

2. Special Committee of the Whole meeting of March 4, 2025 – Financial Plan

DISTRICT OF SAANICH
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS
SAANICH MUNICIPAL HALL, 770 VERNON AVENUE
TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2025 AT 6:00 P.M.

Chair: Mayor Murdock

Council: Councillors Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver (via Teams)

Staff: Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer; Dean Duthie, Chief Constable; Michael Kaye, Fire Chief; Trevor Stubbings, Deputy Fire Chief (via Teams); Sheila Allen, Director of Corporate Services; Paul Arslan, Director of Finance; Angila Bains, Director of Legislative and Protective Services/Corporate Officer; Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning; Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering; Suzanne Samborski, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services; Cristina Caravaca, Senior Manager of Community Services (via Teams); Jennifer Lockhart, Senior Manager of Financial Services; Carroll Porter, Senior Manager of Human Resources (via Teams); Doug Roberts, Senior Manager of Bylaw and Licensing; Tiana Solares, Senior Manager of Recreation; David Sparanese, Senior Manager of Public Works (via Teams); Carley Friesen, Acting Manager of Housing Planning and Policy; Chris Fletcher, Manager of IT – Solutions Delivery; Joanne Ko, Director of Finance and Procurement (Police); Alix Link, Manager of Urban Forestry, Natural Areas and Community Stewardship (via Teams); Cindy Mao, Manager of Risk Services; Kelsie McLeod, Manager of Communications (via Teams); Daniela Murphy, Records and Information Services Manager; Janet Racz, Real Estate Services Manager; Dominic Staniewski, Manager of Fleet (via Teams); Roy Thomassen, Manager of Inspection Services; Sharon Froud, Deputy Corporate Officer; Matt O'Halloran, Deputy Corporate Officer; Mildred Irang, Financial Analyst; and Tara Da Silva, Senior Committee Clerk

PUBLIC INPUT ON BUSINESS ITEMS

M. Najari, Leeds Place

- Questions the percentage of tax increases that have taken place over the past 20 years as well as the amount of debt for each year.
- There is also a need to know the amount of money spent on infrastructure over the past 20 years; it would be helpful to know the projections for taxes, debt and infrastructure costs for the next ten years.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BUSINESS ITEMS

FINANCIAL PLAN – COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PROCESS

Memo of the Chief Administrative Officer dated February 24, 2025.

To present the 2025 Special Committee of the Whole Meeting – Financial Plan Process.

The Director of Finance presented the Financial Plan (PowerPoint on file).

In response to questions from Council, the Chief Administrative Officer; the Chief Constable, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Finance, the Director of Engineering, the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, and the Director of Finance and Procurement (Police) stated:

- Sooty bark disease is an infection caused by a fungus that mainly attacks maple trees; when the tree is cut, the spores are released and can cause respiratory illnesses in humans.
- Staff are developing an exposure control plan; the initial funding would be used for field test kits, PPE and proper disposal methods and future funding would be used to employ contractors to assist with the removal of infected trees.
- Funds have been continually put into reserve funds to be used for larger projects such as Fire Hall #2.
- Critical positions have been identified to ensure that current service levels can be maintained.
- If resource requests were not approved for the Urban Forest Strategy and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, it may mean that there would not be capacity to begin work on enhanced or new initiatives.
- Extension of a Parks Worker I position is requested due to the People, Pets and Parks initiative.
- Progress on the Road Safety Action Plan would be limited with existing capacity; if Council supported a one-time resource request, a new staff member could work on advocacy, policy development, safety audits and education components.
- The largest cost driver of a property tax increase would be the Police budget at 2.99%; in previous years, the police budget was 2.5% or less.
- Over the past years, budget increases were limited and as a result, the Police Department was restructured resulting in layoffs.
- There have been increases in WorkSafe premiums and benefit costs.
- The Police budget is driven by staffing costs and CREST, PRIME and E-Comm levies.
- An organizational review is being undertaken by Saanich Police; this may inform a multi-year financial plan.
- The resource requests for the Police Department are for two mental health co-response Constables; there has been a significant increase in mental health calls for patrol officers to attend over the years.
- Other Police Departments have similar mental health units and note a decrease in the need for patrol assistance for these types of calls.
- Fleet vehicles are at end of life; it would be challenging to maintain service for additional years without replacing them.
- E-vehicle technology for refuse trucks may not be viable at this time.
- Replacement of ten refuse trucks would have an annual cost of approximately \$500,000 to be borrowed and paid through the solid waste fee.
- Farmland is taxed at a much lower rate than residential.
- Projects identified in the Complete Street initiative include Shelbourne Valley Phase 3, Sinclair Road upgrade project, Gorge Road from Tillicum to Harriet, Cordova Bay Road and Richmond Road.
- The Capital Regional District (CRD) bulk water rate is an increase of .31% and .52% for sewage treatment operations.
- Participation rates in recreation programs have surpassed pre-COVID rates.
- Residents are encouraged to compost rather than putting materials in garbage; eventually the cost of garbage pick-up will double to ensure residents are composting and diverting from the landfill.
- Vehicles no longer used are auctioned off and funds received by Saanich.
- There was not a noticeable increase in property tax deferrals over 2023.
- When a property is rezoned from commercial to mixed use, BC Assessment puts a value on the property when the building permit is issued; Saanich can start collecting taxes at that point.

