

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF HORTON

Finance Committee Meeting

February 17, 2015

There was a Finance Committee Meeting held in the Municipal Council Chamber on Tuesday February 17, 2015. Present was Chair Jamey Larone, Mayor Bob Kingsbury, Deputy Mayor Robert A. Johnston, Councillor Dave Bennett and Councillor Glen Campbell. Staff present was Jennifer Barr, Treasurer/Tax Collector and Mackie McLaren, CAO/Clerk.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Larone called the meeting to order at 6:55 pm.

2. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There was no declaration of pecuniary interest expressed by Members of the Committee or Staff.

3. REQUEST FOR 2013 ASSESSMENT CORRECTION

The CAO/Clerk informed the Members that the owner of roll 010-34210 and 010-34212 has requested a refund for 2013 taxes in the amount of \$665.94. He explained that there was an error by the owner's solicitor when registering the property. There is only one parcel of land but the property was registered as being in two parts in 2013. The situation was corrected in 2014 but an application to MPAC under Section 357 of the Municipal Act was denied as it was not MPAC's error.

The Members discussed this request. Councillor Bennett asked what Horton's share of the \$665.94 was. He was told it would be approximately 40%. The County and School Board would return their share of this refund to us.

Moved by Dave Bennett, Seconded by Bob Kingsbury that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that they refund the owner of roll 010-34210 and 34212 \$665.94 for 2013 in taxes paid in error due to an error in registration of the property into 2 parcels rather than 1 parcel by the owner's solicitor.

Carried

4. REQUEST TO ADVERTISE IN MILITARY SERVICE RECOGNITION BOOK

Chair Larone noted that this request was sent to Mayor Kingsbury and he directed it to this Committee for consideration. There was discussion as to what benefit this would be to Horton's vets and to our local Legion Branch in Renfrew. Following discussion the CAO/Clerk was requested to contact the Renfrew Legion for their input into this advertisement request by the Ontario Legion. It is possible that they would appreciate a donation of equal size at the local level.

5. DRAFT 2015 FEES AND CHARGES CHANGES

The Treasurer/Tax Collector reviewed the changes to the fees and charges suggested by the Committees and staff. After discussion, the following resolution was presented.

Moved by Glen Campbell, Seconded by Robert A. Johnston that Finance Committee recommend Council adopt the updated fees and charges schedule.

Carried

6. LOT DEVELOPMENT FEES – CONSTRUCTION PRICE INDEX VS. CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

The Treasurer/Tax Collector presented a report to the Committee Members in which she pointed out to Council that she has recently noticed that the reference to Consumer Price Index mentioned in a previous resolution supporting a cost of living increase to the Lot Development Charge should have been a reference to the Construction Price Index. There is reference to a specific Index Catalogue #62.007. She has learned that Stats Canada no longer supports this index number.

She recommended that the Lot Development fee be increased according to the Construction Price Index which is a blended rate for 2013 and 2104 of 1.6%. The members agreed that this was a housekeeping item.

7. COUNCIL REMUNERATION

Councillor Bennett recalled that at the end of the January 30, 2015 Human Resources Committee Meeting he had requested permission to continue his review of the 2015 Council Remuneration set by the previous Council late in 2014 which was granted. He informed the Members that he has reviewed the 2010-2014 remuneration data prepared by the Treasurer. He believes that the Council Members are \$1,000 underpaid. The base salary should be \$16,000 for Councillor. His review also shows that the Mayor is \$500 under paid.

He said that there was no reason why Council Members have to have a reduced pay scale. He also asked why there was a restriction of 1 conference per Councillor. He suggested that there may be a need to attend a second conference to request grants.

Mayor Kingsbury said there just isn't the money to send a Councillor to more than 1 conference a year. Chair Larone noted that the current Remuneration by-law states 1 convention/conference but adds a Councillor may attend more if approved by Council.

Deputy Mayor Johnston said there never has been a time when every Council Member attends a conference. He objects to the restriction for him. As former Mayor he always attended the OGRA and Ontario East Conferences each year. This has permitted him to establish networking opportunities and wants to continue this practice. He noted that there is more transparency now as a report has to be completed by a member attending a conference or convention.

Mayor Kingsbury suggested that if a Councillor said they had to attend a convention for whatever reason, Council can make the decision.

Chair Larone said if he and the public member on the Waste Management Committee did not attend the Waste Management Convention in Montreal 2 years ago Horton would never have made the contact with Pnewko Bros. for pickup of waste plastic containers at our Landfill Site. He added that this contact was made by the public member.

