

**THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES**

BRCOTW 7-2024

Thursday, December 5, 2024

**Council Chamber - In Person and Electronic Meeting
Niagara Region Headquarters, Campbell West
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold, ON**

Committee: Bateman*, Bradley (Regional Chair), Campion*, Chiocchio*, Craitor*, Davies*, Foster, Ganann*, Grant, Heit, Huson*, Insinna, Ip, Jordan*, Junkin*, Kaiser*, Morocco, Redekop (Committee Chair), Rigby, Seaborn*, Secord, Siscoe, Sorrento, Steele*, Ugulini, Villella, Whalen (Committee Vice-Chair), Witteveen*

Absent/Regrets: Diodati, Easton, Gale, Zalepa

Staff: A. Angelini, Program Financial Analyst*, A. Apfelbaum, Manager, Business Licensing*, D. Barnhart, Chief of Staff, Governance*, B. Brens, Associate Director, Budget Planning & Strategy, D. Carnegie, Acting Commissioner, Corporate Services/Treasurer, C. Cousins, Director, Homelessness and Community Engagement*, S. Dunsmore, Acting Director, Infrastructure Planning and Development Engineering, R. Ferron, Chief, Emergency Medical Services, J. Gamble, Senior Program Financial Specialist*, D. Gibbs, Director, Legal & Court Services, C. Habermehl, Director, Waste Management Services*, P. Hamilton, Senior Program Financial Specialist*, Dr. A. Kasmani, Medical Officer of Health, H. Koning, Commissioner, Community Services, P. Lambert, Director, Water & Wastewater Services, M. Leckey, Program Financial Specialist*, K. Lotimer, Deputy Clerk, K. Lutz, Deputy Chief, Emergency Medical Services*, P. Maposa, Director, Asset Management*, D. Morreale, Director, Growth Management and Planning*, A. Niece, Program Financial Specialist*, M. Raquion, Director, Financial Management & Planning/Deputy Treasurer, T. Ricketts, Commissioner, Public Works, M. Robinson, Director, Strategic Transformation Office*, M. Sergi, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, G. Spezza, Director, Economic Development*, J. Spratt, Legislative Coordinator, A. Stea, Director, Corporate Strategy and Community Sustainability*, M. Steele, Associate Director, Reporting & Analysis, F. Tassone, Director, Transportation Services, R. Tripp, Chief Administrative Officer, P. Varias, Director, Senior Services*, L. Watson, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities*, N. Wolfe, Director, Construction, Energy and Facilities Management.*

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Committee Chair Redekop called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT**

Councillor Ip read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

3. **DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

See Minute Items 5.1 and 7.2.

4. **STATUTORY PUBLIC MEETING UNDER THE BUILDING CODE ACT**

At 6:34 p.m. Committee Chair Redekop called the Statutory Public Meeting under the *Building Code Act* to order and stated that the meeting was being held in accordance with the *Ontario Building Code Act*. Committee Chair Redekop advised that the purpose of the meeting was to receive comments from the public respecting the proposed fee increases for building permits related to sewage system reviews.

4.1 **Speakers to the Matter**

There were no speakers to the matter.

4.2 **Item for Information**

4.2.1 BRC-C 10-2024

Proposed Building Permit Fee Increase (Sewage System Applications)

Moved by Councillor Heit
Seconded by Councillor Foster

That Memorandum BRC-C 10-2024, dated December 5, 2024, respecting Proposed Building Permit Fee Increase (Sewage System Applications) **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Carried

4.3 **Summary and Next Steps**

Susan Dunsmore, Acting Director, Infrastructure Planning and Development Engineering, advised Council that these fee increases were included in Appendix 1 of Report CSD 57-2024 which was on the agenda for this meeting as Agenda Item 7.3 and that the by-law to implement the fees would be considered at the Regional Council meeting being held on December 12, 2024.

4.4 Adjournment of the Statutory Public Meeting under the Building Code Act

The Committee Chair declared the Statutory Public Meeting under the Ontario Building Code Act adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

5. PRESENTATIONS

5.1 2025 Consolidated General Levy Budget

Beth Brens, Associate Director, Budget Planning & Strategy, provided information respecting 2025 Consolidated General Levy. Topics of the presentation included:

- Commitment to Core Services
- Budget Outcomes Investing in Core Services
- Budget Breakdown
- Budget Planning By-law
- Efficiencies Driving Cost Avoidance
- General Levy Summary
- Capital Financing
- Program Changes
- Assessment Growth
- Taxpayer Relief Reserve
- Budget Considerations
- Multi-Year Outlook
- Total Household Impact
- Next Steps

Councillor Huson declared a conflict with respect to the portion of the Consolidated General Levy Budget respecting Agencies, Boards and Commissions as the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA), is a client of her employer; therefore she did not take part in any discussion pertaining to the NPCA.

