



**TOWNSHIP OF WEST LINCOLN**  
**ADMINISTRATION/FINANCE/FIRE COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**

**MEETING NO. ONE**

**February 20, 2024, 6:30 p.m.**

**Township Administration Building**

**318 Canborough Street, Smithville, Ontario**

Council:                   Councillor Jason Trombetta (Chair)  
                                  Mayor Cheryl Ganann  
                                  Councillor Shelley Bradaric  
                                  Councillor Mike Rehner  
                                  Councillor William Reilly  
                                  Councillor Terry Bell  
                                  Councillor Joann Chechalk

Staff:                      Donna DeFilippis, Interim CAO/Treasurer  
                                  Mike DiPaola, Director of Public Works and Recreation  
                                  Brian Treble, Director of Planning and Building  
                                  Dennis Fisher, Fire Chief  
                                  Katelyn Repovs, Manager of Finance/Deputy Treasurer  
                                  Justin Paylove, Deputy Clerk  
                                  Kevin Geoghegan, IT Help Desk Analyst

Attendees:                Regional Councillor Albert Witteveen  
                                  Rob Cosby

**1. CHAIR - Councillor Jason Trombetta**

Prior to commencing with the Administration/Finance/Fire Committee meeting agenda, Chair Trombetta will note the following:

- 1. Comments from the public for a matter that is on the agenda may be provided in person by attending the meeting and advising the Chair during the "Request to Address an Item on the Agenda" Section of the agenda.

2. For those individuals that are unable to attend the meeting in person, you may submit comments for matters that are on the agenda by either (1) emailing [nfiorentino@westlincoln.ca](mailto:nfiorentino@westlincoln.ca) before 4:30 pm. on the day of the meeting. Comments submitted will be considered as public information and read into public record OR (2) by contacting the Clerk's Department to request a Zoom Link to attend the meeting virtually.
3. This meeting will be livestreamed as well as recorded and available on the Township's Website.

## **2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT**

The Township of West Lincoln, being part of Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land is steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk (Hat-i-wen-DA-ronk), the Haudenosaunee (Hoe-den-no-SHOW-nee), and the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-ih-NAH-bey), including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Township of West Lincoln, as part of the Regional Municipality of Niagara, stands with all Indigenous people, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.

## **3. CHANGE IN ORDER OF ITEMS ON AGENDA**

There were no changes in the order of items on the agenda.

## **4. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND/OR CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Councillor William Reilly declared a conflict on this item. (Councillor Reilly noted that he has a potential conflict of interest with Item A05-24, as his wife sits on the West Lincoln Public Library Board, which has submitted a request for a budget increase.)

### **4.1 Councillor William Reilly - DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND/OR CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Councillor Reilly noted that he has a potential conflict of interest with Item A05-24, as his wife sits on the West Lincoln Public Library Board, which has submitted a request for a budget increase.

## **5. APPOINTMENTS**

There were no appointments/presentations.

**6. REQUEST TO ADDRESS ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

**NOTE: Procedural By-law Section 10.13(5) – General Rules**

One (1) hour in total shall be allocated for this section of the agenda and each individual person shall only be provided with **five (5) minutes** to address their issue (some exceptions apply). A response may not be provided and the matter may be referred to staff.

Chair to inquire if there are any members of the public present who wish to address any items on the Administration/Finance/Fire Committee agenda.

Rob Cosby  
5969 Concession 7 Road, Smithville ON

Rob Cosby read from a prepared statement attached as Schedule "A" to the minutes.

Chair Trombetta thanked Mr. Cosby for taking the time to prepare and make his statement to Council, sharing some valuable ideas regarding the budget. Chair Trombetta encouraged other members of the public to similarly attend Council and and Committee meetings in the future to have their voice heard, particularly in regards to important and difficult issues like crafting the budget.

**7. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

**NOTE:** All items listed below are considered to be routine and non-controversial and can be approved by one resolution. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council Member requests it, in which case the item will be removed from the consent resolution and considered immediately following adoption of the remaining consent agenda items.

