



**CORPORATION OF THE
TOWNSHIP OF ESQUIMALT**
Minutes - Draft
Council

Municipal Hall
1229 Esquimalt Road
Esquimalt, B.C. V9A 3P1

Monday, March 3, 2025

6:30 PM

Esquimalt Council Chambers

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL RECONVENES AT 7:00 PM
WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

Present: 6 - Mayor Barbara Desjardins
Councillor Ken Armour
Councillor Andrea Boardman
Councillor Duncan Cavens
Councillor Jacob Helliwell
Councillor Tim Morrison

Staff: Dan Horan, Chief Administrative Officer
Deb Hopkins, Director of Corporate Services/Corporate Officer
Bill Brown, Director of Development Services
Joel Clary, Director of Engineering & Public Works
Steve Knoke, Director of Parks & Recreation
Vicki Gannon, Director of HR & Community Relations
Matt Furlot, Fire Chief
Terése Finegan, Manager of Economic Development
Jonah Ross, Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Desjardins called the Regular Council meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

**I. RESOLUTION TO CLOSE THE MEETING PURSUANT TO
SECTION 90 OF THE COMMUNITY CHARTER**

Moved by Councillor Cavens, seconded by Councillor Boardman:
That pursuant to Section 90 (1) (k) of the Community Charter, the meeting be closed to the general public to discuss negotiations and related discussions respecting the proposed provision of a municipal service that are at their preliminary stages and that, in the view of the council, could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the municipality if they were held in public. Carried Unanimously.

II. CLOSED MEETING

**III. RECONVENE THE REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL AT
7:00 PM WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

Moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Boardman: That the Regular Meeting of Council be reconvened at 7:00 PM. Carried Unanimously.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

1) [25-076](#) Late Correspondence

Item 5.2 - 2025 Draft Budget

- Kristina Egyed - received March 2, 2025

- Mark Eraut - received March 2, 2025

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councillor Armour acknowledged we are on the unceded territory of the Songhees and Kosapsum Nations. We thank them for caring for this land and look forward to continuing to work with them in partnership as we continue to build this township together.

Moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Boardman: That the agenda be approved as circulated with the inclusion of the late items. Carried Unanimously.

4. PUBLIC INPUT ON AGENDA ITEMS 5, 6, AND 7

Mark Eraut, Acting President of the Esquimalt Chamber of Commerce, expressed concern regarding the impacts of proposed property tax rate increases on local business owners, and reductions to the economic development budget. Businesses contribute to the tax base, and the Township's Economic Development programs help promote viability for businesses.

Matt Bass, resident, expressed appreciation for the tax rate reduction scenarios, and acknowledged the challenging tradeoffs between asset management and financial planning. Concerns were raised regarding the need for sufficient funding among key asset management projects to mitigate accumulation of financial burden over time.

James Myers, resident, noted that property tax increases in the last 4 years have been reasonable given increasing costs, but that the initial proposed tax rate increase is high when compared to others across the region, province, and country. In light of projected capital costs, a projection of future property taxes would help with planning, and with oversight of financial management.

Holly Courtright, non-resident, spoke against reducing funding for Economic Development programs, the South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP), and emergency services, and expressed support for maintaining funding for

Police and Library services. The Township was slow to implement an economic development portfolio, and funding should be increased to promote a thriving local economy. SIPP provides crucial programs and research for municipalities, and completing the 5-year engagement with the organization is preferred. Emergency Services staff are depended on in the community, and cannot afford to be diminished when demands are increasing.

Meagan Brame, resident, noted that the provision of budget options are appreciated for discussion, and expressed concern regarding the deferral of expenses to subsequent years and potential loss of important budget items. While the initial proposal of a 14.44% tax rate increase is high, 10% could be too low given the list of items which are not easily removed; priorities are safety, infrastructure, proactivity, and economic development to promote a healthy, thriving community.

