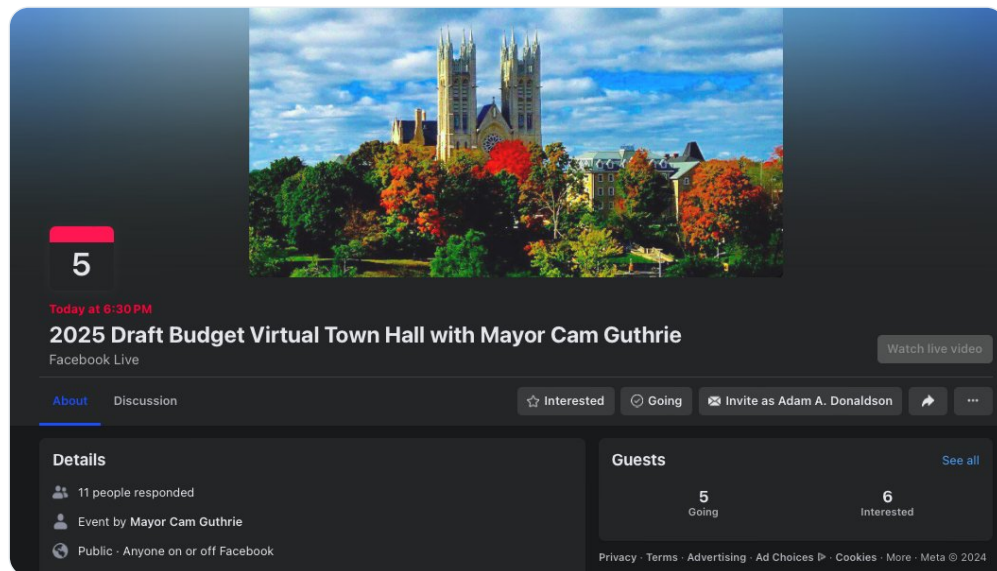




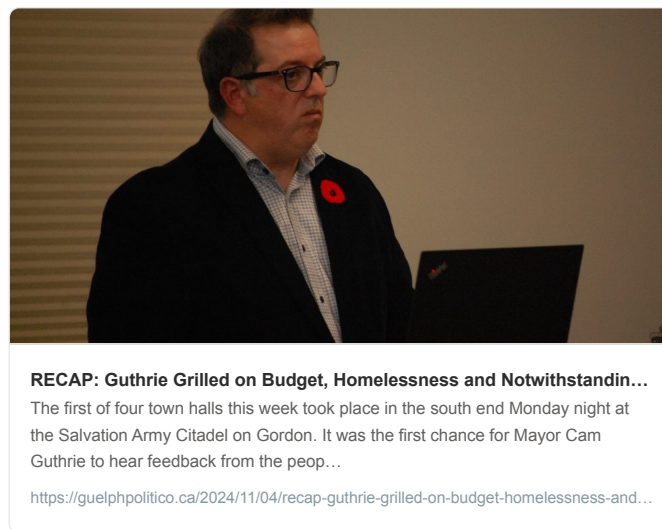
**Adam A. Donaldson** @adamadonaldson

Nov 5, 2024 · 49 tweets · [adamadonaldson/status/1853941539028021669](https://twitter.com/adamadonaldson/status/1853941539028021669)

Mayor's Budget Town Hall night #2: The Facebook Live edition. Ironically, I will be following it here on Twitter. Stand by...



As we wait, catch up with last night's deets:



We begin. Mayor Guthrie thanks everyone for jumping on when there's some competing events for people's political attention. He says he's running this whole think solo from his kitchen table.

Guthrie says he's "going to blab" for a little to set the stage: Again, this is a draft budget, and he says that if he doesn't know the answer to a question, we will let you know that and find a way to get you an answer via email: [mayor@guelph.ca](mailto:mayor@guelph.ca).

-Last year, council approved 4-year multiyear budget and it was a tough one. A lot of stuff they were trying to get done, and with large tax levy increases year-over-year.  
-In his opinion, things were looking unaffordable. He listen to feedback from people and came to this...

