



CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF ESQUIMALT

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

Minutes - Draft

Council

Monday, February 3, 2025

6:00 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
Jonah Ross, Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Desjardins called the Regular Council meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

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

Moved by Councillor Helliwell, seconded by Councillor Cavens:
That pursuant to Section 90 (1) (k) and (m) 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; and, a matter that, under another enactment, is
such that the public may be excluded from the meeting. 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 Helliwell:
That the Regular Meeting of Council be reconvened at 7:00 PM.
Carried Unanimously.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

There were no late items.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Desjardins acknowledged that we are gathered on ləkʷəŋən territory, and proud to fly their flags in recognition of their territory, and highlighted Council's commitment to building strong and enduring relationships with our neighbouring First Nations governments, the Kosapsun Nation and Songhees Nation.

Moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Boardman: That the agenda be approved as circulated. Carried Unanimously.

4. BYLAWS FOR ADOPTION OR FIRST AND SECOND READING THAT ARE SUBJECT TO A PUBLIC HEARING

For Adoption

- 1) [25-053](#) Adoption of Fees and Charges (Miscellaneous) Bylaw, 2019, No. 2961, Amendment Bylaw, 2025, No. 3150, Staff Memo No. ADM-25-011

Moved by Councillor Helliwell, seconded by Councillor Cavens: That Council adopt Fees and Charges (Miscellaneous) Bylaw 2019, No. 2961, Amendment Bylaw, 2025, No. 3150. Carried Unanimously.

5. PUBLIC INPUT ON AGENDA ITEMS 6 AND 7

Item 6.1) - 2025 Local Grant Allocations, Staff Report FIN-25-003

Ali Gaul, President of the Victoria Shakespeare Society, expressed concern regarding the Committee's recommendation to deny all but one of the submitted local grant applications, and encouraged Council to consider all grant applications. Bringing the Bard Across the Bridge show to Esquimalt demands significant time and energy from the Society each year, but is worthwhile due to the community's high interest and appreciation, where the organization sees its highest uptake of free children's tickets.

6. STAFF REPORTS

- 1) [25-045](#) 2025 Local Grant Allocations, Staff Report FIN-25-003

The Director of Finance introduced the Local Grant Committee's recommendations to Council, and the Committee members provided an overview of their considerations.

Council comments included:

- Appreciation for the hard work done by applicant organizations, and the strong applications submitted.
- Available funding is acknowledged, but the Committee prioritized focus on the 17 organizations already receiving funding, with addition of Theatre Al Dente through discussions.
- The Committee's recommendation was informed by careful consideration of each application.
- All budget line items demand reconsideration within context of proposed property tax increase, including items which have been more easily approvable in past years.
- Despite budget pressures faced by the Township, reallocation of available grant funds will transfer pressure to community organizations who do good work for the community and completed the application process.
- Changing grant application criteria to allow comparison between various sectors or categories may be beneficial.
- Available Local Grant funds are not significant within the broader budget, but reconsidering their allocation is an important symbolic step to demonstrate Council's commitment to reducing the proposed property tax rate increase for 2025.

In response to a Council question, the Director of Finance clarified that unallocated grant funds can remain in the Local Grant account for consideration of future requests, and would then be moved to surplus if unused. In order for funds to be moved to general revenue for use towards a tax rate reduction, Council can direct staff to reduce the account balance by the desired amount.

Moved by Councillor Helliwell, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council allocate \$3,400 to Theatre Al Dente for the 2025 fiscal year. Defeated with Mayor Desjardins, and Councillors Armour, and Helliwell opposed.

In Favour: 3 - Councillor Cavens, Councillor Helliwell, and Councillor Morrison

Opposed: 3 - Mayor Desjardins, Councillor Armour, and Councillor Boardman

Council comments continued:

- Demonstrating Council's commitment to reducing proposed property tax rates is a priority.
- Community organizations are able to bring applications forward at any time, and Council retains the ability to approve funding requests directly from general revenue if the remaining Local Grant account balance is reduced to zero

- Encouraging groups to apply outside of typical grant cycle introduces additional challenge of assessing applications on an individual basis as they are received.
- Factors beyond Council's control have resulted in greater economic unpredictability, and demand special consideration of funding requests; future years' Local Grant allocations will be available should the situation improve.

