

Public Feedback Received
2026/2027 Budget Meeting
held on February 26, 2026

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Nicole Blades](#)
Subject: budget input
Date: March 1, 2026 5:14:21 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from an external sender.

Thank you for sharing the proposed 2026/27 municipal budget online and for seeking public input.

It is a very complex spreadsheet to review, and I don't envy council for making all these difficult decisions.

When I look at the budget, there is a guiding principle that comes to mind and that is that the net expense of a particular program is being paid by the person who should be paying for it. I find this difficult to explain, so maybe easier with an example:

Tax sale revenue is \$25,000 and Tax sale expense is \$39,000. to me, the process of the tax sale should not result in any net expense to the residents of the municipality. The revenue of the tax sale needs to cover the expenses of conducting the tax sale.

Similar would be bylaw property clean up costs of \$45,000 for those we need to make sure that we charge sufficient fees to the property owners to re-coup those costs.

It could be that the municipality makes a decision to attract investment and so maybe the permitting fees don't fully cover the cost of the related building inspection costs, but that may be a temporary decision to benefit the growth of the municipality as a whole. In that instance I, as a taxpayer, can accept that we will have a short fall for that line item and I am ok with us as a community financing this.

For these types of circumstances, it is sometimes good to show a discount. Ie have the permit fee structure build so it covers all building inspection costs, but then give a discount at times when you want to attract development. That way, it is always clear that it was a choice to 'loose' money on that program, and the principal of break even for individual services is not lost.

Other observations would be Human Resources - contract portion is 177,921 which is just over 9% of your union and non union payroll and that seemed high. Conference attendance and travel also seems a bit high when we are at a time when lots can be done virtually. Also vehicle replacement costs - maybe with cheaper electric options or some way of pooling resources - have some smaller vehicles and some big trucks and depending on the call you are going out for you choose the more appropriate vehicle? Not sure if something like this is feasible when not everyone works at the Municipal building? The wind turbine seems to be an expense experiment and maybe one that should be discontinued?

When it comes to setting tax rates, I wonder whether any thought has been given on increasing tax on land that ideally would be developed. The resource tax rate may be so low that there is no cost to just holding the land forever and not doing anything with it. Maybe an increase in that category of land might attract more development.

thank you to Council for making these difficult decisions. You will never be able to please everyone, and that is not your job. Your job is to do the best you can for the Municipality.

All the best, 

Feedback on the Budget Meeting February 2026

Author: [REDACTED]

The budget review process lacked **clear prioritization** and was structured around a sequential walkthrough of more than 200 items organized according to MODS' internal departmental structure rather than by resident-centred priorities. This approach obscured what matters most to the public and made it difficult to distinguish strategic issues from routine operational tasks.

The **eight-hour meeting format** (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), which relied on reading each line aloud from a spreadsheet, was not conducive to meaningful engagement or informed decision-making. Extended sessions of this nature are widely recognized as ineffective for sustained attention, and the format discouraged thoughtful discussion. Compounding this, **no materials were circulated in advance**, limiting participants' ability to review the information, reflect on implications, or prepare substantive questions.

Given that the budget spans four years, with projections extending to **15 years**, the level of detail presented was unrealistic and operationally impractical. It remains unclear where the requirement for a 15-year projection originated; such precision over that timeframe borders on the unreasonable.

A more effective process would have incorporated **structured grouping and prioritization**, such as organizing items by cost magnitude, risk level, or strategic importance. Instead, minor operational items (e.g., the Easter Egg Hunt) were discussed in the same manner and sequence as major capital expenditures (e.g., bridge repairs), diluting focus and diminishing the value of the discussion.

Overall, the absence of prioritization, the excessive meeting length, the item-by-item presentation format, and the lack of advance materials significantly limited the usefulness of the process and hindered productive outcomes.

What Should Have Happened

The meeting should have focused first on **high-cost, high-risk, and high-impact items**—the decisions that shape the municipality's long-term financial position and directly affect residents. Items below a reasonable threshold (e.g., \$10,000) should have been delegated to staff to manage within their operational authority.

