



**Adam A. Donaldson** @adamadonaldson

Nov 22, 2023 • 91 tweets • [adamadonaldson/status/1727460571325321597](https://twitter.com/adamadonaldson/status/1727460571325321597)

Coming up at 6 pm, it's a workshop meeting of council.

The topic: #GuelphBudget 2024-2027.

The Politico preview: <https://guelphpolitico.ca/2023/11/17/city-council-preview-whats-on-the-agenda-for-the-november-21-meeting-2/>

The gallery is full... of City staff!



Mayor Guthrie has called the meeting to order.

No Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof, so we move on to the main topic.

Guthrie recaps noting that this was an additional meeting added because council wanted a "more focused" opportunity to discuss options about reducing the budget. It's a deeper dive. Guthrie thanks staff, and notes again that this is a tough budget this year.

Guthrie also thanks citizens and businesses. He says that council hears there and thanks them for suggestions.

CAO Stewart begins. He also thanks staff for helping to guide the conversation and adds that he likes this format because of the informality of it. Staff have set the table to have a fulsome discussion tonight. Notes that Police Chief Cobey and GPL CEO Kraft.

Stewart says that they want to support council through these discussions tonight, and it's nothing personal. Also notes that there may be a need to go in-camera if there's a matter of contracts or identifiable individuals.

Stewart notes that the assessment growth has gone up and the Wellington County ask for social services has also gone down. It's not a full per cent, but there's already some savings! 🙄

We're going to kick off with local boards. Guthrie says that this is a good time for questions of clarity or impact. He also reminds council that the budget board is still live.

Guthrie turns it over to Glen, the facilitator.

Allt asks about the 5 new library staffers, why are those positions important right now? Kraft says that they need to start filling positions to take the burden off present staff, not approving them this year means deferring them to another year and delaying project.

Allt asks if these would be a competitive process. Kraft says they've not hired enough staff over the last 10 years, and now library service is back at pre-COVID level. Need the staff one way or the other.

Allt asks about impact on the total City budget. GM Finance Baker notes that they've been phasing in impact over last 2-3 years so there's already room, but if council wants to cut they will have to decide if it's a straight reduction. Will have to spend money eventually.

Gibson asks about phasing in the hires, waiting till May to post the jobs. Kraft says he would like to hire as soon as possible, GPL has one HR person so it will take a while to bring on all 5, but council can certainly lean that way.

No other Qs for the library, so we move next to the police. Klassen begins by asking about the best way for the community to provide feedback about police budget. She gets a lot of emails and council's ability to influence that budget is limited.

Chief Cobey says they can always email the police board directly (info on GPS website). The budget was introduced on Oct 5 and passed a couple of weeks later.

Klassen asks if the police get emails about their budget. Cobey says he doesn't get any personally. Klassen asks if there's anything that council can do about the timing of board budgets. Maybe as a takeaway. Stewart says that's an interesting convo to have.

Stewart adds that it might be better to direct that to the two members of council that sit on the police board (which is Guthrie and Allt). Also, City has asked Police to take part in the annual community report in June, which could be another place to ask questions.

Caton asks Cobey if council doesn't approve the increase, what does that look like? Cobey says impact would immediate and significant. Also, there are follow-ups that the board have to explore under the Police Services Act. The budget presented has everything staggered in...

...but this is the minimum budget required to had adequate service in this community. The concern is that they're phasing in point-in-time demands over 2-3 years, so Cobey thinks there's already jeopardy.

Caton asks about Ontario Civilian Police Commission, this would be the option that the board could pursue. Cobey says that he can't go back to his board and ask for less because he thinks this is what the City needs.

Gibson asks if this is also about the staff's wellbeing. Cobey says that they're breaking people, here and across the province, police officers didn't get to work from home during the pandemic. Every day we're asking more and more of officers with fewer and fewer resources.

Cobey says that officers were first responders to 3 deaths by suicide in 48 hours. And as soon as they're done, they get in their car and answer the next call. This is personal, Cobey adds.