Moved by Councillor Helliwell, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council direct staff to reduce the Local Grant funding by \$21,500 for 2025. Carried by the following vote:

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

Opposed: 1 - Councillor Cavens

2) [25-052](#) Budget Discussion - 2025-2029 5-Year Financial Plan Staffing and Supplementals, Staff Memo No. ADM-25-10

The CAO introduced the report, and provided a summary of staff considerations in developing the workforce plans and staffing proposals within the broader budget.

The CAO provided the following responses to Council questions:

- Council has full priority to provide direction at any point in the budget discussion, and staff are available to respond to questions and provide clarification given the complexity of the materials.
- Through careful tracking, and depending on work being done, wages and salary can be funded through multiple or varying sources.
- Staff can return with a full program inventory which includes a 2023 staffing baseline and list of positions added since that time.
- Supplemental requests are fundamentally optional, but are required to meet current levels of service endorsed by Council.
- Historically strict approach to funding new positions means that operational budgets are already lean, and requests do not come forward unless they are required to directly meet level of service and Council Priorities.
- Capital Plan discussion is scheduled for the February 24 Council meeting.

The CAO and Fire Chief provided the following responses to Council questions:

- 2023 approval of 4 additional Fire Fighter positions addressed short-term overtime challenges, and additional positions requested for 2025-2028 are necessary to meet level of service demands.

- Fire Inspector position requested for 2025 is to help meet increasing inspection demands required by the Fire Safety Act; 3 Firefighter positions requested for 2025, and 1 for 2026, are to adequately staff current service level.
- Esquimalt is a full service fire department, and BC requires a minimum of 6 positions to meet requirements from WorkSafe, Office of the Fire Commissioner, and our own declared service level.
- FTE requests for 2025 and 2026 are to meet requirements as full-service fire department.
- High-density development is not driving Fire Department staffing requests, but remains an ever-increasing risk factor with high demands on the number of staff required for response.
- Esquimalt's population (20,000) puts the Township at the minimum threshold for a full-service department; the next benchmark for additional engines is 40,000.
- Mutual aid agreement is an integral part of service delivery; the Township can provide initial response unsupported, but larger crews for more significant fire events are only achieved through mutual aid; this is typical across southern Vancouver Island.
- Though inspection fees can offset costs for the proposed Inspector position, they are intended to promote compliance and not serve as revenue generation.
- Education and training opportunities have been prioritized in the change to a 24-hour shift model; capacity for inspections increased as well, but challenges persist as buildings being inspected operate with daytime business hours.
- Inspector position has been funded through use of reallocated overtime budget temporarily, and requires more sustainable funding for 2025.
- Comparison with other communities can be provided in a future report; other communities of a similar size to Esquimalt have composite departments, comprised of volunteer and career firefighters.

The CAO noted that across the Township's operations, some levels of service are established according to legislative or regulatory requirements for safety, or lifespan and maintenance of assets, while others are more ambiguous, and may require further discussion to determine impacts of funding decisions.

Staff provided the following responses to Council questions:

- Requested Planner III position will remain necessary when existing vacancies have been filled due to the significant volume of Council Priorities projects and land-use applications; the volume of complex work demands the level of position requested.
- Current complement of administrative support staff is lean and at capacity across departments, such that a re-organization of duties would not reduce need for requested additions.
- Administrative support capacity must be sufficient to meet regulatory requirements; currently there is a reliance on overtime at the management level to achieve compliance, and a reduction of expectations in other areas will be needed if capacity is not expanded.
- CAO has worked with all departments to review and monitor service levels, and request for additional Development Services staff reflects best professional assessment.
- Two existing Planner II positions are currently vacant, and reflect demands of complex land-use applications and Council Priorities Plan projects which cannot be met by lower level positions.
- Timelines for processing land-use applications are highly variable, but typically average around 4 months with a full staff complement; current vacancies mean that applications in-progress face significant delays.
- Implications of not funding requests for 2025 will vary depending on whether they are being delayed to a future year; staff can return with further information regarding potential impacts of unfunded positions.

