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Stouffville budget will see taxpayers dig \$15 deeper for operations, roads

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

Whitchurch-Stouffville council this week approved a three per cent tax hike for 1993 - an increase officials say is necessary to repair and maintain deteriorating roads.

"We'll remember you at election time," yelled one angry resident after a recorded vote clinched the increase.

"Cowards" another man mumbled to officials who voted in favor of the three per cent hike.

During the most raucous council meeting in more than four years, local officials approved the hike in a two-part vote: one per cent for operations and an additional two per cent for road repairs to be undertaken this year.

The decision comes after

months of in-house debate - and one eagerly anticipated by the fast-growing Save Our Stouffville (SOS) ratepayers' group, which has actively lobbied the town and other government agencies for fiscal restraint.

Officials are blaming rural road deterioration and unexpected snow removal costs for this year's hike, but there was no mention of the proposed fire truck purchase or the \$133,000

slated this year for staff salaries.

Mayor Fran Sainsbury said after the meeting the fire truck will likely go to tender this year and be delivered next year if council decides to purchase it. Therefore, she said, taxpayers will not "feel any debt" from the purchase until 1994.

The mayor side-stepped the salary increase issue, saying the money this year has been

"built into the big budget," the details of which would be available during a press conference, April 21, she said.

What it means

Because of the increase, the town's 4,500 ratepayers will now owe an additional \$15.20 on their 1993 municipal tax bill portion, or a four-cent-a-day hike, based on an average household assessment of (Please See 'Taxpayer' Page 3)

Meeting a 'fiasco', says Wells

The town's budget meeting Tuesday night was a complete "fiasco," and one which left ratepayers confused and disconcerted, said Save Our Stouffville (SOS) chairman, Marion Wells.

Wells said she was ashamed and appalled at the way local politicians handled the meeting, in which officials passed a three per cent municipal tax hike for 1993.

"These are supposed to be professional people and I felt the council was very fragmented," Wells said.

She added a "surprising" two-part vote - one which initially passed a one per cent tax hike; the other which later approved an additional two per cent increase for roads - astonished her, she said.

"I was dumfounded - I don't understand why they did that," Wells said.

She said the budget process is set up to "try to manipulate" the ratepayer - counting on the average person not understanding how it works and shading the real issues behind closed doors. SOS members had earlier told officials they would not be

(Please See 'SOS' Page 3)



Analysis

Audience thrilled by political drama

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

He could have sold tickets, the drama was so profound.

Ward 6 councillor Ken Prentice took advantage of Tuesday's three-per-cent-increase budget decision to vent frustrations against the town, its staff and its policies - clinching - as it appeared

was his intention - at least 50 votes for the '94 municipal election.

His 'ying for the mayor's seat' rhetoric was just what the audience ordered, and a juicy addition to an otherwise grey topic.

Stouffville's frugal councillor offered ratepayers a heaping helping of upstaged political rivalry and conflict, and won rounds of applause for his

(Please See 'Prentice' Page 3)

What they said

Finance Director Ed Blackburn

"There were a lot of areas where we had no control, like increased garbage costs, and department heads worked very hard to reduce budgets by 10 per cent. We were not able to achieve that, but many areas were brought down considerably and substantially reduced."

Mayor Fran Sainsbury

"It was a very long, arduous process and we did state a zero per cent increase was a one-shot deal."

"Council deliberated. Everyone has their own opinion - it's a democratic society."

Ward 6 - Ken Prentice

"Where will the money come from wage increases?"
"I'd like the treasury department to come in at 10 per cent less like everyone else."

Ward 4 - Cliff Dunkeld

"During the last 10 years some of our rural roads have become really impassable. We are a rural community and roads are a vital necessity."

Ward 2 - Stephen Bellerby

"I think a three per cent increase represents a good compromise for our short-term objective, and that is to protect the millions of dollars we have invested in assets, such as roads."

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