6. DELEGATIONS

6.1 2025 Consolidated General Levy Budget (CSD 64-2024, Agenda Item 7.2)

6.1.1 F. Cortese, Resident, City of Niagara Falls

Frances Cortese, resident, City of Niagara Falls, appeared before Committee to express concerns on the financial impact the proposed tax increase would have on Niagara residents given the current cost of living and food insecurities.

7. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 BRC-C 14-2024

2025 Proposed Operating Budget - Niagara Regional Police Service and Police Service Board Response to Budget Reduction Request

Moved by Councillor Ugulini
Seconded by Councillor Ip

That Memorandum BRC-C 14-2024, dated December 5, 2024, respecting 2025 Proposed Operating Budget – Niagara Regional Police Service and Police Service Board Response to Budget Reduction Request, **BE RECEIVED** and the following **BE APPROVED**:

1. That Correspondence Item BRC-C 7-2024, dated November 5, 2024, respecting 2025 Proposed Operating Budget - Niagara Regional Police Service and Police Service Board, **BE RECEIVED**;
2. That the Niagara Regional Police Service and Police Service Board 2025 Proposed Operating Budget of \$213,308,546 or 13.18% **BE APPROVED** in principle subject to consideration of the general levy for Niagara Region;
3. That Niagara Regional Council **DIRECT** the Regional Chair to write a letter to Premier Doug Ford and Solicitor General Michael Kerzner to request that the increase in the Niagara Regional Police Services operating budget of \$10,323,969 (5.7%) as a result of the replacement of the Police Services Act with the Community Safety and Policing Act, be funded by the province, rather than through the tax levy funded by the property taxes of Niagara residents; and
4. That this motion and the letter written by the Regional Chair **BE CIRCULATED** to all 12 local area municipalities, Niagara's four MPPs, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Ontario's Inspectorate of Policing, and the Niagara Regional Police Service Board.

Moved by Councillor Insinna
Seconded by Councillor Heit

That Clause 2 of the motion **BE AMENDED** as follows:

2. That the Niagara Regional Police Service and Police Service Board 2025 Proposed Operating Budget of ~~\$213,308,546~~ **\$207,322,860** or ~~13.18%~~ **10%** **BE APPROVED** in principle subject to consideration of the general levy for Niagara Region.

Recorded Vote:

Yes (13): Bateman, Bradley, Ganann, Grant, Heit, Huson, Insinna, Junkin, Kaiser, Redekop, Seaborn, Villella, Witteveen.

No: (14) Campion, Chiochio, Craitor, Davies, Foster, Ip, Morocco, Rigby, Secord, Siscoe, Sorrento, Steele, Ugulini, Whalen.

Defeated

The Committee Chair called the vote on the original motion.

Recorded Vote:

Yes (16): Campion, Chiochio, Craitor, Davies, Foster, Ganann, Ip, Morocco, Rigby, Seaborn, Secord, Siscoe, Sorrento, Steele, Ugulini, Whalen.

No (11): Bateman, Bradley, Grant, Heit, Huson, Insinna, Junkin, Kaiser, Redekop, Villella, Witteveen.

Carried

7.2 CSD 64-2024

2025 Consolidated General Levy Budget

Councillor Morocco declared a conflict with respect to Clause 4 of Report CSD 64- 2024, respecting 2025 Consolidated General Levy Budget, as she has a business client who is currently involved in the process of applying for a Brownfield Smart Growth Incentive; therefore, she did not participate in any discussion or vote on these matters.

Moved by Councillor Whalen
Seconded by Councillor Foster

That Report CSD 64-2024, dated December 5, 2024, respecting 2025 Consolidated General Levy Budget, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendations **BE APPROVED**:

1. That the 2025 levy relating to the Niagara Regional Departments budget of \$295,101,673 for an increase of \$12,139,392 or 2.51% over the 2024 general levy **BE APPROVED** to support operations;
2. That the 2025 levy increase of \$4,000,000 or 0.83% over the 2024 general levy relating to the 2022 Tax Deferral **BE APPROVED** to support a sustainable budget;

