



## **Staff Report for Budget Committee of the Whole Meeting**

**Date of Meeting:** June 11, 2024

**Report Number:** SRCFS.24.023

**Department:** Corporate and Financial Services

**Division:** Financial Services

**Subject:** SRCFS.24.023 – 2025 Budget Engagement Plan

### **Purpose:**

The 2025 Budget Engagement Plan aims to develop communication tools to educate and engage the public on Richmond Hill's budget process and how their tax dollars are spent, as well as the budget process in general.

### **Recommendation:**

- a) That SRCFS.24.023 – 2025 Budget Engagement be received for information purposes.

### **Contact Person:**

Lisa Chen – Manager, Financial Planning and Analysis

Libbi Hood – Supervisor, Communications

### **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.

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### Background:

At the February 14, 2023 meeting, Budget Committee of the Whole (Committee) 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.” Staff tabled a report to the Committee on September 26, 2023, recommending that the 2024 Budget Consultation be deferred to 2025, after the new Strategic Plan is approved by Council. Although not intended as a budget consultation, the approved 2024-2027 Strategic Plan would inform future budgets.

### 2025 Budget Engagement Objectives

Financial Services staff, in consultation with the Communications team prepared a 2025 Budget Engagement Plan to achieve a number of objectives listed below.

#### Education

To enhance the public’s understanding of Richmond Hill’s budget through:

- Refresh the budget webpage content along with new graphics and external links to useful information including: development charges, legislative changes impacting funding, MPAC videos on property taxes and property assessment and other sources of publicly available information
- Prepare a two-minute “Budget 101” video
- Continue to improve the quality and content of the annual Budget Book

#### Engagement

To engage with the community, staff will launch a pre-budget survey with approximately four to six questions related to the annual budget that will be aligned with the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. The survey will launch June 25 and close on August 16, with a report back to the Committee at the September 24 meeting.

The City will utilize Survey Monkey as its online tool to engage with the public. The online survey will be complemented by options to call in to complete the survey via telephone. The Budget webpage will also have an option to provide general comments to [Budget@RichmondHill.ca](mailto:Budget@RichmondHill.ca) which will be consolidated and shared with the Budget Committee of the Whole on September 24 and throughout budget deliberations.

Staff will promote the survey and budget information to the public by attending or hosting three events during the summer. To ensure a wide range of demographics, staff are considering the following venues/events:

1. Canada Day at Richmond Green
2. Concerts-in the Park
3. Central Library or Community Centre

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These staff led in-person engagement will be open to all members of the public. Councillors may also leverage the material and direct residents to the online survey as part of their own Ward events or consultations. Staff will also explore options to use technology that may be available at the facility to facilitate survey completion at the event.

Specific to the business community, staff will reach out to the Village of Richmond Hill Business Improvement Area, Richmond Hill Board of Trade and the Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan Chinese Business Association groups to assist with promoting the survey out to business colleagues through their membership e-newsletters.

### **Promotion**

In addition to the in-person engagement mentioned above, the budget information and survey will be promoted to a wide audience through email distribution lists (business community, budget webpage subscriptions, corporate e-newsletter), paid digital ads including multilingual ads, social media and signage at community centres.

### **Communicate the Budget and Timelines**

Staff will share the budget timelines, budget survey results and the staff proposed budget in the fall. The survey outcomes will be reported to the Committee on September 24 to provide staff an opportunity to incorporate them into the November 5 Committee meeting, where the staff proposed budget will be tabled. On November 6, the Budget Book will be available on the budget webpage and an evening Public Information Session will be hosted by staff. This meeting will provide information to the public on what is considered in the staff proposed budget.

Following Mayoral Decision 11-24 (<https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/shared-content/resources/documents/Clerks/Decision-11-24-Mayoral-Direction-to-Staff-regarding-2025-Budget-May-22-2024-Accessible.pdf>), the Committee will provide feedback on the proposed budget, and the Mayor will table the budget at the December 11, 2024 Council meeting.

Once adopted, a media release will be issued along with a social media campaign, and the updated Budget Book will continue to be used as communication tool throughout the 2025 Budget year.

### **Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:**

The proposed community engagement plan fits within the approved operating budget.

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### **Relationship to Strategic Plan:**

Engaging the community will improve the outcomes of the 2025 capital planning process as it relates to Pillar 3, Strengthening our Foundations, specifically, Priority 1, Make decisions that are evidence based and data driven to enable the City's long term financial sustainability, as well as social, environmental and economic sustainability.

### **Conclusion:**

The 2025 Budget Engagement Plan focuses on increasing public engagement and education regarding Richmond Hill's budget process. By employing a mix of in-person, virtual, and digital strategies, the plan aims to involve more residents and businesses in the budgeting process, ensuring that the City's investments are aligned with community priorities and fiscal responsibility.

### **Attachments:**

None

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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRCFS.24.023 - 2025 Budget Engagement.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	May 31, 2024

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

**Gigi Li - May 31, 2024 - 11:26 AM**

**Task assigned to Sherry Adams was completed by Gigi Li**

**Gigi Li on behalf of Sherry Adams - May 31, 2024 - 12:51 PM**

**Darlene Joslin - May 31, 2024 - 4:44 PM**