



Committee of the Whole Report

To: To the Chair and Members of the Committee of the Whole
From: Heather Boyd, General Manager of Corporate Services
Date: February 1, 2024
Report #: RPT-0160-24
Subject: 2024 Budget – Public Engagement Results
Purpose: For Information

Recommendation

That Staff Report RPT-0160-24 – 2024 Budget – Public Engagement Results be received as information.

Strategic Plan Priority

Strategic Priority 3 - Economic Resilience

Strategic Priority 5 - Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens

Impacts and Mitigation

Social Impacts

Public Engagement is an important piece of the annual budget process as it gives members of the public direct access to comment on the budget as a whole and various components of the budget, either in terms of supporting, questioning or proposing new initiatives.

Environmental Impacts

There is no anticipated environmental impact resulting from this report.

Economic Impacts

This summary of the Public Engagement results is intended to help inform Council about public sentiment prior to approval of the 2024 budget. Any decision made on the 2024 budget and its components will have direct economic impacts on the municipality in 2024.

Report

Background

The County of Brant released its 2024 Budget Summary document (Attachment 1) and launched the EngageBrant Public Engagement platform on January 5, 2024. The platform closed on January 22 so that comments received to date could be summarized and submitted for Committee's information and to be used to inform decisions on the 2024 Budget.

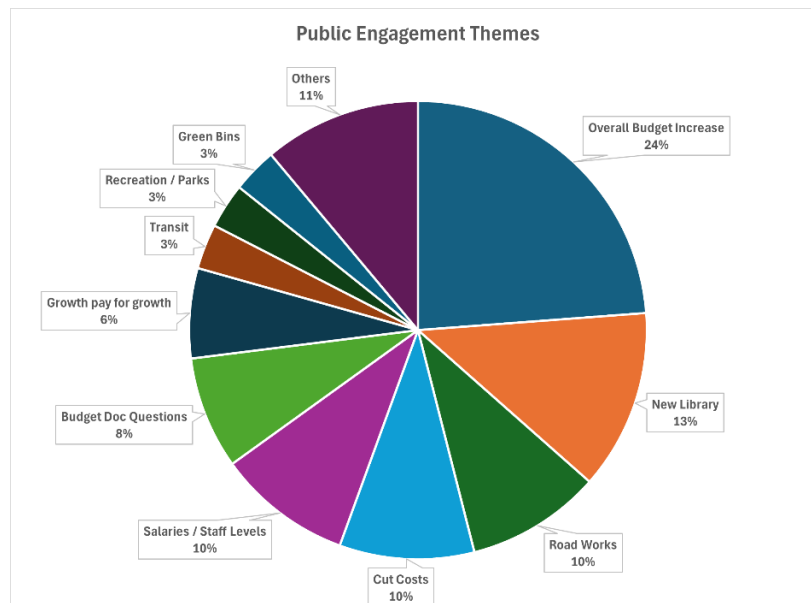
Analysis

The 2024 Proposed Budget EngageBrant Page received a total of 796 visits, of which 230 visitors viewed more than the main page and 27 visitors engaged with contribution through either a comment or question. Attachment 2 is a summary of all feedback received, noting that the “comments” section does not have a reply option for staff to respond to. Attachment 3 is a summary of all questions asked and responses given.

Key Themes raised through the Public Engagement include:

- Concerns about Overall Increase – impact on fixed incomes / homeowners struggling with cost of living and housing costs
- Questioning “median home” value
- Requests for reductions in spending
- Questioning need for new library
- Growth should pay for growth
- Questioning wage increases (specific budget increases)
- Use of funds from “growth” / new assessment
- Internal resources vs. contracted services
- Questioning Corporate Strategy Budget
- Questioning Public Transportation Budget Increase – requests for additional services
- Impact of higher taxes on local economy
- Alternative revenue sources
- Results of previous Engagement Surveys forming basis for budget
- Request for pollinator-friendly spaces and boulevards
- Concerns Re: Stormwater management as a tax-levy burden
- Priority for Bishopsgate Road Interchange
- Servicing of Burford / Scotland / Oakland areas
- Focus on critical infrastructure / health and safety needs of the community
- Request for indoor pool
- Concerns about investment in tourism and limited benefit to existing ratepayers
- More activities for north end of Paris
- Request for intersection improvements (Cockshutt Road / Indian Line)

Key themes and their frequency are summarized below:



A couple of responses to questions asked in the “Comments” section are provided below:

- Brant Transit is currently serviced by a new provider. It is uncertain whether the comment received was in relation to the new or previous service level. Council has already requested a staff review of Public Transportation needs and models to be completed in 2024.
- There is an indoor pool proposed within the ten-year capital forecast. The exact timing and scope of this project is not finalized.
- Green bins are being considered as part of the new Solid Waste Collection Contract and will be the subject of discussions in 2024, with any impact possible in 2025.
- The median home value for the County of Brant, reported as \$383,000, is not reflected of current values, however it is reflected of the assessment roll, which is based on 2016 values. Both the weighted assessment rolls used to determine levy amounts and actual taxes charged to each property owner are based on these 2016 values.
- All non-union staff, members of Council and paid citizen appointees to local boards and committees are proposed to receive a 2.5% increase in salary for 2024. Increases in salaries, wages and benefits lines that exceed a 2.5% increase reflect increased OMERS / benefits costs, some cost annualizations and positions moving closer to their full job grade.

Summary and Recommendations

The most frequent and common theme of the public engagement results is a concern about the affordability of a 10.5% tax levy increase, particularly for low / fixed income homes and those struggling with other cost of living increases.

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the results of the 2024 Proposed Budget Public Engagement as part of their budget deliberations process.

Attachments

1. Budget Summary Document
2. Summary of Feedback Comments Received
3. Summary of Questions / Answers Received

Reviewed By

N/A

Copied To

Alison Newton, CAO
Heather Mifflin, Director of Finance, Treasurer
Dana Steane, Public Consultation Specialist

By-law and/or Agreement

By-law Required	No
Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk	No