

Mayor Beamish, Opening Remarks Community Dialogue: Budget 2021

Thank you all, for your interest in the 2021 Budget and Town Projects.

Thanks also to staff and members of Council for being available to participate tonight in this dialogue. I should note that Councillor Ladwig is not available at this time. Otherwise, I know she would have wanted to be here.

As you will hear tonight, our budget process is not over and there are still many decisions to be finalized by Council as we move to adoption of the related bylaws before May 15th.

There will be a second mandatory public information session later in the budget process. Our Director of Finance will provide you details of the budget schedule.

Tonight, we want to hear from you.

What questions you have; how we can make the budget process more clear; what levels of service you want for the community; what your priorities are.

As you heard about 3 weeks ago, the municipal portion of the budget is only one component of your property tax. There is also the SCRD, SD46 and the Regional Hospital District (RHD).

The SCRD budget is essentially completed, as it must be finalized by the end of March. The related bylaws will be adopted shortly. **The SCRD budget includes an approximate 10% increase for the Town.** The RHD budget will be discussed on Thursday.

SCRD BUDGET....SLIDES.

In recent weeks, our Director of Finance has received and responded to many emails about the budget and she is here tonight to answer other questions.

We recognize that local government budget processes are not easy to understand and that it is different again when trying to compare with Regional District budgets. We will try to explain the differences.

One of our greatest challenges has been to maintain services during the pandemic while keeping socially distanced and meeting on Zoom, as opposed to meeting in person.

This has introduced new levels of process and stress for everyone.

However, I am very proud of how our staff have managed this and on how well the community has adapted. We hope this will be over soon and we will be back to normal later this year.

If you have been following our budget process so far you will have seen that requests for services did not recede in 2020.

It seems that many people found this to be a good time to renovate, to build and to develop. As well, people stayed close to home and utilized our community trails and parks and the services they provide.

Also in 2020, affordable housing and homelessness became more urgent locally and elsewhere. The major project that Council supported on Shaw Road has not started yet and once it does it may be up to 2 more years before the first phase of 40 units is available.

In the meantime, we are challenged to deal with shortages of housing amidst a rising real-estate market on the Sunshine Coast and elsewhere.

Council has made some changes in how we do things and more will be required. Our Affordable Housing Reserve Fund today sits at more than \$500,000 with a significant amount of that committed to the Shaw Road Project.

One of our current challenges is to anticipate and plan for the transition in 2022 to meet the additional financial and administrative costs of police services.

This will require an approximate 30% increase to our taxation going forward to pay for the service, as well as additional costs to administer it. **This year we have included a 5% tax increase to help soften the blow in 2022 and we would like to hear your views on this.**

Our budget can be described as a modified zero-based budget model.

It recognizes that as we come onto a new fiscal year on January 1st we have an ongoing concern that includes employees, contracts, ongoing projects and commitments to new projects, service levels and core services established by policy and bylaws, buildings and equipment to be maintained or upgraded and so on.

Year-to-year there is very little in the municipal budget that is new, except that there are some new projects that are planned to begin as others are completed.

Tonight, you have an opportunity to dig into the budget with our staff and we look forward to your questions and ideas.

If there are services that you feel we should or should not provide, or service levels that should be changed, tonight is a good time to let us know.

Our Director of Finance will provide an overview of the process for this meeting and I look forward to hearing your ideas a bit later in the evening.

Any questions that go unanswered tonight will be noted and if we do not already have your contact information, you are welcome to follow-up with us tomorrow.

Thank you again for your participation.

However, I remind everyone that is participating in this zoom dialogue that we are not in a meeting and while we are open to hearing from you and considering your ideas, we will not be making decisions tonight.