



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of December 14, 2017

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** December 11, 2017
From: Bill Eisenhauer, Head of Engagement
Subject: Summary of Public Input on Draft 2018 Financial Plan

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive the report for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2014, a new direction for budget public engagement has increased public understanding and input on the financial planning process. Efforts have focused on improving the presentation of financial information and plain-language budget materials, increasing notice of public participation opportunities, and an improved online survey.

The City began public consultation on the draft 2018 Financial Plan on November 13, 2017. Citizens were invited to provide input on the proposed budget through an online survey, submitting correspondence, and participating in the Town Hall held on November 30.

Consultation opportunities were widely promoted through social media, news media and advertising, newsletters and stakeholder emails. An increase focus on youth and renter feedback was developed, including working with the City of Victoria Youth Council and creating renter-specific social media posts.

The budgeting process continues to evolve and improve each year. An evaluation of this year's budget consultation will help inform plans for 2019.

PURPOSE

To provide Council with feedback and correspondence received during the 2018 Financial Plan public consultation period.

BACKGROUND

Projected budget impacts were communicated holistically, including impacts from utility increases in addition to municipal property tax increases and five year forecasts for both residential and business properties. Information items developed for the public were provided online at www.victoria.ca/budget, including a video to explain the nature and purpose of a City budget, a budget simulator, the full Draft Financial Plan and a shorter "Budget Summary" piece. In response

to feedback from previous years for a high level overview, a condensed “Budget at a Glance” was also created this year.

Consultation opportunities were widely promoted through various channels: news media, newspaper ads, home page placement on the website, Connect newsletter, e-newsletter, social media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), and display screens at City Hall. Neighbourhood associations and the City of Victoria Youth Council were encouraged to share information with their members and stakeholders.

Consultation this year included an increased focus on youth and renter feedback, including working with the City of Victoria Youth Council, and creating renter-specific social media posts. While more work is needed to fully engage these demographics, the inclusion of a satellite youth event during the Town Hall was a positive step forward.

Online Survey

A total of 579 individuals responded to the online budget survey. The survey asked questions about overall value for tax dollars, spending priorities for new revenue and prior year surplus funds. It allowed participants the option to delve deeper and answer detailed questions on specific areas related to the operating budget, capital budget categories and supplementary budget requests.

It should be noted that the online budget survey is not a random, representative survey of Victoria residents, but rather only represents the views of those who became aware of the survey and decided to opt in.

Budget Town Hall

For the fourth consecutive year, the City hosted a budget Town Hall. The meeting was interactive and webcast live. People could attend and provide feedback in person at City Hall, or participate from the comfort of their own homes. Citizens were invited to submit questions and feedback in a variety of ways:

- in person
- on Facebook
- through Twitter using the hashtag #victownhall
- using the Website form
- by phone during the meeting

The meeting was well attended in person, and had 55 online submissions. Comments and questions covered a wide variety of topics.

Correspondence

Formal correspondence was welcomed as part of the budget feedback process. Several pieces of correspondence were received from individuals and two groups.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

What We Heard

Correspondence

12 pieces of correspondence were received, with 10 from individuals. Of those, eight were related to funding requests for school crossing guards.

Town Hall

The meeting was well attended in person, and included 55 online submissions. Comments and questions covered a wide variety of topics. A complete list of online submissions can be found in the Engagement Summary attachment.

Online Survey

579 people participated in the online survey over four weeks. Of those:

- the highest neighbourhood representation came from Fairfield Gonzales
- 56% indicated they own property in Victoria while 41% responded they rent in Victoria
- 18% of total respondents indicated they owned or operated a business in Victoria

When asked if they agreed with the proposed tax increase the highest response was 46.5% in agreement, while 45% felt the increase should be reduced, and 8.5% felt the increase should be higher.

When asked "How should the City allocate new assessed revenue in 2018?" the highest response was "Save for future infrastructure investment" at 55.6%.

When asked "How should the City allocate surplus revenue for 2018?" the highest response was "Combination of invest in new initiatives and save for future infrastructure investment" at 47.8%.

48% of respondents indicated they were moderately or very satisfied with the value they received for their tax dollars.

Operating Budget

Survey respondents were asked to rate funding levels in various service areas. Options given were: too high, just right, too low, don't know/ not sure.

In general, survey respondents noted that spending in service areas was "just right", with the exceptions of Sustainable Planning and Community Development (respondents noted "too low") and VicPD (respondents noted "too high.")

Capital Budget

Within the capital budget section, respondents were asked to rank nine key areas within the capital budget. The top three funding priorities were:

1. Sanitary Sewer, Stormwater and Waterworks
2. Active Transportation
3. Parks

Survey respondents were asked to rate funding levels in various capital budget areas. Options given were: too high, just right, too low.

In general, survey respondents noted that spending in capital budget areas was "just right", with the exceptions of Active Transportation and Bridges (respondents noted "too high") and Parks (respondents noted "too low.")

Supplementary Budget Requests

When asked if respondents supported funding the supplemental requests, the highest response was "yes" for the following requests:

Ongoing

- Parks Planner
- Transportation Planner
- Fire Prevention Officer
- Community Garden Program
- Parks Natural Area Support
- Youth Leaders in Training Program
- Sustainability Waste Management Engineer

One Time Requests

- Parks Arboriculture
- Overnight Sheltering; Support and Clean Up
- High Risk Tree Removal
- Accessibility Framework
- Youth Strategy Liaison
- Neighbourhood Transportation Management
- Traffic Signal Timing Update
- Step Code Implementation
- Environmental Performance Audit
- Victoria Housing Strategy Implementation
- Expansion to Mental Health Integration (VicPD)

When asked if respondents supported funding the supplemental requests, the highest response was "no" for the following requests:

Ongoing

- Graphic Design Support
- Building Project Administrator
- Additional Staff; 6 officers and 2 civilians (VicPD)

One Time Requests

- Planning Secretary
- Pioneer Square Archaeological Reporting
- Downtown Public Realm Implementation
- Engagement Advisor
- Speed Reader Boards
- Extra Bridge Coverage
- Condition Assessment Pilot Project
- Professional Certification/ Project Management
- Special Events Funding (VicPD)
- Real Time Intelligence (VicPD)

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

2015-2018 Strategic Plan

The budget engagement process is consistent with the City's objective to "Engage and Empower" the community.

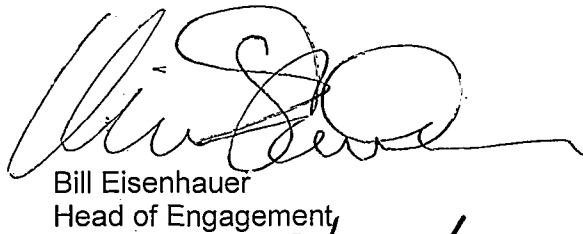
Impacts to Financial Plan

This summary of public input is provided to help inform decisions on the 2018 Financial Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



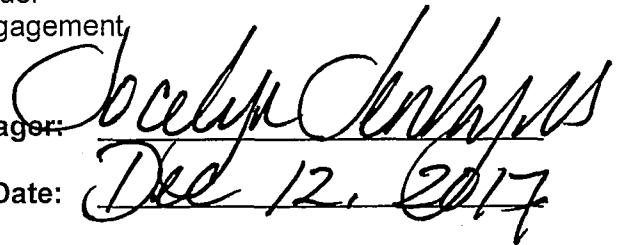
Heather Follis
Customer Service Advisor



Bill Eisenhauer
Head of Engagement

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:



Dec 12, 2017

List of Attachments

- Engagement Summary