5. STAFF REPORTS

- 1) [25-067](#) Garbage Truck - Contract Award, Staff Report No. EPW-25-004

The Director of Engineering & Public Works introduced the report.

Council provided the following comments:

- Additional short-term cost will bring long-term benefits of improved mobility for trucks.
- Addressing safety issues is supportable.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Cavens: That Council award a contract to Rollins Machinery Ltd. in the amount of \$650,565 (excluding GST) for a cab over garbage truck, as described in Staff Report EPW-25-004. Carried Unanimously.

- 2) [25-069](#) 2025 Draft Budget

The Director of Financial Services & IT presented a PowerPoint, and an overview of options presented as part of the 2025 budget. Staff responded to questions regarding future budget forecasting, the budget scenario options, staffing requests, and levels of service. The CAO noted that the scenarios were created according to Council's direction, and do not indicate staff's comfort with the deferrals in each scenario.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council direct that no additional staff be hired for the coming fiscal year.

Council comments included:

- There is a need to reduce costs where possible to make property tax rate increases more manageable for residents and businesses.

- Until work on service level reviews is complete, it is difficult to know the impacts of decisions on staffing requests; if service levels and Council Priorities projects must be reduced to accommodate deferred positions, this is acceptable.
- Funding infrastructure reserve contributions is a priority to manage long-term tax burden.
- Costs associated with requested positions for 2025 will form part of core budget in subsequent years, and have a compounding effect on budget pressures.
- Challenges staff are facing as a result of current levels of service are of concern; should all requested positions be denied, expectations and projects will need to be reduced and levels of service will need to be reviewed.
- Broader political and economic uncertainty will have implications for individuals, businesses, and the Township, and demand pause.

The motion was then put, and Carried Unanimously.

Staff responded to Council questions regarding the Victoria Esquimalt Police Board's staffing and Late Night Task Force budget requests.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council deny the funding requests by the Victoria Esquimalt Police Board for 7 additional staff positions and for the Late Night Task Force and weekend patrols.

Council provided the following comments:

- There is concern that the requested positions may not be of sufficient benefit to the Township.
- Requested budget reflects more complex needs of a large capital city, and previous requests deemed essential have been overturned through section 27 appeal.
- VicPD's work in the community is appreciated, but Esquimalt is in a challenging position due to the shared services structure, and the lack of support from other municipalities which lean on VicPD.

The motion was then put, and Carried Unanimously.

The Regular Council meeting recessed at 8:28 PM and reconvened at 8:35 PM with all members of Council present.

Moved by Councillor Boardman, seconded by Councillor Armour: That Council defer funding of Administration staff furniture of \$3,000. Carried Unanimously.

Staff responded to Council questions regarding funding for South Island Prosperity Partnership, noting that the scenarios presented are options for Council's consideration and not recommendations from staff.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Cavens: That Council:

1. Continue to fund South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP) for 2025; and
2. Direct staff to review and examine the benefits of SIPP membership for the Township.

Council provided the following comments:

- Given that the Township has added a Manager of Economic Development since beginning its term with SIPP, the possibility of overlap is of concern.
- Relationship-building through SIPP provides opportunities to promote economic development in the Township, and generate revenue for the community.
- Approval of funding for 2025 allows the Manager of Economic Development opportunity to provide insight needed for subsequent review of SIPP funding.

The motion was then put, and Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council approve of the following Economic Development supplemental requests

- \$3,500 for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software
- \$5,000 for Sustainability Audits
- \$5,000 for the Shop Local program; and
- \$10,000 for the Economic Reconciliation program.

Council provided the following comments:

- CRM Software and Sustainability item amounts are small, and economic development programs help increase revenue.
- Re-inclusion of the CRM Software and Sustainability items, which were identified by staff for removal, may be of concern.

Moved by Councillor Boardman, seconded by Councillor Armour: That the main motion be amended to remove the CRM Software and Sustainability Audits. Carried Unanimously.

