



Staff Report for Budget Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: September 26, 2023

Report Number: SRCFS.23.043

Department: Corporate and Financial Services

Division: Financial Services

Subject: **SRCFS.23.043 – Budget Consultation Update**

Purpose:

Follow up report to Council on Budget Consultation plans as referenced in staff report SRCFS.23.034 – 2024 Capital & Operating Budget Strategy.

Recommendations:

- a) That the 2024 Budget Consultation be deferred to 2025, after the new Strategic Plan is approved by Council, and;
- b) That Council endorse in principle funding for the 2025 Budget Consultation, to be considered in the 2024 Operating Budget.

Contact Person:

Lisa Chen – Manager, Fiscal Planning and Strategy, extension 6311

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Sherry Adams, Commissioner of Corporate and Financial Services

Approved by: Darlene Joslin, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

Page 2

Background:

At the February 14, 2023 meeting, Budget Committee of the Whole directed staff to “report back on a budget consultation plan for the 2024 Budget process, including the use of an online budget tool/survey before summer recess in 2023.”

At the June 27, 2023 Budget Committee of the Whole, staff report SRCFS.23.034 – 2024 Capital & Operating Budget Strategy, provided an interim update that:

Taking into consideration the ongoing development of the City of Richmond Hill's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, staff will coordinate with the Strategic Plan team to leverage planned activities and gather insights to inform the budget.

The Strategic Plan holds significant importance as a vital policy document that outlines the community's goals and objectives, each of which has budget implications. The Strategic Plan team is actively engaged in community outreach activities, including surveys, open houses, community events booths, and consultations with the business community. Preliminary findings, indicating emerging trends, will be reported to Council in September.

Following this, a report will be presented to the Budget Committee of the Whole, delving deeper into the 2024 Operating Budget implications. The 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, scheduled to be approved by Council before the end of the year, establishes well-defined and actionable plans to reach City of Richmond Hill's goals and objectives under the current Council. Looking ahead, staff will explore budget consultation activities for the 2025 Budget process.

For 2024, staff will present the proposed 2024 Operating Budget to Budget Committee of the Whole on November 21, 2023. During that week, staff will hold a public budget information session prior to Council adoption on December 13, 2023.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

In the June 27, 2023, Budget Committee of the Whole report staff proposed to hold a public budget information session during the week of November 21, prior to Council adoption on December 13, 2023. Upon further consideration, the purpose of the meeting is to offer the public a chance to pose questions and offer input on the 2024 Budget, aligning with the objectives of the already planned Budget Committee of the Whole meeting set for November 21, 2023.

Staff will reassess the feasibility and timing of a public information session after assessing procedural changes required to meet the Strong Mayor's Powers legislation. As budget information is released the budget section of the City's website will be updated to ensure information is readily available to residents and the business community in advance of the already scheduled Budget Committee of the Whole meeting.

Page 3

The [Strategic Plan Community Engagement Summary Report](#) was presented to Committee of the Whole on September 20, 2023. Extensive consultation and outreach activities took place over the past several months, and while comments on the Richmond Hill 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Consultation Summary Report are still being gathered for the actual Strategic Plan, preliminary findings are too premature in the strategic planning process to warrant an adjustment to current budget directions or work plans.

Although not intended as a budget consultation, the approval of the new Strategic Plan will inform future budgets. As outlined in the same report, once the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan is approved, staff will begin to re-align and re-prioritize work and cascade Strategic Plan directions into the City's work planning.

Staff recommend the budget consultation plan be deferred to the 2025 budget process, after the new Strategic Plan is adopted by Council. This will also avoid potential consultation fatigue and potential confusion due to concurrent and overlapping engagement activities.

Pending the Strategic Plan adoption by Council, anticipated before the end of the year, staff will commence 2025 Budget Consultation in May 2024, including the use of an online budget tool/survey. In addition to the previous Citizen Budget tool used by the City in previous years, new tools are now available in the market, with estimated costs ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for licensing and configuration. This excludes any external resources that may be required.

In collaboration with the Strategic Communications and Strategy and Government Relations teams, staff will pose questions related to directions from the Strategic Plan and report back to Council as part of the 2025 Budget process.

Climate Change Considerations:

While there are no direct climate change implications, future budget consultations may request funding for climate change initiatives.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Seeking community budget engagement and consultation demonstrates wise management of resources.

Conclusion:

Initiating the Budget Consultation after the adoption of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan will ensure consistency and alignment with direction from the new Council elected in October 2022.

Page 4

Report Approval Details

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|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Document Title: | SRCFS.23.043 - Budget Consultation Update.docx |
| Attachments: | |
| Final Approval Date: | Sep 20, 2023 |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Gigi Li - Sep 20, 2023 - 9:36 AM

Sherry Adams - Sep 20, 2023 - 9:42 AM

Darlene Joslin - Sep 20, 2023 - 10:36 AM