O'Rourke says there's no question that police value the service, but people are reacting to the amount of the increase over four years. She asks what happens to make sure that we're not constantly playing catch up.

Cobey says an open source look would show that Guelph is at the low end of expanded costs. To catch-up they would have to ask for all money up front, which is not responsible. They're going into this knowing they'll still be behind in four years.

O'Rourke asks about capital costs. Cobey says that the capital costs are for equipment, there's nothing for the building.

Cobey says that they don't make this lightly, and they have the validation and data from an outside arbiter in KPMG.

Follow-up about the County (though no one is here). Busuttil asks if the County will be part of community report in June. Stewart says that it will because they're asking all the agencies, there's also the governance discussion requested by council. (Meeting about that tmw)

Busuttil says that she struggles because council gets the bill and then they have no input into the details, and the people want to know about details. Stewart says that maybe we're off kilter because we're missing that piece and it could be addressed in the future.

That's a wrap for boards and shared services. Moving on:

## Agenda overview

6:00 p.m.	Opening and Mayor's remarks (5 min)
6:05 p.m.	CAO's remarks (5 min)
6:10 p.m.	Option 2: Local boards and shared services operating budget investment reductions (30 min)
6:40 p.m.	Facilitator overview and instructions (5 min)
6:45 p.m.	Option 1: Deferring new operating budget investments (50 min)
7:35 p.m.	Break (5 min)
7:40 p.m.	Option 3: Reducing investment in service enhancements and 100RE capital projects (30 min)
8:10 p.m.	Option 4: Slowing down the pace of growth (20 min)
8:30 p.m.	Time for closed items if required (30 min)
9:00 p.m.	Facilitated session ends
9:00 p.m.	Mayor's remarks and intentions

MYB Workshop: November 22, 2023

## Option categories

1. Deferring new operating budget investments (50 mins)
2. Local boards and shared services operating budget reductions (30 mins)
3. Reducing investment in service enhancements and 100RE capital projects (30 mins)
4. Slowing down the pace of growth (20 mins)
5. Service levels (30 minutes)

MYB Workshop: November 22, 2023

The flow:

## Session flow

1. Council: Identify priority items to discuss
2. Staff: Provide clarity about impacts and risks
3. Council: Additional questions for clarity
4. Staff: Provide further clarity
5. Repeat

MYB Workshop: November 22, 2023

Not focusing on stuff already deferred, and we're also not focused on new spending. Might not get to everything (we're already 10 minutes behind) and beware of tipping into potential legal matters.

Next, deferring new operating expenses.

First three new positions:

Council committee co-ordinator position, Clerk O'Brien says that will be to support hybrid meetings,

1200 additional staff hours have been required and not approving this means in-person only meetings. Board committee co-ordinator. This has to do with elevating some advisory committees that are now treated like local boards (legislative requirement) and tied to new framework. Not hiring this position means only supporting 4 committees.

The third items was compensation for advisory committees, which were meant to take down economic barriers and create equity.

Allt asks if there's not a requirement under AODA for hybrid meetings. O'Brien says there's not an explicit requirement, but certainly hybrid meetings offer a high level of accessibility. Some things like closed captioning would continue.

Next, transit route review plan. Year 3, which has increased frequency for #5, and Sunday on demand extension plus three deferrals. Laura Catalano-Bragues, Supervisor, Scheduling and Service Planning, says that they're presently feeling the pressure on #5.

On demand, Catalano-Bragues notes that this will allow 5 more hours of service on a Sunday. Deferral of 98 Speedvale route impact issues with increasing number of Conestoga College students. That demand will only increase.

#98 is intended to be full crosstown, but with construction they didn't want to introduce something that would then immediately have to go on detour. Also delayed is the #13 going both ways.

O'Rourke asks if Transit's looking at slowing the pace of electrification or expansion, or phasing both in. Catalano-Bragues says that question about EV should go to fleet service. As for the plan, current networked needed enhancement and future adjustments. Already phased.

