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Let's begin a new thread for budget questions from councillors. Here's the thread to the first part of the meeting in case you missed it:


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Thread by Adam A. Donaldson (@adamadonaldson), Nov 7


Coming up at 9 am (?🕒?) it's the council presentation of the 2024-2027 budget. To get some idea about what's coming, consult the Politico preview...




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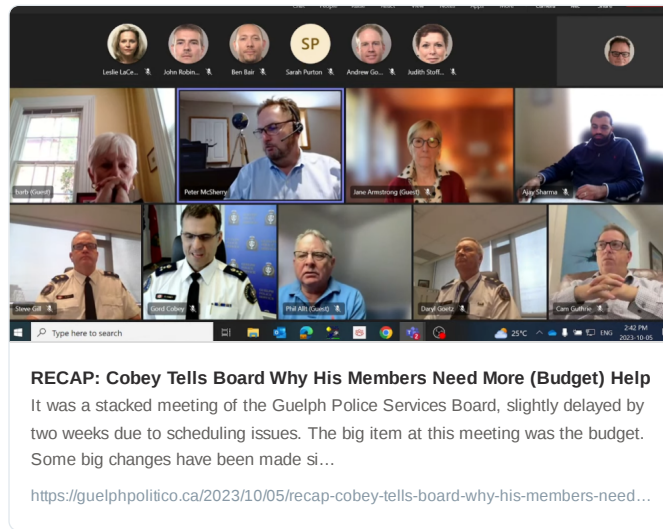
Guthrie calls the meeting back to order again.

Before we begin, Guthrie raises a point that not everyone in the city can watch this meeting, but wonders if staff could post the Qs and As capture here and post them on the budget board so it's a one stop shop. Stewart says they can.

We'll start with the police board before moving to the library and then the County.

Chief Gordon Cobey is here to answer police questions. Deputy Chief Goetz and Sarah Purton are here as well.

Goller asks about the increase to staff meant to address overtime. Cobey recommends that everyone watch the GPS Board meet of Oct 5 to get full background. (You can also check out Politico recap:)



Cobey says that the 30 new FTEs are phased in over four years, but these positions meant to address the needs of policing a growing city. The numbers come from the staffing and service delivery review of GPS by an outside third party.

Goller asks if these levels bring Guelph up to a comparable level to other communities, but not an increase in service levels? Cobey says yes and no, KPMG said we need 18 officers today, but that's a lot to add in one year. We have lowest # of officers per capita + rapid growth.

Goller asks about capital request, what's that for? Cobey says its invest and maintain current assets and then critical assets. Larger scale investments were deferred at the board meeting a couple of weeks ago.

Gibson asks about the origin of the \$2.6 million in grants. Purton says there are 5 grants including prisoner transport grant, community policing and safety, a RIDE grant, sexual abuse and exploitation from ONgov.

O'Rourke asks if there's an opportunity for GPS to look at operating budget again. Cobey says that they worked hard to do that already. It's important for community to understand that they relied on KMPG to give them a reasonable estimate and phase that in over 4 years.

Cobey says it's important to calibrate expectations in the community. They are phasing in where we should be today over four years. There are 10 people on patrol at any given time in all of Guelph, and as incidents stake up more cops are taken off patrol.

Also, we're not funding fully the WSIB commitment right now. If someone goes home with occupational injury no one is there to replace them.

O'Rourke says there's no argument that officers need to be supported. Moving on to next gen 9-1-1, what's the status there? Goetz said the grant that came in has expiry of Mar 2024 so getting infrastructure in place for everywhere was not possible. Leveraging that for 25-26.

Allt asks about total dollar cost for WSIB. Cobey explains that law was members of GPS from Jan 2017 to this year went to a 1,000 sudden deaths and over 1,800 other deaths including deaths by suicide and the deaths of children. There's a cumulative impact to dealing with this.

Cobey says they never budgeted for effects like that, and fewer and fewer people are going to more and more calls.

Purton notes that the total WSIB commitment would be about \$1.1 million, and the overtime budget has been set at over \$1 million over 7 years and the actual is higher than that. They managed to cover the difference with gapping but it's not sustainable.

Cobey adds that staffing gaps are a deterrent to people coming out and addressing their mental health concerns. Everyone wants to be a team player and may sacrifice self care.