7.1 ITEM A01-24

**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

**Moved By** Mayor Cheryl Ganann  
**Seconded By** Councillor William Reilly

That the Administration/Finance/Fire Committee hereby approves the following Consent Agenda Items:

1. Items 1, 2, 3 and 4 be and are hereby received for information with the exception of Items #(s) 4

**Carried**

1. West Lincoln Age Friendly Advisory Committee - Minutes of January 12, 2024
2. Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee (MYAC) - Minutes of December 6, 2023
3. Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) - Minutes of September 14, 2023 & November 9, 2023
4. Information Report WLFD-02-2024 - Monthly Update January 2024

Councillor Chechalk inquired to the Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, for a more in-depth explanation of the current progress on the Fire Station 2 construction, and for an update on the completion timeline.

In response to Councillor Chechalk's inquiry, Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, explained that there was an issue with a sub-contractor, which caused a delay. They are no longer working with that sub-contractor, and so finding a new sub-contractor has caused an additional delay. Now, they are back up and running, finishing up the little bit of mechanical that needs to be finished. They are going in the right direction. It has been frustrating since he has been back. Dennis could not provide an exact date, but he is hopeful about the middle of March, 2024 for completion.

Councillor Chechalk further inquired to Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, if he could prepare a report detailing what work needs to be done to complete Fire Station 2 on the approximate timeline he provided, along with updates if any further delays are incurred during that timeline.

In response to Councillor Chechalk's further inquiry, Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher agreed to create a report, and inquired back to Councillor Chechalk, Chair Trombetta, and the rest of Council, if that report should be prepared in time for next week's Council meeting or for the next Administration/Finance/Fire Committee meeting.

Council requested that the report from Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, be provided at the next Council meeting, on Monday February 26, 2024.

Councillor Chechalk further inquired to Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, about the target date for the new CAD software system to be up and running.

In response to Councillor Chechalk's further inquiry, Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher explained that the timing on the new CAD software system is in the hands of dispatch, outside of the control of the Fire Chief. Dispatch is having some issues on the back end of the software, but it is being worked on.

**Moved By** Councillor Joann Chechalk

**Seconded By** Mayor Cheryl Ganann

That, Information Report WLFD-02-2024 regarding "Monthly Update – January 2024", dated February 20, 2024, be received for information.

**Carried**

**Moved By** Councillor Joann Chechalk

**Seconded By** Councillor William Reilly

That, the fire department attempt to prepare a report regarding Station 2 construction progress and the potential upcoming finishing date for the upcoming Council meeting, and that a monthly progress report be prepared if not yet opened, for the following Administration/Fire/Finance Committee meeting.

**Carried**

## **8. COMMUNICATIONS**

### **8.1 ITEM A02-24**

Re: Jenny Galan, West Niagara Agricultural Society  
Request for Designation of 2024 West Niagara Fair as a "Community Festival"

Chair Trombetta inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about why the designation request for this event is coming to the Township of West Lincoln Council, as it is a "West Niagara" event.

In response to Chair Trombetta's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that Council must address this request because the fair takes place in West Lincoln.

Councillor Chechalk further explained to Chair Trombetta that the "West Niagara" in the name of the event is due to the blending of associations years ago, and that this request is made annually to Council, as the fair is hosted in West Lincoln due to the quality of the available facilities.

**Moved By** Councillor Joann Chechalk

**Seconded By** Mayor Cheryl Ganann

1. That, the correspondence from Jenny Galan Administrator of Operations, of the West Niagara Agricultural Society, Dated January 4, 2024, requesting that the 2024 West Niagara Fair be designated as a "Community Festival" in order to obtain a Special Events Permit from the Ontario Alcohol & Gaming Commission, be received; and,
2. That, the Council of the Corporation of the Township of West Lincoln hereby designate the 2024 West Niagara Fair as a "Community Festival of Municipal Significance" in accordance with the Liquor License Act of Ontario and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, which festival is to be held from Friday, September 6 to and including Sunday, September 8, 2024 at the West Niagara Agricultural Centre, 7402 Mud Street, Grassie ON.

**Carried**

8.2 ITEM A03-24

Lisa Maychak, West Lincoln Age Friendly Advisory Committee

Re: Resignation from the West Lincoln Age Friendly Advisory Committee

Mayor Ganann explained that Ms. Maychak's work schedule conflicts with the Age Friendly committee meeting schedule, and so she has not been able to attend meetings, which is the impetus for her resignation.

However, because she does work in an associated field and she is interested in supporting the committee, she will be continuing to advise the committee and provide assistance/information as may be necessary going forward.

