

The Gibsons Way

headlines from the Hall

Volume 13 - May 2017



GIBSONS COUNCIL:

Mayor

- Wayne Rowe

Councillors

- Stafford Lumley
- Charlene SanJenko
- Jeremy Valeriote
- Silas White



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Message from Mayor Rowe

For many weeks, Council has been working with staff to finalize the Town's 2017 budget. For those of you who received notice of significant increases in the assessed value of your property, it will come as no surprise that taxes will also increase. We have been able to keep this relatively modest, however, the Town's portion of your tax bill this year will increase by 3% percent. Half of this amount will help address inflation, while the other half will be allocated to a reserve fund for future asset replacement. As prudent as it is to create this fund for the replacement of aging infrastructure, we recognize that the \$80,000 we can allocate from this year's tax revenue is a very modest amount for this important purpose.

The increase in residential assessments has one important implication for our taxpayers; it affects the Town's share of the SCRCD budget. Here is one way to look at it: each year, Gibsons must pay its slice of the SCRCD budget 'pie'; with the increase in assessments being particularly dramatic in Gibsons, our slice of the 'pie' becomes proportionately larger. So in addition to the 3% percent mentioned earlier, local taxpayers will pay an additional 1.5%, comprising the additional charge by SCRCD and increases to other agencies such as the School District and Police taxes. The overall average residential tax will increase by 4.5% percent for an average house in Gibsons, assessed at \$472,000.

While residential properties increased 30% percent, commercial properties increased less dramatically at 15% percent and thus will see an average tax increase of less than 1% percent. Other increases will be required to our utility rates. Water will be, on average, up by 5 per cent, and sewer will have an average increase of 6% percent. The garbage collection fee will remain the same. Taxes are not a favourite topic of conversation, especially

when they include necessary increases – so, lest you think all is doom and gloom, it's important to bear in mind some of the important improvements planned for 2017. Thanks to recently received grants, Council now has the opportunity to approve the completion of a multi-use pathway up Gibsons Way, linking Upper and Lower Gibsons; renovations to the land portion of Armours Beach, while working with other community partners to attract additional funds to improve the beach overall, with work to begin in late 2017; and more mundane but vitally important work to improve and increase the integrity of our water lines.

More exciting news lies ahead, as we marry Federal 'Canada 150' grant with Town of Gibsons funds to support our work with the Sea Cavalcade team, the Coast Cultural Alliance and the Gibsons Jazz Society on major celebrations for this summer. Please check the Town's website in coming weeks to learn more about what lies in store for you, your friends and families.

J. Wayne Rowe, Mayor

2017 Budget Highlights

Here are some key details on this year's Budget:

BUDGET TALKS

Average Residential Tax Increase – 4.5%
Average Commercial Tax Increase – 1.0%

Including significant capital improvements:

- Gibsons Way multi-use pathway from North Road to Seaview Road
- Armours Beach Park renovations
- Waterline upgrades on Gibsons Way, N. Fletcher and Gower Point Roads

The waterline upgrades are made possible by significant grant funding (83%) from the Federal and Provincial Governments.

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Council Update - Chipseal Project

In recent months our staff have been publicly criticized for the Town's Chipseal Program that was implemented in the Hillcrest neighbourhood. This criticism, directed primarily at our Director of Engineering, has been in person, on social media and in online publications. Not unlike any other employee/employer relationship, Council, as the employer, makes decisions and staff implement those decisions. The decision to use chipseal on those roads was made by a unanimous vote of Council and, as a Council, we cannot condone staff being villainized for our decisions.

Faced with the daunting task of finding \$500,000 per year to maintain our roads, Council requested Town staff investigate other options to maintain our roads within a more affordable budget. This resulted in the unanimous decision of Council to proceed with the chipseal process.

Was Council aware of the exact roads that would be chipsealed?" Yes, staff kept Council apprised of the project as it progressed.

While I agree, in Gibsons we did not hit a home run with this project in all locations, other roads on the Sunshine Coast have achieved success with chipsealing for several years. In considering our fiscal responsibility to our residents, Council was open to considering less expensive alternatives and decided unanimously that running a pilot chipseal program would be appropriate to determine an alternative to traditional asphalt that is currently beyond the Town's ability to finance.

We do understand the frustration that has been experienced by residents on some of the roads that we attempted to improve, admittedly with less success than we had hoped. We will continue in our efforts minimize their inconvenience having regard to the constraints of the Town's resources and finances.

In the 2017 budget recently adopted, we were able to allocate additional funds to apply asphalt to Seacot and Mountainview as the chipseal treatment did not work as intended on those roads. The other roads will remain chipsealed as we work to address the excess gravel with additional road sweeping scheduled over the next few weeks.

Huckleberry Art & Play Garden Update



Progress on the new Council approved Huckleberry Art & Play Garden has been fast and furious. Here is an update on this community project that will provide both outdoor play and art space for Huckleberry Childcare Centre, as well as a new public garden space when the daycare is closed.

The hard landscaping is now complete, with thanks to the expertise of machine operator, Daryl Lewis, and site supervisor, Phyllis Surges. Some settling of the sand and crusher dust is necessary before adding a bit more crush to the paths and dry stream bed. Planting will begin soon and continue through May, weather permitting. Fence construction is scheduled to begin May 22nd. The Rotary Club of Gibsons is generously donating funds for fencing materials and helping out with a work bee. The first stage of the garden project will be finished by mid-June.

The Arts Building anticipates running several community gardening sessions and eco-workshops in the fall program. Huckleberry Childcare children are enthusiastically planning how and where to play; they have loved watching their play garden become a reality before their eyes!