Billings asks if the \$8 million in 2024/2025 can be "smoothed over". Courtney McDonald, Manager, Transit Business Service, says it's been smoothed out already over 13 years, but they could smooth it out further.

O'Rourke asks about electric signs, can that project be scaled down to hubs only. McDonald says recommendation is 100 top stops, \$600k each year plus budget impacts. It's spread over three years, but it could be spread out further.

Gibson asks if the charging infrastructure will be in place as more EV buses are added. Staff says yes, and as more new buses are added, more infrastructure is being added. They're also looking at on route charging options.

O'Rourke asks about cost of EVs. Staff say that they're replacing buses at end of life, and it would be more costly to keep those buses versus buying a new EV bus.

Klassen asks about impact on net zero goals slowing down purchase of EV buses. DCAO Holmes says those goals will be affected.

Guthrie asks if the City is spending millions on buses and have the infrastructure to charge them. Staff says yes.

Caron asks about impact on fuel costs if we stick to diesel buses. Allt suggest that staff prepare a memo looking at the industry rate of change and the potential liabilities if the slow down on the conversion.

Gibson asks if staff can be given multiyear direction. Stewart says that this can be done, but it's a matter of what council's comfort with the changes are. Council and staff have to do these things together to

mitigate the surprise.

Gibson notes that \$10.9 million in salary increase is dedicated to expansions and enhancement of service, some of that is health and safety like paramedics, but what if they asked staff tonight to take off 1 per cent, so lose \$3 million in salaries?

Stewart says this would be the "bucket" to do it in, reducing something before it begins, but "beware of new beginnings" he says. There are reasons why we got here tonight. It could mean staggering, but it's in the year after's budget though.

Gibson agrees with Stewart, it's never personal, it's about looking at affordability. There are also so many unknowns in this budget, and if those things appear to change (inflation coming down, ONgov making us whole) maybe there's room to wait in this budget.

O'Rourke asks if there was any phasing looked at around trails and active transportation. Gene Matthews, GM of Parks, says that they have, and they can take another look at council's request.

Billings asks when they'll find out about grant money around housing (assuming she means the federal Housing Accelerator fund).

Turns out that Billings means it's the Building Housing Faster grant. Baker says they're still waiting the specs, and don't anticipate that they will have the details in the for next week's meetings.

Guthrie asks about possible positive variances for this year, and if Baker can consider if there's an amount that she would recommend using and where she would recommend using it. That's a takeaway.

We return after a five minute break. We will now look at the third "bucket": Reducing investment in service enhancements and 100RE capital projects.

Baker starts by clarifying that it's table 2 and table 4 in this attachment. Those are the projects we're looking at. <https://pub-guelph.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=42454>

Gibson asks if staff might consider a conversation if whether 100RE is better than low-to-zero emissions, which is a measurement that the province and the feds use. Wonders if the costs outweigh the benefit with 100RE.

Holmes says that net zero and 100RE are not the same, but they all get to the same place. Right now, staff are pursuing the goals that council has established.

Busuttill asks if the cycling network numbers in table 2 are the reserve fund or mix of grants. Baker says all those amounts are for the reserve funds, but there could be opportunity for grant revenue. Some of these projects have multiple sources.

Billings asks about Traffic Signal Pre-emption/Priority Implementation, table 2 says \$2.4 million, but budget is \$4.8 mn, what's the deal? City engineer Gayman says the costs are split from various sources, and it's a lot of money upfront.

Baker says that this is why they use the reserve fund, to manage the cash flow over multiple years. There are a number of projects that do the same thing.

Guthrie asks how many buses \$2,856,960 buys. GM or Operations Godfrey says it buys 2. Baker clarifies that the table only represents part of the cost, ICIP funding covers the rest.

Guthrie asks if with the ICIP funding, is council allowed to not buy as many EVs so that the City can save money. If it can't be changed so it, but would like to know if they can.

O'Rourke asks about the operations campus expenditures. Baker notes that staff brought that back earlier this year, and they've taken it back and are rethinking it. Will come back to council sometime next year, as they're looking at other operations buildings. It's complicated.