**Moved By** Councillor Terry Bell

**Seconded By** Councillor Shelley Bradaric

1. That, the notice of resignation received on February 6, 2024 from Lisa Maychak, Member of the West Lincoln Age Friendly Advisory Committee, be received with regrets; and,

2. That, by-law 2023-03 being a by-law for various appointments to boards, committees and municipal positions, be amended to remove Lisa Maychak from Schedule "A".

**Carried**

**9. STAFF REPORTS**

9.1 ITEM A04-24

Fire Chief (Dennis Fisher) & Communications Specialist (Beth Audet)  
Re: Information Report WLF03-2024 - 2024 Solar Eclipse

Chair Trombetta inquired to the Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, about the contentious nature of the upcoming Total Solar Eclipse.

In response to Chair Trombetta's inquiry, Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, explained that people can lose their eyesight entirely if they look at a Total Solar Eclipse. It is a big event, as the path of totality hits the Niagara Region, which is why the region is expecting an influx of visitors to view the eclipse. As a result, it is expected to be a congestion and transportation issue.

Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, further explained the nature of his emergency response plan, as well as the joint plan of fire chiefs across the Niagara Region and the nature of the response that will be enacted on the day of the Total Solar Eclipse.

Councillor Bradaric inquired to the Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, about the nature of the media response to the Total Solar Eclipse and the emergency response to the event.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's inquiry, Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, explained that West Lincoln's Communications Specialist, Beth Audet, has been involved in many meetings on the Total Solar Eclipse and the response as well, because messaging across the municipalities of Niagara is going to be consistent and controlled on the day of, only going through the Communications Specialist.

Councillor Bradaric further inquired to the Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, if there is any information forthcoming for members of the public to ensure they stay safe and are informed ahead of the Total Solar Eclipse.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's further inquiry, Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, explained that he will be discussing that at an upcoming joint emergency response meeting with his colleagues from across the Niagara

Region, in order to work out the exact timing and content to be released to the public regarding the Total Solar Eclipse.

**Moved By** Councillor Shelley Bradaric

**Seconded By** Councillor William Reilly

That, Information Report WLF03-2024 regarding "2024 Solar Eclipse", dated February 20, 2024, be received for information.

**Carried**

9.2 ITEM A05-24

Interim CAO and Treasurer (Donna DeFilippis) & Manager of Finance and Deputy Treasurer (Katelyn Repovs)

Re: Recommendation Report T-04-2024 - 2024 Operating and Capital Budget Update

Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, provided a timeline of the budget creation and revision process.

Manager of Finance/Deputy Treasurer, Katelyn Repovs, gave a presentation providing a greater detailed explanation of Report T-04-2024, 2024 Operating and Capital Budget Update.

Councillor Rehner inquired to the Manager of Finance/Deputy Treasurer, Katelyn Repovs, if the Community Engagement and Events Coordinator position is still going to remain on the 2024 Budget.

In response to Councillor Rehner's inquiry, the Manager of Finance/Deputy Treasurer, Katelyn Repovs, explained that the position does remain on the budget in the proposed budget update, but that its budget impact is being reduced by reducing the hours of the position.

Councillor Rehner inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, if the position could be removed entirely and if existing staff could take on these responsibilities.

In response to Councillor Rehner's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that on top of reducing the hours of the Community Engagement and Events Coordinator position, a part-time position in the Clerk's department has also been removed, and so this may be seen as being in line with Councillor Rehner's request.

Councillor Rehner further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about whether there are larger budget items that could be put



on the table in budget discussions that were thus far left out that could be removed to reduce the levy increase so that it is in line with neighbouring municipalities levy increase percentages.

In response to Councillor Rehner's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that other Niagara municipalities have had assessment growth that far outpaces West Lincoln, which explains why they have comparably smaller percentage increases to their tax levy's. Additionally, work has been done thus far to reduce the levy increase from 14.2 per cent to 7.55 per cent. To reduce the tax levy increase further will require service cuts and cutting full-time staff positions.

Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis commented further that capital reserves have to be invested in now in order to meet funding targets for future capital projects, which has an impact on the levy increase percentage.

Councillor Rehner further commented that staff must be considerate of the ability of members of the public to afford a tax levy increase during current economic times, and that he feels adjustments should be made in all areas in order to meet the current economic climate and reduce the tax levy increase percentage.