The Regular Council meeting recessed at 8:41 PM, and reconvened at 8:47 PM with all members of Council present.

The CAO and Director of Engineering and Public Works provided the following responses to Council questions:

- Office space planning will depend on positions approved; short term planning has occurred, and next steps could include a long-term analysis of Municipal Hall footprint which accounts for long-term personnel plans.
- Proposed Project Manager position is to help alleviate workload related to Active Transportation Plan, the Capital Asset Renewal and Asset Management Plans, and pressures from the number of large development projects entering construction phase.
- Whether positions are funded through capital or operating budgets varies

depending on the work they will do, and takes into account multi-year growth planning to account for potential shifts in capital funding or development trends.

- Development-driven demand for utility and frontage work is already increasing, and where requests exceed staff capacity, work is to be completed by developers; connection of new builds to existing utilities and drainage infrastructure will continue to be completed by the Township as the primary maintainer of those assets.
- Pump station service work for View Royal continues, and is provided for by an agreement between the two municipalities; while no easy alternatives to this arrangement have been identified, staff from both municipalities continue to be engaged in discussions.
- Township's practice of collecting payment for property taxes together with utilities can pose public relations challenges when this distinction is not articulated in tax rate comparisons, but allows residents over the age of 55 to defer payment to the following year; when the utilities are separated, only property taxes can be deferred.

The Director of Human Resources and Community Relations provided the following responses to Council questions:

- All administrative support staff are at capacity such that re-organization would not yield increased efficiencies.
- Impact of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) coordinator on premiums cannot be predicted due to variability of WorkSafe premiums, but it is generally expected that expanding OHS capacity will improve safety and return-to-work plans, with impacts on expenditures to be seen.
- Directors have been consulted to develop a Municipal Hall workspace plan that can accommodate the requested positions.

The Director of Corporate Services provided the following responses to Council questions:

- Committee Coordinator position was approved for 2024, and the position has been filled; in addition to duties relating to Council's Advisory Committees, the position backfills for the EA to Mayor & CAO, and provides important support on special projects including Council's Accessibility Plan, the Capital West Accessibility Advisory Committee, and the 2025 By-Election.
- Council Clerk position requested for 2025 provides capacity to address a backlog of Privacy Impact Assessments which delay implementation of projects across the organization, and addresses unsustainable levels of

overtime currently worked by department leadership.

- Benefits and efficiencies of proposed Council Clerk position are lost if the position is a shared resource.
- Quantifying the amount of work downloaded to the Township from upper levels of government is a challenge due to the high variability in volume and nature of Corporate Services work; recurring tasks and projects are unpredictable, and meeting daily requirements is a challenge.

Council provided the following comments:

- Proposals articulated by staff are understood as necessary; however, there is a need to reduce the proposed property tax rate.
- It is acknowledged that unfunded requests may result in delayed or reduced Council Priorities Projects, and will have similar implications for operational levels of service.
- Producing options for tax rate reductions, including potential reductions of projects and service levels is of interest.
- More specific understanding regarding potential risks and impacts of funding decisions is needed for Council to signal intentions for single and multi-year funding.
- Recently announced tariffs from the United States, and other ongoing developments have changed context for budget discussions.
- Exploring opportunities to increase revenue in Parks and Recreation is of interest.
- Intent is to allow for options within 0.5% of targeted rate.

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Morrison: That Council direct staff to develop options to target a tax increase of 9.68% comprised of: 6.68% for identified budget constraints, 1.5% increase in infrastructure reserve contributions and 1.5% increase in combination of staffing requests and supplemental service requests. Carried Unanimously.

7. REPORTS / MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES

- 1) [25-051](#) Draft Minutes of the Local Grant Committee meeting held on January 20, 2025.

This item was received.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no public input.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Councillor Armour, seconded by Councillor Helliwell: That the Regular Council meeting be adjourned at 10:04 PM. Carried Unanimously.

MAYOR BARBARA DESJARDINS

THIS TH DAY OF, 2025

DEB HOPKINS,
CORPORATE OFFICER
CERTIFIED CORRECT