Goller asks if there will be more capacity for social workers support with the increases. Cobey says they will be adding another DT resource officer, plus an additional IMPACT worker.

Billings asks if GPS is making any headway with supportive staffing program. Cobey says they need to mitigate the increase. Last year they had 70k lost hours due to health issues.

Goetz adds that they've become very proactive with members to identify issues before they occur, and they have a couple of strategies to tackle that but it still might be a couple of years before they pay off.

Billings asks about addressing the increased staffing. Cobey says that if they are able to get people off of leave and bring them back on the job, they would address the staff issue through attraction or pausing additional hires. They need options.

That's a wrap for police questions, and we're moving on to the library. Before that, Guthrie says that lunch break will come after the library Qs.

We're now being joined by Library CEO Kraft and deputy CEO Dan Atkins.

Busuttill asks about operating grants. Kraft says they get a PLOG, a Public Library Operating Grant, which is \$167k and hasn't changed since the 90s. Other than that, GPL gets small grants.

Gibson notes that in 2018, GPL budget was \$5.7 million and it was expected to be \$2.3 mn increase for new library, but now it's up to \$12 mn, and will increase 300% by 2027. What are the drivers for those costs?

Kraft says compensation has increased, and they've added one or two staff members since then. The library will be bigger in size and over the years they've kept staffing suppressed and are not presently meeting service demand. Materials increased too.

Digital services have increased substantially, a physical book can cost \$40, but a digital book can cost 2-3x as much.

Gibson says he would like to see a break down of the drivers, and some accounting for the 100 per cent increase in costs since 2018.

O'Rourke asks *City* staff about using funds now to help manage transitions, how does that effect ramp up for operating? Baker says they've guessed investment income based on the average opening and closing balance, but doesn't know exact number right this minute.

Caton asks about fundraising. Kraft says they have an annual fundraising campaign for about \$40-\$60k on average, it "depends on the weather". The money is put aside for new main library not part of annual operating.

Downer asks if council decides not to do \$500k reserve transfer does that go back into City budget?

Baker says if council makes that decision they reduce the library's budget and there were be a secondary decision if that would be on operating or service enhancement.

Guthrie asks if the request is for more staff. Kraft says it's 5 for about \$500k. Why? To prepare for new library. Current staff are overextended and post-COVID nature of many services have changed and managers can't focus on that prep while providing level of service.

Guthrie asks about the expected overall impact once the new library opens. Kraft acknowledges that the 2018 business case was \$2.2 mn, but report will be almost 10 years old by the time the building opens. Will be \$2.9 mn now.

Guthrie asks about motion from council to have fulsome review of operating costs. He feels like that motion is outstanding. Kraft says they're working with City staff on operating, but he'll have to get back to council about progress.

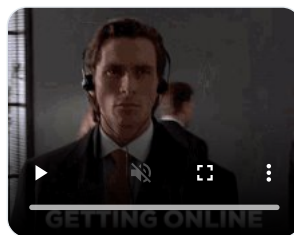
O'Rourke asks if the library can take another look at its budget to find additional savings. Kraft says that's an excellent Q and acknowledges the difficulty, his concern is that City will have completed building that won't be ready to be opened.

No more Qs for the library so you know what that means...



One minute warning from Guthrie.

Note that I will be following the rest of the meeting online.



Guthrie calls the meeting back to order. Double checks to see if the County team is all there.

Looks like we're still waiting or Louisa Artuso, the social services administrator, so we will move on to City business.

First from Caron, who says she's saving line-item questions for the board. Wherever there's an ROI, like saving gas with EVs, will council see the savings next to the investment? Baker says those types of efficiencies are impacted on net operating from capital.

Caron asks if "water" is more than just the provision of water, but everything associated. Holmes say yes, though there are separate rates for water and wastewater, it's all water services capital.

Caron asks about creating different PILLS. Baker says staff will take that one away, they would not to talk to some boards about their provincial impacts not all boards build budgets the same way.

Caron asks about levy impact as dollar figure. Baker says 1% is \$2.95 million.

Busuttill asks about provincial impacts on boards b/c it impacts CAO's advocacy for new deal. Maybe that's not a project for this budget? Baker says yes that's a project worth pursuing.