MAIN MOTION AS AMENDED: That Council approve of the following Economic Development supplemental requests

- \$5,000 for the Shop Local program; and
- \$10,000 for the Economic Reconciliation program.

Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council approve the \$50,000 Bylaw After Hours Service supplemental request.

Council provided the following comments:

- After-hours bylaw enforcement has been raised as a major issue by residents.

- When the upcoming report on this initiative is received, Council will have opportunity for reconsideration with full information.
- Cost is worthwhile to provide enforcement of parking and noise complaints after-hours.
- Potential for cost-recovery available through after-hours enforcement is of interest.

The motion was then put, and Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Cavens, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That the \$50,000 Active Transportation Plan Priorities Refresh supplemental request be approved.

Council provided the following comments:

- Revisiting priorities and spending within current economic environment will also allow for re-assessment of the project's direction and timeline.
- Should the Phase II project be deferred, a review will be needed to provide residents with a plan to establish priorities.

Staff responded to questions from Council regarding opportunities for ongoing modification and re-assessment of the Active Transportation Plan (ATP), and the work to be included in the proposed ATP Priorities Refresh.

Council comments included:

- A renewed public engagement initiative may not reveal any changes from previous findings; it may be more cost-effective for Council to meet with staff to better understand the project, and discuss alternatives.
- Initial round of public engagement was pre-pandemic, and not satisfactory for some; the latest Phase II engagement improved upon this, and further engagement using the improved process may be beneficial.
- There is concern that further engagement is needed with residents in multifamily buildings, and having an additional Council discussion could be of benefit regardless of this funding decision.

In response to a question from Council, staff confirmed that consultant support is needed to update the ATP Priorities document, and that implementation will be a challenge without the additional requested Project Manager position; as such, further direction from Council will be needed in order to prioritize work on this project.

Council comments continued:

- Foregoing the renewed public engagement may be acceptable given the level of feedback Council has already received.
- Given the need for further direction from Council, revisiting this initiative at a Committee of the Whole meeting is supportable.

The motion was then put, and Defeated by the following vote:

In 1 - Councillor Cavens

Favour:

Opposed: 5 - Mayor Desjardins, Councillor Armour, Councillor Boardman, Councillor Helliwell, and Councillor Morrison

Staff responded to questions regarding the Pavement Condition Assessment & Management Plan supplemental request, and staff resources required for the initiative.

Moved by Councillor Armour, Seconded by Councillor Cavens: That Council approve the \$50,000 Pavement Condition Assessment & Management Plan supplemental request.

Council provided the following comments:

- State of roads and pavement infrastructure are a visible indicator of a municipality's effectiveness.
- This initiative is an important part of the broader Asset Management Plan.
- Pavement maintenance is a priority for many residents.

The motion was then put, and Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Cavens, seconded by Councillor Boardman: That Council approve the \$10,000 Short Term Rental Options supplemental request.

Council provided the following comments:

- Recent legislative changes have increased demand for implementation of this project.
- Approval of requested funding will help expedite determination of policy options for Short Term Rentals, and alleviate the burden on staff receiving related inquiries.

The motion was then put, and Carried Unanimously

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Helliwell: That Council deny the \$75,000 Affordable Housing Strategy supplemental request.

Staff responded to Council questions regarding the work involved in the Affordable Housing Strategy initiative.

Council provided the following comments:

- Cost of housing in the Township is lower compared to other jurisdictions in the region.
- Council previously expressed interest in revisiting this initiative in the context of the budget process, and given the uncertainty that this initiative

will produce viable options.

- Affordable housing has been discussed at length and broadly supported, but Council's decision to not fund additional requested staff means that this project will impact levels of service and other projects.
- Should funding not be approved at this time, Council will have opportunities to revisit the initiative as part of future Council Priorities discussions.
- The Township's lower housing costs should be considered within context of lower income levels.
- Delaying the initiative further may prevent Council from taking action before the end of this term.