Next, Slowing down the pace of growth "bucket". Guthrie says that \$690mn in cap. already deferred, but didn't see rate impact. Baker says its complicated. Majority of cap. growth is from DCs, not a rate impact, and DCs come when permits are issued.

Baker says that there's a lot of ready to go land for next year so the ability to reduce costs from growth is very minimum.

Guthrie asks Gayman if he can look at roads through asset management and determine what work can be pushed off another few years. Also, is there active transportation/transit that could be funded w/o it. Gayman says they did that work, and a lot is already past due.

Gibson says that his math says operations growing by 6% per year, while city grows 2-3% year. Capital's slowing down while operating seems to not be slowing down. That's more of a comment. Gayman says the capital budget is still going up year over year even with deferrals.

Next, current service levels. Gibson asks about loose leaf collection in the fall, what's the cost to provide the service? Godfrey says \$131k is what City pays to contractors to take away 4,000 tonnes of leaves every season, City staff do the rest.

Godfrey adds that the City does encourage mulching. Without the service, people would have to bag the leaves themselves and bring them in to solid waste. That would create more traffic. Could contract the service out, but that could cost more.

Allt asks about the impact on leaves on the street. Godfrey says if leaves are left on the burb and bike lane there's impact. Bylaw gets calls. Makes winter control more difficult too.

O'Rourke asks if there's any benefit to doing four playground replacements per year instead of five. Matthews says current replacement cycle is 18-20 years, 100 in the program, some playground deteriorate quicker because of use and that's why they're inspected.

O'Rourke notes that some communities have playgrounds from the 70s, are we too fast? Matthews says no, CAA dictates timeline and they are seeing a lot of ongoing maintenance on older equipment. Year-to-year there are changes and reprioritise.

Gibson asks if inspections go into asset renewal. They do. Gibson asks if there's a reserve where if they run into a year in need can they do more? Baker says there's not that kind of microbial focus, each department gets an allocation from infrastructure renewal funding.

No more Qs so that's the end of the formally facilitated part of the meeting.

Goller asks about transfer to Guelph General Hospital. Do they need the money this year? Stewart says they might have to come back with an answer for that.

Intentions? Guthrie asks to start with reductions and reminds council that they will have to work with staff on wording and advice by Monday at 4 pm.

Goller: Wants to reduce allocation to bicentennial to \$250k; delay for hospital levy; efficiency target for ops budget.

Gibson: Fund half of GPL request, or phase-in 50% over two years; phase-in 50% for the City budget too; direction to staff to reduce ops growth.

Downer: G2G Trail community project, she's had convos with Hiking Trail Club and staff, might take \$75k out.

O'Rourke: Eliminate or rescope digital transit signs, spread out transit/active t costs, affordable housing reserve; funding the physical recruitment; 0-based budgeting

Billings: Traffic signal priority, a couple of positions she'd like to see eliminated, addition to council training

Caron: Deferring Emma-to-Earl bridge.

Guthrie: Ditto to some of the things colleagues have mentioned, plus use of surplus.

Billings suggests she might move the hospital levy to operating contingency reserve.

Additions:

Goller: Will second physical recruitment, \$1.5 million to affordable housing reserves, reinstate level of funding to downtown redevelopment.

Caton: Wants to propose motion to expand tax deferral to larger range of low income people.

Caron: Moving the bicentennial planning to a community working group model for 2024, not sure that's a budget item but it will let work start early, especially with fundraising. Dittos downtown.

Guthrie encourages everyone to get their questions in. They've had a tonne of time, had this extra meeting, so on the 29th, it's decision day and not rehashing day. Heads up, he's going to be persnickety that day (respectfully).

Guthrie thanks council for the good work this month. The feedback's been good and respectful, there are takeaways from this process, and they will tweak as they move forward. It's crunch time the next week!



fyi: Budget board closes on Sunday so that staff have time to answer Qs. Ward 4 town hall is tomorrow at West End Rec Centre at 7 pm.

Meeting adjourned!





@threadreaderapp unroll please!

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