Councillor Chechalk expressed her thoughts on the recommendations from staff to reduce the tax levy increase, and disagreed with Councillor Rehner's comments regarding the presence of large budget items that could be considered by Council that staff have not brought forward. Councillor Chechalk also brought forward some new ideas on how to further reduce the tax levy increase, building on ideas proposed by staff in the budget update report, such as reducing the operating period of the Farmer's Market, and cutting the Events and Community Engagement Coordinator position further, to name a few.

Councillor Reilly echoed comments made by Councillor Chechalk regarding the difficulty of this budget process, and also suggested that the fireworks be cut from the Canada Day budget.

Mayor Ganann similarly echoed comments made by Councillor Reilly and Councillor Chechalk. Additionally, Mayor Ganann thanked the library board for coming back to the table having made some concessions in their budget proposal. Additionally, Mayor Ganann reassured the Interim CEO, Cindy Weir, that they will continue pushing the province to increase their portion of municipal library funding.

Councillor Bradaric thanked Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, and Manager of Finance/Deputy Treasurer, for their work in preparing the initial budget proposal, as well as the updates they have made. Councillor Bradaric then inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, as to why future road enhancement funding has been eliminated and if the Township is prepared and able to keep on top of their road enhancement efforts going into the future.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that the funding for the future road enhancements has been reduced to one project per term of Council, rather than one project per year, as had been the case before. This was a decision made during the process to reduce the tax levy increase.

Councillor Bradaric inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about the slope stability special project on Concession 2 Road, that is noted as having been cut in the budget update. She inquired if this was the project that was brought to Council's attention as an emergency in 2023.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that it is not the same project.

Councillor Bradaric further inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about the continued inclusion of the Township Administration Building parking lot on the budget.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's further inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that moving the Township Administration Building parking lot rehabilitation a year or two out will not have an impact on the levy increase, as the project cannot be moved back any further due to the poor condition of the parking lot.

Councillor Bradaric inquired to the Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, as to whether we can predict increased assessment growth for future years reliably or not.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's inquiry, Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, explained that our growth strategy predicts that the Township should be achieving 250-290 new housing starts per year. If we get there, our growth will paint a much better picture than right now. As has been discussed, there are servicing challenges, which staff is keeping Council up to date on. However, currently we are stuck where we are at due to servicing limitations. In 2025 and beyond we should be receiving

over 200 permits per year, which will help with increasing the growth assessment immensely.

Councillor Bradaric commented that, as a member of the library board, she is proud of the work they have done to reduce the budget request from the library.

Councillor Bradaric further inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, whether the Township is tracking data on public events run by the Township, like the Farmer's Market, to track its value and to help with budget considerations.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's further inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that certain data is recorded by the Township and is presented to Council annually in May.

Councillor Bradaric commented that the Events and Community Engagement Coordinator position could be made temporary, so as to not saddle the new incoming CAO with a new permanent staff position that they did not have input on. It would also allow staff and Council to consider the KPI's collected on the community events to determine the value and/or necessity of the position to coordinate event planning beyond 2024.

Councillor Bell commented that he agrees with the sentiments of his fellow Committee members and Councillors. However, he suggested increasing the hours of the Events and Community Engagement Coordinator, rather than cutting them, in order to not only coordinate the current events schedule, but to perhaps increase it. Councillor Bell also expressed that the needs of the Township are and will continue to evolve, especially as we enter the anticipated rapid growth period of the next few years and decades.

Chair Trombetta inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, on how they can proceed with the Farmer's Market budget reduction without having a schedule worked out ahead of time.

In response to Chair Trombetta's inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that he would have to look at the past Farmer's Market schedule and compare with a new schedule to determine the full extent of the savings.

Chair Trombetta further commented that members of the Santa Clause Parade committee could be paid an honorarium, rather than requiring a

full time coordinator position. He stressed the need to preserve beloved Township events while being cognizant of the cost.

Councillor Chechalk inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the need for the fire filling station at Fire Station 2 to be built in 2024, despite the station not being opened, as a potential means of reducing capital project costs.

In response to Councillor Chechalk's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that she could look into how much the fire reserve could be reduced if the filling station project were moved back one year. However, she would ask the Fire Chief to comment regarding the impact of that project deferment on health and safety and operations.

Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, explained that it would become a health and safety issue. The gear needs to be clean, because the gear holds fire contaminants, which would be unsafe for firefighters. The filling station was originally in the cost of construction, but has been taken out over time as a result of the overruns and the increased costs associated with that.

Councillor Chechalk further commented that cutting the Farmer's Market, Santa Clause Parade, Canada Day, and the Events and Community Engagement Coordinator, would have the least impact on municipal services, which Councillor Chechalk can support.

Mayor Ganann inquired to Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, about the filling stations and if they have anything to do with washing the equipment of firefighters.

In response to Mayor Ganann's inquiry, Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, explained that he misspoke, as the filling station is not related to cleaning equipment but is instead used for filling firetrucks.

Mayor Ganann further inquired to the Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, about the possibility of removing the filling station and cylinder compressor from the 2024 budget and moving it back to 2025.

In response to Mayor Ganann's further inquiry, Fire Chief, Dennis Fisher, explained that it could be pushed back a year.

Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, further explained that the cylinder compressor and filling station for Station 2 is partially funded by development charges and the fire reserve. If that were delayed to 2025, we could cut the fire reserve transfer by \$15,000, reducing the levy increase.

Councillor Reilly inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about the necessity of the Township Administration Building parking lot rehabilitation project.

In response to Councillor Reilly's inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that he would be comfortable deferring the project one year, but he is unsure what impact that would have on the levy increase.

Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, further explained that moving the parking lot project back one year would not impact the tax levy increase this year. To impact the levy, they would need to remove the project entirely.

Councillor Reilly suggested that he would be in favour of removing the parking lot project entirely and addressing it later on at a point when the project would be necessary.

Councillor Reilly inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about what the impact of removing this project would be on the levy.

In response to Councillor Reilly's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, suggested that they break for a recess once all suggested changes to the budget are brought forward by Council in order to give staff some time to assess the budget impact of each change.

Councillor Reilly further commented that cutting community events would go against what he ran on as a Council candidate, which was to bring the community together. He cautioned to avoid causing too much disruption to their slate of annual community events in an attempt to only minimally reduce the tax levy increase.

Councillor Reilly further commented by questioning the proposal brought forward by Chair Trombetta to compensate volunteer members of the Santa Claus Parade Committee rather than hiring an Events and Community Engagement Coordinator. He also noted that the position would not only be responsible for the Santa Claus Parade, but all community events hosted by the Township.

Councillor Reilly further commented that he supported the proposal to reduce the road improvement projects, as has been proposed in the updated budget report.

Mayor Ganann supported the request for a recess to allow staff to determine the levy impact of Council's current suggestions.

Councillor Bradaric agreed with Mayor Ganann.

Councillor Bell commented that staff should be given a month to assess the proposed budget changes that Council has brought forward.

Council recessed for 15 minutes.

Manager of Finance/Deputy Treasurer, Katelyn Repovs, gave an itemized summary/review of the impacts on the tax levy increase caused by the changes to the budget requested by Council. The total reduction to the tax levy increase, as a result of the additional budget changes proposed by Council, would be \$88,765.

Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, commented that staff applied for a Celebrate Canada grant, which they do every year. The way that the grant works is that you apply in December, and in that application you lay out your expenses for hosting a Canada Day event. Then the application is reviewed, and if successful, you can receive up to a \$10,000 grant. Without the fireworks, staff would have to reach out to the Celebrate Canada Grant administrators to let them know of that removal and the impact that that would have on their event budget.

Councillor Bell expressed his opposition to removing the fireworks from the Canada Day budget.

Councillor Bradaric inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about if this change to the grant application would affect their chance of receiving the grant, and if the Township had been successful in securing the grant in the past.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that it is possible that it would make them less likely to receive the grant, and that the Township has received the grant in several of the past few years.

Councillor Bradaric then commented that the Canada Day event budget should be left as it is to not jeopardize this grant application.

Mayor Ganann agreed with the comments made by Councillor Bradaric.

Councillor Reilly inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, as to whether this revised tax levy increase includes the deferring of the Vaughan Road project.

In response to Councillor Reilly's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that the revised tax levy increase does not include deferring the Vaughan Road project.

Councillor Reilly commented further that this project should be included, and he echoed the comments of Councillor Bradaric and Mayor Ganann.

Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, commented that if deferring Vaughan Road, Council should consider funding half of the project this year and half next year, as assessment growth is not anticipated next year.

Councillor Chechalk inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, if the potential Canada Day grant is included in the event budget item.

In response to Councillor Chechalk's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that the grant is not included in the budget because it is not guaranteed that we receive the grant.

Councillor Chechalk further commented that the Canada Day budget be conditional on receiving the grant, meaning, that if the grant application is successful, then the fully budgeted amount can be spent on the event. However, if it is not successful, then \$10,000 be removed from the Canada Day event budget to reflect the missing grant amount.

Councillor Chechack commented that the Vaughan Road project should not be deferred depending on the maintenance costs to keep it functional and if it will be able to remain functional for the next few years.

Councillor Rehner inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the tax levy increase impact if the Vaughan Road project were to be partially funded this year.

In response to Councillor Rehner's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that Council is free to defer the entire project from the 2024 budget to realize the \$70,000 reduction on the 2024 tax levy increase, however, she would recommend that \$35,000 be funded in 2024 and the remaining \$35,000 be funded in 2025, still reducing the tax levy increase in 2024, while also ensuring that the project is able to be funded in 2025 with limited budget impact during that year, which is projected to be equally as difficult financially as 2024.

Councillor Rehner further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, if that means the tax levy increase impact would be roughly 0.33 per cent in 2024.

In response to Councillor Rehner's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, agreed that this would be approximately correct.

Councillor Rehner inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about the cost of maintaining Vaughan Road rather than completely rebuilding it.

In response to Councillor Rehner's inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that there could be more base repairs required with another year deferred. However, it is hard to quantify if those base repairs would be needed if we fully rehabilitated the road or not. The other point is that Vaughan Road was started last year, and the intention was to complete the project in 2024.

Councillor Reilly inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, for the pavement condition index given to Vaughan Road.

In response to Councillor Reilly's inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that he does not have the pavement condition index in front of him, but also that this index does not work for gravel roads, as the condition can change drastically without regular upkeep, from month to month, and so on.

Mayor Ganann commented that the Vaughan Road rehabilitation project was already delayed last year, and so she cannot support delaying it again.

Councillor Bradaric inquired to the Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about cost savings that have been realized thus far as a result of staff time due to the small amount of snow fall.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's inquiry, Director of Public Works and Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that we save some money on staffing and materials cost due to the mild winter. However, the mild weather introduces other costs, particularly for maintaining gravel roads, that largely offset those cost savings.

Councillor Bradaric agreed with comments made by Mayor Ganann about the Vaughan Road project.



Councillor Bell agreed with Mayor Ganann and Councillor Bradaric's comments regarding the Vaughan Road project.

Chair Trombetta commented that he was proud of the work of this Council and last Council to prioritize road rehabilitation projects and so he is disappointed to have to delay projects in this budget.

Chair Trombetta inquired to the Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, about the growth forecast for next year.

In response to Chair Trombetta's inquiry, Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, explained that there are going to be more building starts in 2025, but for assessment growth, those buildings must have occupants, and so it is safe to assume that 2025 is another difficult budget year with limited growth akin to 2024.

**Moved By** Councillor Joann Chechalk

**Seconded By** Mayor Cheryl Ganann

1. That, Recommendation Report T-04-2024, regarding the "2024 Operating and Capital Budget Update", dated February 20, 2024, be received; and,
2. That, a 2024 tax levy of \$9,799,910 which represents a 7.55% tax levy increase after factoring in assessment growth, be approved; and,
3. That, staff prepare the Final 2024 Operating and Capital Budget report, with all necessary attachments for presentation and approval at the February 26, 2024 Council Meeting.

**Referred**

**Moved By** Councillor Joann Chechalk

**Seconded By** Mayor Cheryl Ganann

1. That, the Operating and Capital Budget found in "Recommendation Report T-04-2024 - Regarding the 2024 Operating and Capital Budget Update" be amended by the following items:
  - A. That, the Canada day celebration fund not exceed more than \$34,000.00,
  - B. That, the proposed cylinder compressor/water filling tank item be deferred until 2025,

- C. That, the Events Coordinator position be altered from a Full time position, to a Temporary position,
  - D. That, the events coordinator position shift from 0.71 FTE to 0.50 FTE
  - E. That, the Parking lot rehabilitation project be removed from the budget completely,
2. That, this item be referred back to staff to come back with the amended final budget report, to the Council meeting held on February 26th, 2024.

