



WARDEN'S 2023-24 BUDGET ADDRESS

April 26, 2023

I am pleased to outline the continued plans and priorities that the 52nd Council of the Municipality of the District of Shelburne will carry out in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

Following, are priorities that will enable the Municipality to invest in current and future projects through its operating and capital budgets. Included with these priorities are a few of the initiatives planned for this fiscal year:

1. Infrastructure
2. Planning
3. Economic and Community Development
4. Health Care

1. INFRASTRUCTURE

Completion of New Building – After years of discussions, negotiations and planning, Council and staff have moved into the new administration building at #414 Woodlawn Drive with our federal tenants, Employment Services Development Canada and Canadian Food Inspection Agency. It is an efficient, single level accessible building, with electric vehicle charging stations and future solar panels. These building components are very important to us as we continue to promote and support accessibility and renewable energy initiatives.

The total cost of this project is approximately \$7.2 million, assuming that we receive \$200,000 from HST. The building is funded through a combination of reserves and gas tax as well as a loan for \$3 million through the NS Department of Finance & Treasury Board over a 15 year period.

We are very pleased to offer a modern, safe space to our tenants, to staff and our residents to carry out their business. A ribbon cutting ceremony will take place within the next couple of months to celebrate the opening of the new building.

Sewage Treatment Plant – The lagoon clean out project was completed last fall to ensure the continued effectiveness and efficiency of the sewage treatment plant. Ongoing maintenance items at the plant are planned, including some equipment replacement (pumps, control panel and blower rebuild).

West Green Harbour Ballfield – Restoration Project – Work has continued on the West Green Harbour Ballfield, including new dugouts and bleachers. Resurfacing of the infield and filling in holes in the outfield are anticipated to be completed this month. Further enhancements to the site include a picnic area with accessible picnic table, bench and shade.

Final Phase of Accessibility Upgrades to Welkum Park – Contractors have been secured for the planned accessibility upgrades at Welkum Park with work taking place during the spring and summer of this year. The upgrades consist of an accessible pathway that will connect to all amenities, new playground equipment and accessible surfacing, a natural play space, a mobi-mat for access to the lake and a new modular floating dock.

Investing in Trails – Trails are an important infrastructure and economic driver in the community. Preparation will continue for the conversion of the Jordan River Trail to enable motorized use, including resurfacing of the trail and planning/preparation for the bridge repairs.

2. PLANNING

Municipal Boundary Review – Municipalities are mandated by the Province to carry out a Governance and Boundary Review every eight years. The Municipality carried out and submitted its review last year, with recommendations that included the number of polling districts remaining the same, continuing with a warden system as well as changes to a couple of existing districts. The Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board intends to conduct its hearing on this matter on May 10, 2023.

Mandatory/Regional Planning - A Regional Planning entity of eight municipal units in the Tri-County has been formed that will offer sustainable and consistent planning services across the region. Given that the Province have updated the planning regulations, the Municipality has until December 31, 2024 (or such other deadline date as the Province may agree) to comply with the new regulations. In deliberations with other municipalities in the region, it was identified that Municipality of Clare is in the same situation as our Municipality and would also be required to update their Municipal Planning Strategy and Land-Use By-Law. An RFP will be awarded to seek a consultant to update our MPS and LUB and any other relevant policies and by-laws so that they comply with Provincial Regulations.

Finalizing and Implementing the Eastern Shelburne County Accessibility Plan - Council approved the Eastern Shelburne County Accessibility Plan on April 27, 2022. The mandate for Committee's first year was to develop an accessibility plan to address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers in the Municipality's policies, programs, practices and services. The Municipality has approved funding in this year's budget to help support an Accessibility Co-ordinator position for one year to implement the plan.

3. ECONOMIC and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community and Business Marketing - The Municipality has made a \$55,000 investment in community and business marketing, working with over 15 businesses to complete focused marketing videos as well as a community profile video. These videos have been hugely successful in showcasing our beautiful Municipality and surrounding area. We have also been working hard over the past months to develop a new, accessible, website that we will use to market our Municipality as a place to work, live and explore. The site is expected to be launched early May, 2023.

Economic Analysis of Assets – The Municipality will be seeking consultation to complete an economic based analysis of its property assets to determine feasibility for economic, housing and community development. This strategic planning process will identify the Municipality’s positioning as it relates to rural economic trends that may impact the community and provide high-vision action plans for the implementation of recommended development.

Event Development – Hosting successful events is a great economic driver for the community as well as a way for residents and tourists alike to enjoy everything we have to offer. We are pleased to invest in and work directly with various committees, neighbouring municipalities and the Province to further develop signature events in the area.

Last October, the Municipality worked with the local community to host a Giant Pumpkin Regatta in Shelburne Harbour. We welcomed approximately 1,000 spectators to Shelburne’s beautiful historic waterfront to watch five brave locals participate in a 500m giant pumpkin race. The event was an overwhelming success, and we have officially declared Shelburne to be the new home for Nova Scotia’s Annual Pumpkin Regatta, formerly hosted in Windsor, NS.