The Director of Finance & IT clarified that denial of this funding request would not reduce taxation as the cost is offset by grant funding.

Staff responded to questions regarding staff capacity for the Affordable Housing Strategy project.

Council comments continued:

- Options for affordable housing seem to depend on partnerships with other organizations, and there may be more cost-effective ways to develop these opportunities.
- Given that the request is offset by grant funding and will require time to action, approval at this time is supportable.
- While it is not certain that there are options for the Township to improve housing affordability through this initiative, other municipalities have had success through similar work, and even small improvements are of value.

The motion was then put, and Defeated by the following vote:

In Favour: 2 - Mayor Desjardins, and Councillor Armour

Opposed: 4 - Councillor Boardman, Councillor Cavens, Councillor Helliwell, and Councillor Morrison

Moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Cavens: That Council approve the \$5,000 Public Art Beautification Projects supplemental request.

In response to a question from Council, staff clarified that the amount is to support creative place-making, and can be used flexibly to provide funding for an art project in the Township, or to apply for grants.

The motion was then put, and Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Mayor Desjardins, seconded by Councillor Armour: That Council approve the \$2,700 Archives Walking Tour Brochures supplemental request.

Council comments included:

- Public feedback is overwhelmingly positive, and demand is high as the maps are helpful for residents and visitors alike.

The motion was then put, and Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Cavens: That the Regular Council meeting be recessed at 10:27 PM. Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Armour: That the Regular Meeting of Council held on March 3, 2025, be reconvened at 7:00 PM on March 4, 2025. Carried Unanimously.

The Mayor confirmed with staff that a motion was needed to articulate the decision made on the Victoria Esquimalt Police Board budget from the Regular Council meeting held on March 3, 2025 and the rationale behind that decision.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council direct that a letter be sent to the Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board and copied to the City of Victoria advising of Esquimalt Council's resolution to reduce the budget increase by not providing funding for the seven additional requested staff members and the late night great night patrols.

Council discussed rationale for inclusion in the letter. The Mayor advised that she would prepare the letter and accept Council comments for inclusion in the rationale to reduce the budget request.

In response to a question from Council on contingency funds, the Director of Finance informed Council that reducing the contingency fund under \$250,000 would be considered a risk.

Moved by Councillor Armour and seconded by Councillor Cavens: That Council increase the annual infrastructure reserve contributions by 0.5% to 2%.

Council commented that raising the infrastructure funding from 1.5% to 2% is supportable because Township residents will face considerable tax increases in order to fund improvements in the future, if the contribution does not begin now.

Moved by Councillor Cavens and seconded by Councillor Boardman: That the motion be amended to increase the infrastructure reserve contributions by 0.71% instead of 0.5%.

Council comments included:

- Taxing our residents for an increase in the reserve fund for projects that will not be achieved in 2025 is unnecessary.
- The Township should not operate a pay as you go service. If the reserve is not built up now the tax increases will be faced in the future.

The Amendment to the Main Motion was then put and DEFEATED, with Mayor Desjardins and Councillors Morrison and Helliwell Opposed.

Council discussion continued:

- Council attempted to lower the tax rate to a reasonable amount yesterday, but this amendment would make it less reasonable. It is hard for tax payers to afford increases during this uncertain time with the United States tariffs.
- As a responsible Council we need to think of future residents and not be short sighted.
- In hindsight the decisions that Council made yesterday were very dramatic and Council should push to improve staffing and capital.
- Infrastructure is a core municipal service which requires funding and needs to be sustainable. Any additional amount that can be saved now will go to support the infrastructure.
- The reports provided by staff on the amount of funding required to maintain our assets supports the responsible decision to increase funding and ensure that the infrastructure for our growing community is sustained.

The MAIN MOTION "That Council increase the annual infrastructure reserve contributions by 0.5% to 2%." was then put and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Director of Engineering and Public Works and the Director of Parks and Recreation responded to questions from Council on the subject of Capital Projects.