**Carried**

**10. OTHER BUSINESS**

10.1 ITEM A06-24

Members of Committee

Re: Verbal Updates from Members of Boards and Committees - If required

There were no verbal updates from Members of Boards and Committees.

10.2 ITEM A07-24

Members of Council

Re: Other Business Items of an Informative Nature

Mayor Ganann

Re: Bowling for Kids Sake

Township staff and members of Council will be taking part in a fundraiser, Bowling for Kids Sake, on Tuesday February 27, 2024.

**11. NEW BUSINESS**

**NOTE:** Only for items that require immediate attention/direction and must first approve a motion to introduce a new item of business. (Motion Required)

There were no motions to introduce new items of business.

**12. CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS**

There were no confidential matters.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at the hour of 10:36 p.m.

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JUSTIN PAYLOVE, DEPUTY  
CLERK

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COUNCILLOR JASON  
TROMBETTA, CHAIR

Chairman Trombetta and members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee this evening regarding the 2024 proposed budget. I have attended the budget meetings over the past couple of months and reviewed the many budget documents that have been prepared. Also many thanks to various Township staff for all of their work in preparing the 2024 budget.

It is certainly a challenge, not just for this Township, but for all businesses and homeowners to deal with the large increases in the last year for equipment, supplies and labour. As much as nobody likes to see their property taxes increase, reality is that these increased costs need to be passed along to the taxpayers by the Township, just as any other business. The reduced amount of assessment growth in the Township over the last year certainly compounds the issue. I believe that the revised budget being presented by staff this evening does it's best to keep the Township operating at a reasonable service level for 2024 while also being conscious of taxpayers by deferring some expenditures to future years. New builds associated with new subdivisions and urban boundary expansion in future years will help by increasing assessment growth to increase revenue to the Township.

I would like to comment on 2 specific items in the 2024 budget:

Community Engagement and Events Coordinator – This position would partially replace the duties of the part-time person that currently operates the Farmer's Market. This was a learning moment for me as I thought that the Farmer's Market was operated by volunteers. I think this was the case some time ago, but currently it is an expenditure of over \$20,000/year for this position. It now appears that the Santa Claus Parade, which has been run by volunteers in the past, has run into some difficulties and a need has been identified to have a staff person to run this event as well as the Farmer's Market. This trend is troubling to me as it appears that our Township has been tasked with taking over some of the staffing for these two events that used to be run by volunteers. What other staff time is allocated, or will need to be allocated to the operation of these 2 events, and at what cost? Everyone loves our Santa Claus Parade, and it has been well attended for many years, but I feel that members of Committee need to be asking this question in conjunction with this staffing request.

Vaughan Road from gravel to tar and chip – This project was one of 3 roads previously planned for upgrading in 2024 as outlined in the 2023 10 year capital budget last year. The original estimate for upgrading 3 roads was very ambitious and the expenditure was reduced to 1 project on Vaughan Road resulting in a decrease in capital expenditure of approx. 60% to an estimate of \$700,000. I certainly hope that this committee does not remove this item from the 2024 budget as it would show this Council's commitment to a steady and gradual improvement of our rural roads that began several decades ago.

Unfortunately, in connection with this gradual improvement of rural roads, Township staff has proposed that similar upgrades previously scheduled for 2024, 2025 and 2026, have been deferred until 2027 and 2031 as part of the budgeting process. This would be a considerable delay and further inconvenience to rural Township residents that continue to endure gravel roads. I still believe that this Council largely support the gradual upgrading of our gravel roads to tar and chip, and I would like to suggest that a reasonable capital expenditure for upgrades be included in the 10 year capital plan for at least 2025 and 2026 to allow for these projects to be considered as part of the budgeting process in those years. This Township has improved from a point in the mid 1970s where virtually every road was gravel, to today where I believe that at least approx. 2/3 of our rural roads have been upgraded. I believe that our Township should continue to commit a reasonable amount of funding to continue this process in the coming years.

Thank you for your time.

Robert Cosby,

5969 Concession 7 Road, Smithville, ON.