-His Strong Mayors directive to reduce this year's total budget increase to 4% max, with focus on infrastructure and regulatory needs. City's portion is 2.59%, which leaves the 7 shared services to come in with the remaining 1.4.

fyi, Police, Library, GRCA, WDG Public Health, The Elliott, DGBA and County Social Services will get their budgets approved in January.

There are about 40 people watching this town hall right now.

Guthrie now covering the process, adding amendments at the end of September and the mayor's option to veto and super-majority of council option to override veto.

Guthrie says again that it's his hope to avoid having to do a veto. He's very serious about working well with council to have a wholesome process without vetos or overrides.

Guthrie now gets into some highlights:

- fully funded capital and capital forecast.
- South End Rec Centre and main library untouched
- Massive investments in downtown infrastructure needed.
- Free transit pilot for high schoolers and seniors.

Changes?

- 10-year transit route and schedule review pushed out [another] 1-3 years.
- Waste Innovation Resource Centre will see service reductions due to Blue Box transition.
- Welcoming Streets and Tool Library are in conversation after hearing from people about those concerns.

Guthrie will now get into Qs. Morgan Dandie asks about transit strike, but Guthrie says he won't speak to contractual matters and says that they're looking for the best outcome.

Alex says the Police Budget is out of control, which is not a question. Guthrie says that it's true, council has no control over that budget, but residents can attend the board meetings were those decisions are being made.

(It's worth noting that the Guelph Police board still meets virtually, so it's a little hard to attended in a meaningful way.)

Morgan again: How does mayor justify reduction to transit capital while increasing parking operating? Guthrie says he will have to take a look at those deets and get back to her.

Guthrie confirms a post I made to the chat that police and social services will be the only 2 of the 7 that come in over the 4% benchmark, but he I didn't just get it from him last night.

Q: What are you doing to find savings, cut every dept by 25%! Guthrie says it's not that easy (cut ambulance, for example.) All projects were measured by impact to public, legislative/regulatory requirements, safety, and the creation of new housing.

Guthrie adds that they also various internal systems to continually improve and find efficiencies, plus the annual work of the internal auditor and the value for money audits.

Question from Hugh Whiteley: Why 4%? Guthrie got this last night, and he thought it was better than 10 while also staying on top of utility rate impacts, inflation and construction costs. But he felt that the City needed a "shot in the arm" and make structural changes for afford.

Why not 7%? Guthrie says he wanted the City to challenge itself.

Question from Lorelei Root: Why the change in decision to use Strong Mayor's? Guthrie say that he wanted to move on housing and give new direction for a budget, and it's also now legislative responsibility for mayor to direct budget.

Question from Dean Martin (?!): Should council pause all bike lane projects b/c of ONgov leg? Guthrie says the law is still under consideration, and he's directed staff to answer that question. The city will be asked to give feedback as part of that process.

Q: Any potential for subsidies to lower the costs for summer camp? Guthrie says that's interested and he's willing to look into that. The City does fund summer camps through groups like the Neighbourhood Support Coalition.

Q: More soccer fields? Guthrie says they're doing an engagement for planned sports fields, and there will be a report coming back to council about that sometime next year.

Q: What about keeping increases in line with rate of inflation? Guthrie says that would be a great idea, but that's hard for municipalities to do. More than 80% of workforce is unionised, and sometimes increases are out of City control through binding arbitration.

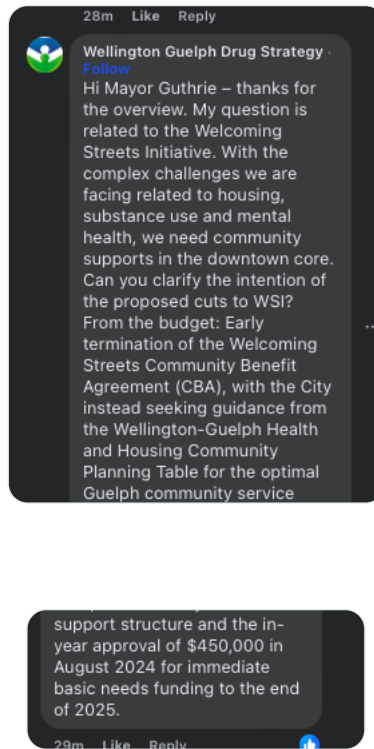
Guthrie adds that costs of utilities like heating and fuel also drive costs, buildings need to be heated and buses need to have gas (or electricity). Also don't want to underfund capital.