3. That the 2025 levy decrease of \$7,500,000 or (1.55%) under the 2024 general levy **BE APPROVED** to align with legislative changes related to Bill 23 and Bill 185;
4. That the 2025 levy increase of \$4,870,687 or 1.01% over the 2024 general levy related to Smart Growth Incentive Regional Development Charges Reduction Program (Smart Growth DC Incentive) **BE APPROVED** to support developer refunds when eligibility criteria are met;
5. That the 2025 levy include additional capital financing of \$12,075,960 or 2.50% over the 2024 general levy **BE APPROVED** to be used as per Appendix 4;
6. That \$3,145,654 gross, \$0 net in available levy debt charge budget **BE APPROVED** to be transferred to the General Capital Levy Reserve to be used for the substitution of approved but unissued long-term debt for the projects listed in Appendix 6;
7. That the 2025 levy increase of \$4,607,815 or 0.95% relating to program changes **BE APPROVED** to be used as per Appendix 2;
8. That an additional 1.51% or \$7,293,880 of assessment growth revenue **BE APPROVED** to fund \$2,034,914 of Tax Increment Grants, \$290,900 of operating costs of capital and \$4,968,066 for council and capital priorities;
9. That the following items totalling \$8,230,760 gross, \$0 net **BE APPROVED** with funding from the Taxpayer Relief Reserve:
 - a) One-Time requests as detailed in Table 2 of Appendix 3 in the amount of \$950,915;
 - b) Industrial Development Charge Grant of \$5,418,000 for phase one of Asahi Kasei development (Project Eagle); and
 - c) Transfers for timing impact of Emergency Services funding per Provincial agreement of \$1,861,845;
10. That the total 2025 general levy of \$542,417,734 **BE APPROVED** to include:
 - a) Regional Departments and General Government of \$316,731,949, which is an increase of \$33.8 million or 6.99%; and
 - b) Agencies, Boards, and Commissions of \$225,685,785, which is an increase of \$25.6 million or 5.30%;

11. That a Vision Zero Road Safety Program Reserve **BE ESTABLISHED** as outlined in this report and in alignment the Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy C-F-013; and
12. That the necessary by-law **BE PREPARED** and **PRESENTED** to Council for consideration.

Moved by Councillor Siscoe
Seconded by Councillor Ip

That Clause 9 **BE AMENDED** to add the following:

- d) ***One-Time request of \$128,000 for Welcoming Streets Pilot Project.***

Carried

Moved by Councillor Siscoe
Seconded by Councillor Ip

That Clause 9 **BE AMENDED** to add the following:

- e) ***One-Time Request of \$400,000 for a temporary seasonal shelter.***

Defeated

Moved by Councillor Huson
Seconded by Councillor Seaborn

That the one-time request of \$400,000 for temporary seasonal shelter **BE REFERRED** to the Public Health and Social Services Committee meeting on January 7, 2025, for staff to provide additional information.

Recorded vote:

Yes (19): Bateman, Bradley, Chiocchio, Davies, Ganann, Grant, Heit, Huson, Jordan, Junkin, Kaiser, Redekop, Seaborn, Secord, Sorrento, Steele, Ugolini, Whalen, Witteveen.

No (8): Champion, Foster, Insinna, Ip, Morocco, Rigby, Siscoe, Villella.

Carried

Moved by Councillor Heit
Seconded by Councillor Insinna

That Clause 2 of the motion **BE AMENDED** as follows:

2. That the 2025 levy increase of ~~\$4,000,000~~ **\$2,000,000** or ~~0.83%~~ **0.41%** over the 2024 general levy relating to the 2022 Tax Deferral **BE APPROVED** to support a sustainable budget.

Carried

Moved by Councillor Heit
Seconded by Councillor Secord

That Clause 4 of the motion **BE AMENDED** as follows:

4. That the 2025 levy increase of ~~\$4,870,687~~ **\$2,000,000** or ~~1.01%~~ **0.41%** over the 2024 general levy related to Smart Growth Incentive Regional Development Charges Reduction Program (Smart Growth DC Incentive) **BE APPROVED** to support developer refunds when eligibility criteria are met.

Carried

Moved by Councillor Grant
Seconded by Councillor Sorrento

That Budget Review Committee of the Whole **EXTEND** this meeting's curfew to 11:00 p.m.

Carried

Moved by Councillor Insinna
Seconded by Councillor Villella

That the motion **BE AMENDED** to remove Clause 9 (a) to reduce the proposed amount coming from the Taxpayer Relief Reserve.

Defeated

Moved by Councillor Insinna
Seconded by Councillor Villella

That Clause 7 **BE REFERRED** to staff to provide options at a Budget Review Committee of the Whole meeting to be held on December 12, 2024, for a 50% reduction in budget requests contained in Appendix 2 of Report CSD 64-2024.

Carried

As a result of the referral of Clause 7, Clause 10 could not be considered and was removed from the motion. It will be included for consideration at a Budget Review Committee of the Whole meeting to be held on December 12, 2024.

