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A Metroland Community Newspaper Vol. 141 No. 3 Friday, March 24, 2000 48 Pages \$1.00 (GST included)

Up close

Knuckles, a little filly that was born just 14 days ago, gets to know Vanessa Jacobs of The Ranch on Burnhamthorpe Road. The birth is a sure sign of spring.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE



Town budget proposes tax freeze

Best budget in years: Challinor

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

An operating budget that delivers enhanced services along with a tax freeze passed easily at the Town's administration and finance meeting Tuesday night.

For the first time, the budget showed the effects of new growth on Town coffers. That amounted to an estimated \$93,000 in new building permit revenues.

But it also means the Town will have to shell out for numerous human resource positions to the tune

of \$800,000 in order to tackle the increasing population.

Legal fees dealing with development plans are expected to eat up another chunk of the budget.

"This budget is clearly showing we're not preparing for growth anymore," commented committee chair Wally Hunter. "We're starting to see the impacts."

That thought was echoed by Town treasurer Jim McQueen.

"This is a growth-related budget," he said.

"It's not an easy budget to put together when you're dealing with a growth scenario that you haven't had

to deal with for a long time."

Included in the \$8.7 million budget is three full-time fire fighting positions. That helped swell budget expenditures to \$19.9 million — or a 16 per cent increase over last year. But that's balanced by a projected 31 per cent hike in non-property tax revenues, leading to the \$8.7 million figure.

Overall, the average urban owner of a \$185,000 home can expect to pay \$583 in property taxes this year, while the rural owner of the same priced home should pony up \$535.

But a final tax bylaw won't be drawn up until May, when the extent of potential provincial grants will be known.

"We'll wait until May to announce

the tax bylaw in case the Province pulls a few surprises out of their hats," said Mr. McQueen.

Despite those uncertainties, the 2000 budget is a conservative document, said Town CAO Mario Belvedere.

For example, some slot machine cash and revenues stemming from the Town's decision to retain Milton Hydro as a business haven't been factored into the budget.

Overall, the budget was lauded by Mayor Gord Krantz, a sentiment that was seconded by councillor John Challinor. "I think it's the best budget document I've seen in the last nine years on council."

The budget will head to council for approval Monday.

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