Councillor Campbell said that he attended 2 of 4 conferences in the last term. The conferences were tied to meetings with a Provincial Minister. He said he always looks at the agenda and if not interested in what was to be presented, he wouldn't go. If he doesn't attend, he would support a Councillor attending a second conference in his place. He believes that this is the intent of the additional conferences in the remuneration by-law.

The Treasurer/Tax Collector said in reviewing the 4 year averages she concurs that the average Councillor remuneration was \$15,900, so \$16,000 would be justified. When asked by Chair Larone on the average for the Mayor, Ms. Barr said the average would be \$20,225.

Moved by Dave Bennett, Seconded by Robert A. Johnston that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that they amend the Council Remuneration By-law to increase the Council Remuneration to the average of the last 4 years remuneration, being:

Councillor - from \$15,000 to \$16,000 minus health benefit costs
Mayor - from \$20,000 to \$20,500. Mayor receives health benefits through the County.

Discussion

Chair Larone said 4 years ago, the previous Council had the first review of Council's remuneration by an outside committee. He doesn't want to set the remuneration for himself. He accepts Councillor Bennett's analysis.

Councillor Campbell said on the 4 year average his own remuneration was on the low end. He missed the odd meeting and only attends conferences when required. As his average was lower than the current remuneration he believes he has already received an increase.

Councillor Bennett said he wouldn't be asking for this if the rate was similar to last year and can't accept that this Council deserves less than the previous Council.

Deputy Mayor Robert A. Johnston said that he and Councillor Bennett were not here last September to discuss remuneration. But he recalls the last Council he was on raised up the remuneration for the past Council.

Mayor Kingsbury said the previous Council looked at a fair wage last September. His concern is the public are aware of the remuneration and they have accepted it. He suggested a fairer way would be go through 2015 with the current remuneration and re-look at it for 2016. He has a problem with looking at it now.

Chair Larone agreed.

Deputy Mayor Johnston said that he has learned over the year that sometimes we make mistakes and we have to admit it. He said he finds it hard that the remuneration is below the previous 4 year average.

Chair Larone called for a vote:

For: Councillor Bennett and Deputy Mayor Johnston
Against: Mayor Kingsbury, Councillor Campbell and Chair Larone.

Resolution Lost.

8. 2015 BUDGET

- 2014 and 2013 Surplus to Reserve

Chair Larone presented a report prepared by the Treasurer/Tax Collector showing the departmental surpluses in 2013 and 2014 and explained departments resulted in a surplus situation.

- Department Summary – 2015 Budget

Jennifer Barr reviewed the current budget situation by Department. Currently the budget is showing an increase of \$17,395 over Council's goal. This represents at 2.97% increase when the goal was 2%. Ms. Barr presented several options for the Committee to consider that would reduce the increase to 2.33%.

Mayor Kingsbury asked what the members thought. Councillor Campbell said he estimated the draft would be around 3% increase. Mayor Kingsbury said that with a budget under 3% it could provide some wiggle room for future infrastructure projects. Councillor Campbell said he would rather see average taxes throughout the 4 years of this term rather than some years high and some years low.

- 2015 Capital Budget

Ms. Barr reviewed the draft 2015 Capital and 2015 Reserve Budgets. She presented spread sheets looking down the road for the next 7 years. She explained that there are sufficient funds in reserve for equipment purchases and building improvements. We have an issue with Roads Infrastructure. She suggested we establish a fund of 1-2% tax increase for infrastructure reserves. She called up the current debenture borrowing rates from Infrastructure Ontario and noted that a 10 year Serial Debenture is 1.93%

Ms. Barr noted that the Township is not using all available Development Charge funds for road capital projects.

She also noted that the 10 year capital budget must be reviewed and accepted before the end of 2015.

The Members discussed COLA. Ms. Barr said that the Consumer Price Index indicates 1.9% for Ontario in 2014. She said that to go to a 2% COLA to match the County of Renfrew, would only cost \$660.00. The Members suggested that the \$660 could be used towards infrastructure.

Chair Larone thanked the Members and Staff for doing a real good job drafting this year's budget. A decision yet to be discussed is are we going to create a 1% Infrastructure fund. He noted that the 4 year average tax rate increase was 3.56% over the last four years.

Ms. Barr said she expects the Education rates to be released shortly. When she receives them she can provide the Finance Committee with what the overall tax increase could be when the rates for the Township, County and Education are combined. The Members asked Ms. Barr to have this information available for them after March 31.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Glen Campbell, Seconded by Robert A. Johnston that this Committee Meeting be adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Carried

CHAIR

CAO/Clerk