



SUN-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Money for the design of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library/Leisure Centre expansion is in the 2013 budget. Construction is expected to occur in 2016 and 2017.

Problems with sewage system at town operations centre

Budget passed: Average tax hike \$75 per home

BY SANDRA BOLAN
sbolan@yrmg.com

Your tax bill will increase by an average of \$75 this year, Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Council passed a 2.9-per-cent hike Tuesday, which is down one per cent, or \$21, from what was proposed back in February when the draft budget was released.

The \$75 increase is based on a Whitchurch-Stouffville home assessed at \$575,000.

"I'm in favour of what we've accomplished," said Mayor Wayne Emmerson, at the end of deliberations, which lasted about four hours.

Some of the expenditures slashed from the budget include the fire department's 100-foot aerial truck and the library's organizational staffing study.

Both items were pushed to future years.

The fire truck was going to cost an estimated \$1.125 million, while the library's study was estimated at \$20,000.

Also pulled from the 2013 budget was \$750,000 for the construction of multi-purpose space in the town hall and \$282,500 for street lights in the Ninth Line/Elm Road north area.

"It's a good budget ... compared to some other ones," Mr. Emmerson said.

This is the second year in a row taxes have increased by 2.9 per cent. In 2011 it was 3 per cent and in 2010, 3.5 per cent.

The 2013 operating budget is \$54.5 million. The capital budget was approved at

\$14 million, which includes money to fund a joint concept design for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library/Leisure Centre expansion.

The next phase will be the detailed design, which is slated for 2015, with construction expected to occur in 2016 and 2017.

"We keep talking about an expansion of the library, but we're really dealing with a redevelopment," said Councillor Ken Ferdinands.

Due to the transfer or delay of some capital projects, along with an increase in pit fill fees, 2012 ended with a surplus of more than \$1 million.

Although a new council will be at the helm of the library/leisure centre project "I cannot see anyone coming in here in a year-and-a-half putting the brakes on the expansion," said Councillor Rob Hargrave.

Some of the major projects taking place this year include Memorial Park's enhancement, which includes a new skateboard park; refurbishing of the track and tennis courts; the Ninth Line jog elimination, which is being done in partnership with York Region and town hall is being renovated to accommo-

date the York Regional Police's sub-station.

Due to the transfer or delay of some capital projects, along with an increase in pit fill fees, 2012 ended with a surplus of more than \$1 million.

"It's a healthy surplus," Marc Pourvahidi, the town's treasurer and director told The Sun-Tribune yesterday.

The money was applied to the town's reserves, as per stipulations set out by a municipal bylaw.

However, not all departments ended the year in the black.

Despite the board's promise to break even in 2012, the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment - Nineteen on the Park's operating revenue actually fell short by \$35,212, which was covered by the town.

"We need to do better in filling those seats," Harry French, chairperson of the facility's board of directors, told council.

Single ticket sales for the professional series' events dropped last year to 1,461 from a high of 1,591 in 2011.

Community event bookings have steadily risen since 2010, which had 35. In 2011, it was up to 47 bookings and there were 70 in 2012.

The budget also included an unexpected \$67,000 expense for the \$10.7-million operations centre, which opened on Bethesda Road in 2010.

Its septic system's tanks and tile bed are experiencing ground water infiltration due

to a high ground water table.

"Just a phenomenon that turns out to be bad luck," said Paul Whitehouse, director of public works for the town.

The budget initially had \$70,000 earmarked for the septic system's repair. Now, because the tile bed has to be relocated, septic tanks raised, a sub-drain system installed and the tank pumped out, the repair is estimated to cost \$137,000. That also includes contingency and consultant contract administration fees.

Geotechnical studies were done on the site, prior to the design being completed, which indicated a higher water table. That information was provided to the consultant who designed the facility, according to Dave Cash, CAO of the town.

"We are currently in discussions with the company hired to do that so I can't discuss that point anymore," Mr. Cash told The Sun-Tribune yesterday.

Council voted to increase their public relations budget from \$35,000 to \$40,000 and their miscellaneous expenses from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Miscellaneous council expenses had a \$10,000 budget in 2012. A little more than \$6,000 was used. This year's draft budget had it down to \$2,000.

According to Mr. Pourvahidi, the line item used to contain council's membership to AMO. That expense now has its own line item.

SAVE UP TO **\$38** ON YOUR NEXT GROCERY BILL!

Check out this week's money saving deals from our team of experts

flyerland.ca



Just a few of our featured advertisers



Sign up for free e-Offers and get the inside scoop on the best flyer deals!