O'Rourke says that the City is knocking themselves out to meeting housing pledge, not sure what's going to have an impact, so is there a way to create breathing room? Holmes says they don't have any when they look at what the ONgov wants them to do, which is double normal process

Holmes says when an application comes in and there's no staff to look at it, the countdown clock starts anyway. They could always look at gapping too and will adjust accordingly, maybe they won't have the applications to support.

Gibson says they've sat thru many sessions about downloading, but wonders about budget and actuals. Have we had \$1.6 mn in impacts this year. Baker says they've seen \$3 million in costs from exemptions in 2023.

Gibson notes that no one wants a \$500k mortgage at 8%, so issues on the developer front. What does the start-up horizon looks like for 2024? Baker says she has no crystal ball or magic wand. Knows what the market is up against b/c City has some of same pressures.

Baker also notes that it's a really competitive hiring market for staff, and they want to make sure that they have the people in place when they need them.

Gibson asks if there's a project for housing starts in '24. Baker says they've tried to be conservative, but in the case that starts don't slow down they are using other sources of cash flow too.

Goller asks about debt limit. Baker says she's comfortable with the range where the debt is sitting right now and there are a number of considerations at play when the credit rating is being developed. Also, credit rating changes changes cost of borrowing.

Goller asks how debt might impact infrastructure to accomplish housing pledge. Baker says new debt earmarked is for infrastructure renewal, most water and transit. Though to say certain projects would need to be deferred.

Goller says that he would like to see the cost of deferral, how much it would to delay a project five years. Moving on, he asks the cost to keep York 2 lanes for now, will City still have to go to 4 lanes 10 years from now?

Holmes says simple answer is yes, it will cost more in the future, but for now they've limit scope to doing work that will increase housing, especially on the GID lands. She doesn't have a crystal ball either.

Guthrie asks if Holmes will present a differential between budget and full cost? Holmes says yes, they are put that on the budget board.

Klassen asks how much to downgrade DT renewal from great to good? Holmes says about \$15 million per year over the next 4 years. She says they will coming back to council with options about streetscaping in a workshop. Underground work largely unchanged.

Klassen: What are we taking away?

Holmes: That's coming back in spring, but would include sidewalk width, trees, anything you see on the street.

Klassen asks if there's another opportunity down the road to revisit? Holmes says these are big complicated disruptive projects so they like to be "one and done" for decades.

Klassen asks about patio program money taken out of budget. Holmes says they wanted to make program revenue neutral, no use of MAT either, costs include overtime from public works and PT wages to co-ordinate program, which is only part of the year.

Klassen asks about lost opportunities. Holmes says it's going to be difficult to co-ordinate the program, they've getting better with repetition, but there's also increased demand.

O'Rourke asks about need for new water treatment facility. It wasn't in the budget. Holmes says when master plan was updated they were looking at projected growth *at the time* plus new requirement from MOE. Haven't shown up b/c they didn't have new detailed master plan.

Holmes adds that these are long term projects, complicated, take a lot of planning and 2-3 years to build. Believes the City would need it eventually w/o Bill 23, but will have to double check time horizon.

The fun county delegation is now here to answer questions.

Goller asks County to outline the request for \$4.6 million, what does it change? Artuso says it's in the preliminary package from the Sept 12 meeting, and says that there's been about 15-20 evenings where they had to turn people away, plus more families; 10 in Oct, now 17.

Artuso says that they're trying to address the immediate need, plus there's been a rising cost in the servicing to help people. She says she hopes to see reductions once the supportive housing is open.

Goller asks about the timeline for implementation. Artuso says the impact these changes will be in place in 2024, and they've extended the agreement with Holiday Inn as a temp shelter.

Goller asks what would happen if the City only funded 80% of ask. Artuso says they continue to look for opportunities for other funds, especially provincial funding, but she would be hard pressed to say that they don't need it all and they're trying to ride out the next 2 years.

Busuttil asks about the County developing a PILL. Artuso says they can do that and work closely with City staff to identify the gaps. That's also a planned part of the housing symposium, to come up with a shared number for the Wellington area.

Guthrie asks for a direct answer, the \$5 million request is not discretionary, these are costs the County is eating? Artuso says yes.

