

Comments and questions from Highlight's Document and Proposed Budget

1. The town is appealing the NSPI assessment and \$100,000 has been allocated in the budget under tax appeal. Is the town working with the other communities that have been negatively affected by the decrease in NSPI assessments? Could we not lessen the financial burden of an appeal by pooling resources?
2. The Highlights document has not put any expectation of success in the future years; however, the budget has allocated \$100,000 in legal fees to appeal the assessment. If the town is expecting to spend that amount of money this year, then some conservative measure of success should be reflected in the future years' income, otherwise don't bother spending the appeal money. Perhaps since the appeal is an expense this year with the expectation of increased grant in future years, the \$100,000 should either be wholly or partially taken from the planned reserves for the 2009/2010 year. Would this be considered by Council?
3. There are a number of items in the budget where services are contracted. Are these services tendered and are we getting the best possible price? Could you please provide the total consulting fees for the 2002/2003 budget and a breakdown of how these services were used?
4. Could you please advise if the engineering consulting fees in the proposed budget of \$45,000 include engineering fees for capital projects?
5. The budget shows consulting fees general in the amount of \$4,680. Could you please advise what this might relate to?
6. The Highlights document indicates that Council plans to reduce expenses; however in reviewing the budget, Town Administration has not reduced any expenses, but has increased its expense.
 - a. There is a total of \$9,400 allocated for travel/conference
 - b. There is a total of \$10,150 allocated for courses/training (includes Public Works)
 - c. There is a total of \$1,010 allocated for staff bonuses
 - d. There is a 3% increase each year in staff salaries

During these difficult economic times, many organizations and governments have frozen or reduced salaries or staff positions, temporality suspended travel and ceased bonuses. Has Council considered this?

7. The town is proposing an increase to commercial tax from 3.05 to 3.50, representing a 14.75% increase. The document compares the commercial tax revenue received by the town in the budget year 2002/2003. It reflects a 4% increase in commercial tax revenue and it is referenced that this is due to the loss of the Business Occupancy tax. This comparison of monies does not reflect the increase in revenue that the town now receives with the NSPI grant that was 1/3 less in 2002/2003. Could you please provide the total town revenue from 2002/2003 compared to what will be received in 2009/2010? Although the NSPI money is in the form of a grant in lieu it is still based on the assessment of a commercial property.

8. Could you please provide the number of new residential properties since 2002/2003 and the total amount of tax revenue these new properties have contributed?
9. Could you please provide a copy of the budget for the tax year of 2002/2003?
10. The budget has a line item of \$5,000 for police recruitment on an annual basis. Does council feel that we will have staff turnover in the department each year?
11. The budget has separate sections relative to town maintenance, Public Works, Sewer, Snow /Ice removal, and water, which has expenses at various percentages. It is difficult to determine the actual cost including salaries. Could a roll up of expenses relating to the administration be provided?
12. The budget has a line for Public Works Training at 60% in the amount of \$3,000. Could you please provide an explanation on what type of training this would be for and if it is mandated at some level?
13. Public works is granted a clothing allowance. Is this mandated?
14. The budget shows several line items for the Kubota and the backhoe, including fuel, labour, insurance and parts. Has there been any consideration to contracting these services on an as needed basis to determine if there would be a cost saving?
15. The Highlights document states there will be no reduction in economic development. Please provide more detail on the planned activities and expenditures related to economic development?
16. The Highlights document states, "The Attractions Group, Annapolis District Board of Trade and the Annapolis Region Tourism Council will be taking on the lead role in marketing. Some funding will be provided to the group for 2009-2010 only. The Town will be focusing on economic development, management of the Visitor Information Centre, support for community initiatives, grant application writing, and website maintenance." There is a line item in the budget for a Town Marketing employee in the amount of \$25,461. It is currently understood that this position will be assigned to the administration of the VIC for five months of the year. Because the town administration has indicated that they are not going to focus on marketing, can you please explain why the budget shows a year long salary?
17. If the town is no longer allocating any budget money to marketing after this year, could you please advise how you will help to stimulate economic growth in the tourism sector; currently the biggest economic generator for the Town?
18. The Recreation budget shows total expense of \$78,965 with revenue of \$14,500 representing a cost to the town of \$64,465. Could you please provide a detail of services that are provided? Where measurable, could you please provide a breakdown between use by town residents and tax payers versus use by county residents?

19. Could you please explain the line item "Buy a Share of AR" in the amount of \$1,500.00?
20. Many of the town hall expenses are shown at 65%. Could you please advise where the other 35% of expenses are found in the budget? Would it be possible to provide the actual town hall expenses?
There is a line item for Landscape in the amount of \$3,500.00, but the funds for gardening services have been reduced to 0. Can you please advise why there would be funds for landscape but no funds for gardening services?
21. Our town welcomes many visitors over the summer months and the town has taken great pride to ensure that the flowers and gardens in our town help increase the beauty. The town invested a considerable amount of effort in past years and last year won the International Award for Communities in Bloom, this proposed budget shows a nil amount. Would Council consider any investment in the gardens of our town in this budget year?
22. There is a line item for Communities in Bloom marketing; with no further funding for gardening, what will this money be used for?
23. Could you please explain the services associated with Animal control expenses in the amount of \$800.00?
24. Could you advise if the \$6000 budget item to the Friends of the Pool Society is a gift in kind or a loan to the society?
25. There is a line item in the budget for Election Expenses in the amount of \$1500.00. Why would this be budgeted in a non-election year?
26. There is an increase in the amount of Legal Fees from last year's budget and the budgeted amount this year is \$25,000 that is separate from the appeal legal fees. Could you please advise why this is such a substantial amount?
27. There are a number of items relating to UNSM. Has council considered the benefits of this membership against the cost?
28. The budget amount to Wayne Snow for collections in the amount of \$5000 is an annual budget amount. Is this a task that could be performed by our own finance department?
29. There is a line item in the amount of \$50,000 representing repairs to Town Hall. Could you please advise if these repairs must all take place in the 2009/2010 budget year and what they are?
30. The budget shows IT Services in the amount of \$5,000 Could you please provide a breakdown on what services this includes?

31. Town Hall cleaning expenses at 65% are an increase over last year with a budget amount with \$13,000 for this year. Could you please advise the number of hours per week that is required to clean Town Hall?

32. The budget reflects an increase in the Police vehicle fuel with a total budget amount this year of \$4,800. There is another line item referencing equipment rental in the amount of \$1,296. There is an assumption that the Police department is going "green" this year and will be using bicycles to police our streets when possible. Could you please advise why the fuel cost budget amount has increased instead of showing a decrease with the use of bicycles?

33. Public Works Radio License/Repeater item appears to have increased from \$200 in last year's budget to an annual cost of \$1,796. Can you advise what has caused such a large increase?