Moved by Councillor Helliwell and seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council direct staff to put a temporary hold on further design work on the Kinver/Swinford sidewalk for the completion of the Active Transportation Network Plan refresh and subsequent Council discussion to determine the project's priority level.

Council comments included:

- Kinver is a heavily used pedestrian street that does not have a lot of vehicle traffic.
- The Nelson Constance corridor has the elderly and children walking in the middle of the street. With the Townships increased densification, sidewalks should be placed where they are needed.

- The Kinver sidewalk project should not go ahead without Council looking at other projects on pedestrian routes. Council's options should remain open prior to making a decision on where the funding should be allocated.
- There is concern that the pause in the project would mean that no sidewalks would be installed this year as the summer season will be lost.
- The motion is supportable as there may be more logical sidewalk project alternatives, regardless of timelines.
- Kinver may have been chosen for this project when there were more vehicles in the area due to the Old English Inn construction.
- The priority areas should be where multi family homes are being developed and to provide pedestrian corridors to transit.

The MOTION was then put and CARRIED with Councillor Cavens Opposed.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Cavens: That Council direct staff to include Council's feedback on the 2025 budget and prepare the tax rates and financial plan bylaws for consideration. Carried Unanimously.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

For Council's Consideration

- 1) [25-070](#) E-mail dated February 21, 2025 from Michael Bloomfield, Harmony Foundation of Canada Re: Proposed life-affirming, community-building, and compassionate resolution

This item was received.

7. NOTICE OF MOTION

- 1) [25-065](#) Request to the BC Minister of Education and Child Care for a Greater Victoria School District 61 Task Force for consideration of SD 61 Board of Education electoral reform - Councillor Morrison

Councillor Morrison introduced the Notice of Motion to Council and commented that there is a disconnect between the Greater Victoria District School Board and the communities that it represents. The Trustee Electoral Area election model has been implemented in the majority of other regions of B.C. and provides for a fair, equitable and connected school board. By making this request for change, the Township will be a leader in good governance.

Moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Boardman:
WHEREAS the vast majority of B.C. School Districts that serve multiple municipalities have implemented a Trustee Electoral Area election

model whereby local communities each separately elect their own School Trustee representative(s) to help optimize fair and equitable school board representation among the various municipalities,

AND WHEREAS Part 4 – Division 1 – Section 30 of the BC School Act grants authority to the Minister of Education to approve and implement a more fair and equitable Trustee Electoral Area election model for electing school board trustees,

AND WHEREAS the previously elected Greater Victoria School District 61 Board of Education has now been terminated, and a new Board of Education will not be elected until October 2026,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Township of Esquimalt ask the Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care, to direct School District 61 to create an inclusive and collaborative task force to consider a Trustee Electoral Area election model for the Minister's ultimate consideration of approval for implementation in time for the 2026 Local Government/Board of Education elections.

AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township of Esquimalt author letters to School District 61 official trustee Sherri Bell, the City of Victoria, District of Saanich, District of Oak Bay, Town of View Royal, District of Highlands, the Songhees Nation and Kosapsum (Esquimalt) Nation, as well as area MLAs within School District 61 to inform them of the Township's request to the Minister of Education and Child Care. Carried Unanimously.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no public comment.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Desjardins commented that this had been a difficult budget process and showed gratitude toward staff for providing the required information for Council's consideration. Council recognizes that there is uncertainty for our country at the moment with the United States tariffs and felt that, although challenging, it was the time to hold back on the staff recommended tax increase.

Moved by Councillor Boardman, seconded by Councillor Cavens: That the meeting of Council be adjourned at 8:22 PM. Carried Unanimously.

MAYOR BARBARA DESJARDINS

THIS DAY OF , 2025

DEB HOPKINS,
CORPORATE OFFICER
CERTIFIED CORRECT