Guthrie says that's the point of this: hospital, social services, housing, these are the costs of downloading. Those are the costs. The budget starts at 3.3% per cent and there's nothing the City can do about it.

That's a wrap for County so on to other questions. Busuttil asks if the brownfield reserve can be used for other things. Baker says that's an option, those funds are meant to be allocated to the study and clean up of contaminated sites.

Baker adds that if council decides to lower the transfer they would have to decide how much and when to pay it back.

Gibson asks about York Road schedule, wasn't York/Vic supposed to be worked on next summer?

Holmes says they're planning now to do the work in 3 subphases in '24, '26 and '28.

Gibson asks if there's a traffic justification to reduce from four lanes to two. Holmes says it's more a factor of affordability, and it's aligned with the Transportation Mater Plan.

Gibson asks if this is the place for savings? Holmes says that they were looking for ways to stretch out spending and support hosing. It "pains" staff to make this call b/c they already put a lot of work in.

Gayman says funding is a mix of rates and DCs, agrees with Holmes that this is about levels of service, but the key is to make sure the project goes forward and not stall. Especially with Clyde Creek project.

Gibson says that a lot of public engagement has been done on this, are they going to have to go back out there? That seems rhetorical.

Gibson says that he appreciates the acknowledgement that the infrastructure levy needs to slow down. Not that's saying he's right. On capital transfers, Gibson asks if the City is using levy money to finance growth projects like library and police station?

Baker says short answer is no, 2 years ago they separated those projects out of the City transfer as they're their own boards. Staff are realigning the accounts but the allocation of levy money has not changed.

On stormwater, Gibson says it seems like a lot of work coming after the next four years. What's the deal? Gayman says staff have tried to relieve the pressure on the reserve as they sort some stuff out.

Caton asks if keeping York 2 lanes means that they don't have to move Clyde Creek. Gayman says that's right, moving the creek was a big drain on the budget for this project.

O'Rourke asks about paramedics, any new hires and is that part of master plan? Clack-Bush says they're still following the pace of the plan despite pandemic challenges. There is \$ in budget for replacing Elmira Rd station here in Guelph.

Stations in County, Clack-Bush says there's been some reluctance in the past on the part of the County to build facilities and lease them back to the City, but that responsibility lies with the City, and they're talking to social services tomorrow about that.

O'Rourke asks about the differential on 100% renewable and net zero projects. Holmes says there are a couple of 100RE projects, some are opportunity projects and getting the most life out of present equipments. Trying to look at all project thru climate lens.

O'Rourke asks if there are ever any budget constraints applied to master plans when developed. Clack-Bush says master plan charts the course but the budget is the gas pedal. They don't want to constrain the process.

O'Rourke asks about zero based budgeting. Will they be able to look at every department thru that lens? Lee says that as they move more services to central customer service process the can look at funding, which is a kind of 0-based budget.

Busuttill asks thanks staff for looking at Margaret Greene underpass even if it's not till 2033. The community is at least being heard.

Guthrie asks if there's a way the City can sue debt to "spread things out". Baker says they haven't looked at that and tried to leave some room for debt financing with so many unknowns. She doesn't recommend it either.

Guthrie asks how much longer do we have to study and monitor brownfields. When can we do something with them? Gayman says it's site specific and there's due process, but there's nothing stopping real estate interest, but the City has to recognise environmental liability.

Guthrie asks about deferring \$690 mn, where the list of projects presented today the total list? Some deferrals do not sit well with him at all. Baker says the presentation captured the highlights...

...actual # impacted is a lot and staff tried to capture it in this memo: <https://pub-guelph.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=41951>

Guthrie asks if there's a full list. Baker says they will have to put together that list.

Guthrie asks how many. Baker says there were multiple revisions of capital plan and not all projects completely deferred.

Guthrie says that staff have made their decision, but council's already seen this since Friday. Council has some angst about some of these projects - York Rd, DT, etc - not sure how to feel without the full list.

Guthrie asks about pushing out projects beyond 10 years. Clack-Bush says that sounds specific to transit, staff brought recommendations to exec, and certainly council can say pause the whole thing, but they're trying to balance needs of the community.

Guthrie says he wasn't just talking about transit, he's thinking more broadly.

Goller has an additional motion, a request to have staff seek 2 per cent of further cuts and to request local boards do the same.

