing them with portable toilets. Total savings would have been \$34,000.

Ward 2 Councillor Bryan Lewis referred to it as "an intimidation list" as though the Recreation and Parks Department was daring councillors to cut these services for the public. But Director of Recreation and Parks Terry Alyman explained that the revenue generating programs are interdependent on expenditures programs and it's difficult to cut one without affecting another.

• \$590,000 was included for the neglected Trafalgar Rd. Sports Park after the Georgetown Slopitch League donated \$100,000 to build a baseball diamond. Funding of \$500,000 was removed last year after local groups did not donate any money. Another \$38,000 was allocated to determine the feasibility for an alternative sports field irrigation system at the park.

PARKS/TRAILS

• Budget committee approved \$137,500 in extras for the Engineering and Public Works Department, including more cash for roads and parks maintenance, walkway lighting, school crossing guard hours at the Miller/Eaton intersection, regional Natural Green initiative, stormwater pond maintenance and Fairy Lake geese population control.

• \$82,000 was added to provide an asphalt pathway, lighting, shade trees and sod at the Dominion Gardens Park. Plus, \$35,000 was included for refurbishment of bleachers, player benches, soccer goal and baseball outfield fence at the Fairgrounds and Prospect Park. Other parks, slated for work, include Meadowglen/Sundale, off Mountainview Rd. N. and Meadowlark Park in the Miller/Main area and Barber Mill Dr.

• \$93,000 was included for trail development, about 2 kilometres, likely in Hungry Hollow in Georgetown. Ward 4 Councillor Bob Inglis asked that a trail from Oak St. across a swale to Silvercreek School be considered.



ROADS/SIDEWALKS

• Ward 2 Councillor Joan Robson's bid to get a sidewalk built on Confederation Rd. from Bishop Court to Main St. was referred for review for inclusion in the 2008 capital budget with construction, if approved, about 2010. The \$750,000 sidewalk, which Robson deems necessary for pedestrian safety, is high due to hilly topography of the road and its current rural nature.

• Budget committee also kept the Glen Williams Transportation Plan study (\$25,000) in the 2008 capital budget forecast, despite a plea from Wayne Van Hinte of the Glen Williams Community Association to move the "overdue" study

forward to the 2007 capital budget. He said the Glen has become the bypass for Hwy. 7 traffic and there is a need to do the plan before the scheduled Wildwood Rd. reconstruction in 2008.

But Director of Engineering, Public Works and Building Services Rick Henry said due to the number of projects on the schedule this year staff would be unable to do the study even if it was moved forward. One of those projects is an update of the 1985 Master Transportation Study for \$88,000.

• Road work this year includes Main St. Georgetown; Main St. S. Acton; Vimy St., Acton; Tenth Line (from River Dr. to 20 Sideroad), Halton Hills Dr. at the Bennett

Gallery, Third Line from Five to 10 Sideroads and Glen Lawson Rd. from Third to Fourth Lines and a multi-use path from Eighth to Ninth Lines. Gravel resurfacing will also be done on Clayhill Rd.

• Under the pavement management program, streets that will be worked on are primarily in Ward 4: Langstone Cres., Gower Rd., Faludon Dr., Comset Gate, Torino Gate, Marilyn Cres., Gray Gate, Campbell Gate and Prince Charles Dr., Alcott Dr., Hyde Park Dr., part of Moore Park Cres., Ewing St., Market St. (between Church and Mill Sts.), Chapel St., Morris St. and portions of College and John Sts. A total of \$1.4 million is being spent this year on the pavement management program.


SENIORS

• The Georgetown Seniors Centre's request to lower its rent contribution (\$14,500) equaling Acton Seniors Centre's contribution, and to add \$3,700 to hire students for setup and cleanup of programs and events was approved. However, the budget committee did not approve the Georgetown Centre's request for extra hours for its administrative assistant (\$12,300) or the Acton Centre's request for extra hours for its co-ordinator (\$11,500).



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