Cameron Spence: "That's only if you pay transit drivers."

Guthrie says he doesn't know what Spence is talking about.

Another question about bike lanes Guthrie says that the City has been ahead of this, because look at Speedvale, which cycling infrastructure was moved off the main road and onto side streets. As a busy road and a hospital route, it didn't make sense to take Speed. down to 2 lanes

WGDS asks about Welcoming Streets cuts. Guthrie says that he had heard mixed things about the effectiveness of the program with downtown business, but he does have a meeting with Guelph CHC later this week, and he heard from 1 DT biz at Chamber today whose positive.



Martin Collier notes that not building Emma-Earl bridge could have saved \$23 million. Guthrie says council decided to move forward with it, and ONgov has rubber-stamped it, but thanks.

Morgan back and accuses Cam of disdain for transit, which is key to affordable housing. Guthrie says Sunday on-demand was supposed to be cut, and he advocated for it to continue, so he respectfully disagrees. He's also advocating for more ridership with free rides.

Shelby asks about in-direct control on police budget. Guthrie says there's influence, two members of council sit on the police board (Guthrie and Allt right now), same with other boards. He also a "very big" supporter of the police.

Q: Any plan for Drill Hall, affordable housing maybe? Guthrie recalls that staff recommended to sell it earlier this year after requests for proposals, but there are a lot of restrictions b/c of Metrolinx tracks, and housing is one of those restrictions.

There's a feasibility study now to see if it can be turned into an arts centre, but yes, there's about \$150k in budget for maintenance. There was agreement at council that the City put a lot of money into it so not sell it off so willy nilly.

What happened to that Housing Accelerator Fund cash? Guthrie says they're using it to make internal processes go faster, they have to unlock 700 new affordable units over 3 years and put together a demonstration site for housing, which will be on Edinburgh.

Guthrie adds that they're also creating incentive programs, about \$1.5 million to help with those ends. That will be coming to council next week, fyi. The City's got to meet criteria in each of three years to keep the money flowing.

Q: What's the motivation for boards to keep budget in check? Guthrie says he's sent out letters to the 7 asking them to think about affordability as they put their budgets together, but Guelph council has no direct control. He says they're doing their best & they have obligations

Dean Martin: What stops the mayor from rejecting those boards' budgets? Guthrie says Strong Mayor powers don't extend to the outside boards. Also, council can reject police budget, but then it goes to OCOP how rule in favour of the police board almost every time.

Question about growing number of encampments, what's in the budget to alleviate this? Guthrie says there was \$3-4 million extra in budget this year for social services, and we're still over budget by about \$1 million. Now waiting for announcement for funds from Feds.

Q: About additional funding for parks with potential encampments moving there? Guthrie says they think they can handle that capacity, they are looking at doing more through the Basic Needs Table at the County.

Question about washrooms at the transit terminal. Guthrie notes that more public washrooms downtown was a recent discussion at council and he and council are trying to get the washrooms at the GO Station open.

Q: Anything new about Royal Brock site? Guthrie says no, the developer can come to staff and get site plan approval tomorrow. He hears they're getting ready.

Back to bike lanes: Guthrie says that he's not fully in favour of giving up traffic lanes but he doesn't like the ONgov overreach.

Last Q: Why fund an arts centre when we're cutting arts funding? Guthrie says he doesn't know what the outcome of feasibility study is going to be, but he starts with idea the building shouldn't be empty. City put \$5 million into Drill Hall, but it might be suited for art centre.

Guthrie thanks everyone and invites people to get in touch with him with their feedback.

Next town halls:

Wednesday November 6, 6:30-8:00 pm | Wards 3 & 4  
West End Community Centre  
21 Imperial Road S

Friday November 8, 6:30-8:00 | Wards 1 & 2  
Victoria Road Recreation Centre  
151 Victoria Road N

And we out!



@threadreaderapp unroll please!

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