Supporting Community Groups – Our community groups are a vital component in providing a quality of life to our residents that is second to none. The Municipality is pleased to continue to provide financial and other support to these organizations through the continued Grants to Organization Program. Over \$67,000 has been approved to support these wonderful organizations in this year’s budget.

Low Income Property Tax Exemption – Council maintains \$50,000 in this year’s budget. In 2022/23, this program assisted 179 residents.

4. HEALTH CARE

Advocacy Role - The Municipality will continue to advocate for acceptable access to essential health care services for our residents. We are constantly in discussions with all local and provincial healthcare stakeholders to address barriers to our recruitment and retention efforts. We also continue to highlight that Shelburne is committed to seeking new opportunities for healthcare service development at Roseway Hospital.

Recruitment and Retention - The Municipality has been awarded the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment grant in the amount of \$75,000. We will work with the local community and our local medical team to determine our best strategic approach to healthcare recruitment and retention for developing digital assets, establishing tools to enhance our welcoming communities and hosting recruitment/appreciation events. We will be posting opportunities for ways the community can become involved in the near future.

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST

Cellular Service - There are many places throughout the Municipality where there is little or no cellular coverage. This is a huge safety concern, especially for those residents/businesses that no longer have a landline. Council has been working on this file for some time and will continue to advocate for improved cellular coverage throughout the Municipality, which among other things, may include meeting with the Province as well as cellular providers.

Service Exchange Agreement - The 1995 Service Exchange Agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia is currently being re-negotiated and is receiving government consideration. An Advisory Group was established by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities to represent the interests of municipalities across the Province in this matter. At this point, Council is unaware as to what

is even being discussed. These changes are expected to have a one-year implementation period, leaving little time for planning. Uncertainty surrounding the agreement and what implications it will have on the Municipality in terms of finances, staffing and timing causes a tremendous amount of concern for Council.

Municipal Relations and Other Partnerships - I believe one of our greatest achievements in 2022 has been the forging and strengthening of partnerships with all levels of government, but especially neighbouring municipalities and across the Province.

The result of these partnerships can be seen locally by our residents in events such as Dock Street Days, the Pumpkin Regatta, Harmony Bazaar and Miracle on Dock Street, Cruise Ships, just to name a few. Strong partnerships increase capacity in providing such great experiences.

There have been many conversations with potential partners in relation to sharing of services in our local area and beyond to accommodate the expanding needs of our communities, including the potential for regional emergency management and regional planning initiatives.

Our partnerships with non-profit groups to help address local needs and concerns is also very important. We are excited to continue our work with institutions and community organizations such as the NS Community College, Shelburne Area Chamber of Commerce, Black Loyalist Heritage Society, Sou'West Nova Transit Association, South End Environmental Injustice Society (SEED) and others to further community projects such as marine innovation, community gardens, a community well, etc., that make a huge impact on the lives of our residents.

We are growing as an area because of these partnerships and I look forward to increased collaboration.

2023-2024 Budget

At a Special Council Meeting held on March 27, 2023, and after holding the tax rate for the past nine years, Council voted by a narrow majority to increase its residential tax rate by 2 cents to \$1.28/\$100 of assessment and its commercial rate by 3 cents to \$1.85/\$100 of assessment. One cent of residential and resource generates \$45,678; one cent commercial generates \$3,701.

A home assessed at \$100,000 will pay an additional \$20 per year and a home assessed at \$200,000 will pay an additional \$40 per year. The Municipality's 2023-24 operating budget is set at \$8,844,101. Its capital budget is set at \$204,765.

The residential and commercial sewer rates are set at \$285 per unit.

The septage receiving rate is set at \$0.036 (3.6 cents) per litre.

Council will continue to fund reserves, contributing \$100,756 this year to the operating reserves.

Council will maintain the interest rate charged on tax bills at 10% (pre COVID was 14%).

At the end of fiscal 2023-2024, the Municipality's total reserves is anticipated to be approximately \$5.2 million.

Our final audited statements will not be completed for the 2022-23 fiscal year until July, 2023.

The decision to increase taxes was a difficult one. The Municipality, like so many others, are feeling the pressures of increased costs. In order to maintain or improve services and to meet mandatory legislation required by the province, a slight increase was approved to help address these rising costs and additional pressures placed on the Municipality, while continuing to maintain and improve services our residents and businesses have come to expect.

As I conclude my remarks, I must always recognize our stellar staff for their commitment to providing the best timely advice to Council as well as ensuring that programs and services are provided efficiently and effectively to our residents and businesses. On behalf of Council, thank you; please know that we appreciate everything you do.

To my fellow Council members, we are now in the third year of our four-year mandate and although we have had a number of accomplishments over the past 2 ½ years, there is so much more we need to do. Communication, collaboration and co-operation are key in ensuring our community continues to enjoy new growth and success.

And to the residents of the Municipality, your Council looks forward to continuing serving and working with you as together, we show the world the amazing place the Municipality of the District of Shelburne is to live, work and thrive.

Warden Penny Smith