Motion Councillor Goller



1. That Council request City of Guelph staff to review the multi-year budget with a request to reduce the overall 2024 Budget by 2% and to provide to Council a memo outlining the further reductions of either operating or capital to achieve these reductions for further Council consideration prior to the November 15th public delegation night. And that Council respectfully requests all outside local boards and services to also consider reducing their overall 2024 operating budgets by 2% and to provide a memo to City Council for further consideration.

Klassen seconds. On the motion, Caron says that's council's job. Staff has brought forward their best recommendation and they've done that. It's council's budget now. She respects the intent, but can't support the motion.

Downer says the the motion is direction to come back with 2 per cent, but Goller phrased it as hunt for savings. Goller says he foresees this a memo that would come back with information.

Downer says she's disappointed that they're getting this now, didn't know they were doing motions today. She can't support and says ditto to Caron's comments.

"Find your own two per cent," Downer adds saying that she's not being rude.

Allt asks why two per cent? Goller says \$460 per household year over year is a lot of money and some people are looking at \$1,000. A lot of people on fixed incomes. If he's doing his own budget, he can since 2%.

Allt says that he would like to send the budget to the ONgov, this is from years of downloading so they should make things right. Also, he can't go back as member of GPS board and say come back with 2% next week.

Stewart says that they can go across all departments, but they have to be aware of sacred cows. This is fairly broad, so perhaps there should be something more directed given the size of the budget. Wants to make sure that this is direction that works.

Stewart says he's on for the discussion, but council may be in a dilemma with delegation night next week so this might create more confusion in the short term but staff need some more guidance.

Allt says he needs to be aware that this is the mayor's budget though he's offered in collegially, but he calls the motion a "gotcha moment".

O'Rourke's not sure about the gotcha, but notes that this is going to hit differently in different parts of the city (tax impact). Not sure its council's sole responsibility but likes taking this back to staff to get options. Most outside boards kept to the small increase too.

O'Rourke says we need to prioritise safety and what's essential, and while "essential" means something different to everyone, she wants to focus on live saving.

Caron says it's not just about number, it's about risk, future costs, impact, liability, etc. It's not enough to pick by numbers and they're asking staff for an incredible body of work in 8 days.

Gibson says this is the tragedy of the budget. Council can go line-by-line and make decisions based on priorities. He didn't get to ask how council came up with York Road. Didn't want to make the comparison, but taxes in the county are \$5,700, and a short walk away they're \$11k.

Chew says the onus and the responsibility is on council, but staff have the relationships and the background. Some direction setting is prudent.

Busuttil says she doesn't think she can support this. She's concerned about the levy, but the PILL is out there and doesn't like to tell people that they need to have less because of that downloading. Also needs time to go thru the budget.

Klassen asks if boards were asked to come back with lower budgets. Baker says there was no direction, so there's just the expectation that staff did what they could to bring their budgets back to an affordable lens.

Downer says she's seen this movie before, and while many people don't find 10% palatable, what should council be asking for right now? Stewart says he doesn't want to "upset the apple cart" for delegation night, could look at special meeting the next week.

Stewart: Perhaps there's stuff staff can do, big ticket items, and show their impact. Start with operational, and move down through programs and services. Can we slow growth? Have to make sure there's no legal jeopardy.

Lee adds that if the true nature is to impact the levy, look at capital is not going to offer great dividends. Got to look at operation service delivery and other areas.

Guthrie says that this is becoming a long drawn out thing but he likes what Stewart is saying. Still there's a motion on the floor. Stewart suggests a possible workshop as opposed to a full meeting something less formal to set the pace.

Guthrie thinks a wise idea is have Goller pull his motion, and then table a new motion to request staff to create opportunity for council workshop prior to the 29th for further budget consideration.

Goller says he's concerned about not adding more Welcoming Streets funding, but doesn't want to add to the levy. He will remove the motion if they can put together a formal motion to have staff put together that workshop. Guthrie says he's got 5!

Guthrie has called the meeting back to order, and we've got a new motion to have a special workshop meeting on November 22 and it's passed unanimously.

Goller says that with delegation night next week he says that the expectation of the community is that 10 is as high as it will go. Guthrie says that council has a lot of work ahead of them.

And that's a wrap for this meeting.



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