- The main reason for the budget decreasing is the administrative recoveries including the water, sewer and solid waste utilities.
- The Climate Plan Report Card will be presented to Council in the near future.
- Fleet Services include two EV cars at the Municipal Hall, 34 trucks and 1 trailer.
- Building replacements include Nellie McClung redevelopment, Fire Hall #2 and the Saanich Operations Centre, if approved.
- The Carbon Neutral Reserve Fund has been used to fund EV projects or building projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Climate Action Reserve Fund can be used for projects in the community.
- The PKOLS Tower Reserve Fund is used for tower replacement.
- Potential reduction scenarios could include the elimination of the Crossing Guard program.
- Staff are currently working on a report for the location of the new PKOLS tower; every precaution is being taken to protect biodiversity and ecological value.

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: “That it be recommended that the report of the Chief Administrative Officer dated February 24, 2025 titled “Financial Plan – Committee of the Whole Process” be received for information.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

BUDGET SUBMISSION REPORT: DRAFT FINANCIAL PLAN 2025-2029

Report of the Director of Finance dated February 24, 2025.

To present the Draft 2025-2029 Financial Plan.

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: “That it be recommended that the report of the Director of Finance dated February 24, 2025 titled “Budget Submission Report: Draft Financial Plan 2025-2029” be received for information.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON THE 2025 FINANCIAL PLAN

Report of the Director of Finance dated February 24, 2025.

To present a general summary of the feedback received during the public consultation period for the 2025 Draft Financial Plan.

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: “That it be recommended that the report of the Director of Finance dated February 24, 2025 titled “Public Engagement on the 2025 Financial Plan” be received for information.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

5280-20
2025 Budget

BUDGET REDUCTION OPTIONS

Report of the Chief Administrative Officer dated February 24, 2025.

To present options for reducing the impact on taxation in accordance with the 2025 Budget Guidelines.

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: “That it be recommended that the report of the Chief Administrative Officer dated February 24, 2025 titled “Budget Reduction Options” be received for information.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

5280-20
2025 Budget

2025 BUDGET – RESOURCE REQUESTS

Report of the Chief Administrative Officer dated February 24, 2025.

To present ongoing resource requests identified as either priority needs or Strategic Plan implementation for 2025.

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: “That it be recommended that the report of the Chief Administrative Officer dated February 24, 2025 titled “2025 Budget – Resource Requests” be received for information.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

5280-20
2025 Budget

2025 BUDGET – EFFICIENCIES REPORT

Report of the Chief Administrative Officer dated February 24, 2025.

To present the efforts undertaken in 2024 to efficiently deliver services within existing municipal budgets.

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: “That it be recommended that the report of the Chief Administrative Officer dated February 24, 2025 titled “2025 Budget – Efficiencies Report, be received for information.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councillor de Vries and Seconded by Councillor Plant: “That the meeting be adjourned.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

CORPORATE OFFICER