The Committee Chair called the vote on the motion, as amended, as follows:

That Report CSD 64-2024, dated December 5, 2024, respecting 2025 Consolidated General Levy Budget, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendations **BE APPROVED** as amended:

1. That the 2025 levy relating to the Niagara Regional Departments budget of \$295,101,673 for an increase of \$12,139,392 or 2.51% over the 2024 general levy **BE APPROVED** to support operations;
2. That the 2025 levy increase of \$2,000,000 or 0.41% over the 2024 general levy relating to the 2022 Tax Deferral **BE APPROVED** to support a sustainable budget;
3. That the 2025 levy decrease of \$7,500,000 or (1.55%) under the 2024 general levy **BE APPROVED** to align with legislative changes related to Bill 23 and Bill 185;
4. That the 2025 levy increase of \$2,000,000 or 0.41% over the 2024 general levy related to Smart Growth Incentive Regional Development Charges Reduction Program (Smart Growth DC Incentive) **BE APPROVED** to support developer refunds when eligibility criteria are met;
5. That the 2025 levy include additional capital financing of \$12,075,960 or 2.50% over the 2024 general levy **BE APPROVED** to be used as per Appendix 4;
6. That \$3,145,654 gross, \$0 net in available levy debt charge budget **BE APPROVED** to be transferred to the General Capital Levy Reserve to be used for the substitution of approved but unissued long-term debt for the projects listed in Appendix 6;
7. That an additional 1.51% or \$7,293,880 of assessment growth revenue **BE APPROVED** to fund \$2,034,914 of Tax Increment Grants, \$290,900 of operating costs of capital and \$4,968,066 for council and capital priorities;

8. That the following items totalling \$8,358,760 gross, \$0 net **BE APPROVED** with funding from the Taxpayer Relief Reserve:
 - a) One-Time requests as detailed in Table 2 of Appendix 3 in the amount of \$950,915;
 - b) Industrial Development Charge Grant of \$5,418,000 for phase one of Asahi Kasei development (Project Eagle);
 - c) Transfers for timing impact of Emergency Services funding per Provincial agreement of \$1,861,845; and
 - d) One-Time request of \$128,000 for Welcoming Streets Pilot Project;
9. That a Vision Zero Road Safety Program Reserve **BE ESTABLISHED** as outlined in this report and in alignment the Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy C-F-013; and
10. That the necessary by-law **BE PREPARED** and **PRESENTED** to Council for consideration.

Carried

Councillor Information Request(s):

Provide an update respecting the Region's financial responsibility for Wainfleet Beach. Councillor Insinna.

7.4 BRC-C 15-2024

Recommendations for Consideration from the Public Works Committee Meeting held on December 3, 2024

Moved by Councillor Heit

Seconded by Councillor Secord

That Memorandum BRC-C 15-2024, dated December 5, 2024, respecting Recommendations for Consideration from the Public Works Committee meeting, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendations **BE APPROVED**:

1. That the low concentration hauled sewage rate of \$71/1000 gallons (2025 fee number PW 49) as outlined in the Draft 2025 Schedule of Fees and Charges attached as Appendix 1 to Report CSD 57-2024 **BE APPROVED**;

2. That Regional staff **BE DIRECTED** to undertake focused consultation with those wineries most impacted by the high concentration rate before the Council meeting on December 12, prior to approval of the 2025 Fees and Charges By-law (specifically, wineries with reported high concentration annual volumes of greater than 170,000 imperial gallons resulting in a total Regional hauled sewage fee increase of \$20,000 or more); and
3. That Regional staff **REPORT BACK** to Council on December 12, 2024, to provide alternatives for addressing the high concentration hauled sewage rate (2025 fee number PW-50) as outlined in Appendix 1 to Report CSD 57-2024 respecting 2025 Schedule of Fees and Charges.

Carried

7.3 CSD 57-2024
2025 Schedule of Fees and Charges

Moved by Councillor Whalen
Seconded by Councillor Rigby

That Report CSD 57-2024, dated December 4, 2024, respecting 2025 Schedule of Fees and Charges, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendations **BE APPROVED**:

1. That the Draft 2025 Schedule of Fees and Charges, Appendix 1 to Report CSD 57-2024 (excluding PW-50), **BE APPROVED**; and
2. That the necessary by-law **BE PREPARED** and **PRESENTED** to Council for consideration.

Carried

8. **CONSENT ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

Moved by Councillor Heit
Seconded by Councillor Morocco

That the following items **BE RECEIVED** for information:

CSD 65-2024
2025 Operating Budget Reconciliation and Financial Disclosure O. Reg 284/09

BRC-C 11-2024
Council Information Requests

BRC-C 12-2024
Non-Union Compensation Review Phase 2 - Budget Impacts

BRC-C 16-2024

City of St. Catharines Motion respecting Welcoming Streets Pilot Project

Correspondence Supporting City of St. Catharines Motion respecting Welcoming Streets Pilot Project (Agenda Item 8.5.1 to 8.5.9)

Carried

9. OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at 5:30 p.m., in the Council Chamber, Regional Headquarters.

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Councillor Redekop
Committee Chair

Jenna Spratt
Legislative Coordinator

Kelly Lotimer
Deputy Regional Clerk

Ann-Marie Norio
Regional Clerk