Priority discussion topics should have included:

- Major infrastructure needs, such as **bridge repairs**
- Housing initiatives, including the **HFA2 program**
- The municipality's largest discretionary expenditures, particularly **Hartz Point** and the **Highway 103 properties**

Residents should have been placed **at the centre of the process**. All handout materials should have been made available well in advance, consistent with council meeting requirements. The hard-copy spreadsheets provided lacked line numbers, yet presenters referred to line numbers – and several columns contained truncated text, making it difficult to understand what was being discussed. These avoidable issues created unnecessary barriers to participation and understanding. These issues reflect a broader pattern of poor planning for a meeting of such importance.

KPIs (Key Performance Indicator) – Where are they?

One of the primary reasons for attending the budget meeting was to assess the quality and completeness of the KPIs associated with each project. In the November 13, 2025 meeting, the CAO stated explicitly that a list of KPIs would be provided (see [brief video here](#)). After listening to all audio recordings of the budget meeting and reviewing the hard-copy spreadsheets, it is evident that no such KPIs were included for any project.

The absence of project-level detail is concerning. There are no milestones, no gating factors, no exit criteria, no deliverables and no KPIs—none of the basic elements required to manage projects responsibly or evaluate progress over time. Without these tools, the municipality risks defaulting to an implicit “whatever we achieve is success” mindset. That is not project management; it is the absence of project management.

The Strategic Plan prepared by Davis Pier provides a clear definition of a Key Performance Indicator (KPI): *a measurable value that shows how well the municipality is progressing toward an objective*. KPIs offer an objective basis for assessing progress and are fundamental to responsible project management. Without defined measures—milestones, gating factors, exit criteria, and KPIs—projects cannot be effectively monitored or evaluated. Again, when nothing is being measured, control is lost, and accountability becomes impossible.

Hartz Point and Highway 103 Properties

The purchases of the Hartz Point and Highway 103 properties represent two of the largest discretionary expenditures made by the municipality in recent years. Despite the scale of these investments, the public record shows that **no clear plan** existed at the time of acquisition. Shortly after the Hartz Point purchase, the CAO stated openly that there was *no plan* for the property (see this brief [video](#)), and Council did not question this. Following the acquisition of the Highway 103 lands, the same pattern repeated: the CAO again stated that there were no plans, and a consulting firm was subsequently hired to advise Council on what could be done with the property.

Yet at the budget meeting on February 26, 2026 - only four months later - multiple items appeared in the budget related to both Hartz Point and the Highway 103 properties, including LiDAR, surveys and marketing costs (see Figure below). Both the CAO and the Warden emphasized the urgency of preparing these lands for sale.

00-26210-050 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Market Readiness Activities (GIS, LiDAR, Surveys, Marketing) \$65,000
ARC GIS Subscription \$3500

This raises fundamental questions about transparency and process:

- How did the municipality move from “no plan” to an active project aimed at preparing the land for sale?
- Where is the documentation that explains this shift?
- When were these decisions made, by whom, and under what authority?
- How and why were the new budget items added to what had previously been described as a “no plan” situation?

The absence of a clear, documented decision path for such significant public assets is concerning. It undermines public confidence and makes it impossible to understand the rationale, timing, or strategic intent behind these expenditures.

Conclusion

In summary, the February 2026 budget meeting demonstrated a **fundamental failure in both process and accountability**. The decision to conduct a sequential, all-day walkthrough of more than 200 items without prior circulation of materials or clear prioritization made meaningful engagement and informed decision-making virtually

impossible. By treating minor operational tasks with the same weight as major capital expenditures, the municipality **diluted the focus on high-risk, high-impact strategic issues** such as infrastructure repairs and housing initiatives.

Furthermore, the **complete absence of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**, milestones, and deliverables—despite prior assurances—represents a significant lapse in responsible project management. Without these objective measures, there is no mechanism to monitor progress or ensure accountability for public spending. This lack of transparency is further exemplified by the **shifting narratives surrounding the Hartz Point and Highway 103 properties**, where significant public assets moved from having "no plan" to active budget items without a clear, documented decision path.