

Finance & Administration Committee Budget Meeting

Council Chambers
Pembroke, Ontario
January 14, 2025
6:00 p.m.

1. Land Acknowledgment

2. Call to Order

Present:

Deputy Mayor Abdallah, Chair
Mayor Gervais
Councillor Jacyno
Councillor Kuehl
Councillor Lafreniere

Regrets:

Councillor Plummer
Councillor Purcell

Also, Present:

Dave Unrau, Chief Administrative Officer/Deputy Clerk
Victoria Charbonneau, Municipal Clerk
Angela Lochtie, Treasurer/Deputy Clerk
Ashley Perrier, Recording Secretary
Jennifer Belaire, Financial Planning Analyst
Marsha Hawthorne, Purchasing Manager/Deputy Treasurer

Deputy Mayor Abdallah called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest & General Nature Thereof

There were no disclosures pecuniary interests declared.

4. Approval/Amendment of Meeting Agenda

The Chair requested that the agenda be approved by the Council's Standing Committee.

Motion:

Moved by Councillor Kuehl

Seconded by Councillor Jacyno

That that the agenda of the Finance and Administration Committee Public Budget Meeting of January 14, 2025, be approved as presented.

Carried

5. New Business

The Chair indicated that this meeting has been called to consider the draft 2025 budget to establish annual fees to be charged for garbage collection and disposal; the waste

management facility; to review the water and sewer rates; and to adopt the 2025 budgets for the City of Pembroke and the local boards. He asked the Clerk to report how the meeting was advertised to the public.

The Clerk reported that a media release was posted on the City's website and social media platforms on November 25, 2024. A notice was placed in the Pembroke Observer and News the week of November 30, 2024, and again the week of December 7, 2024. It was also posted on the bulletin board at City Hall on November 25, 2024. Radio advertisements on both local radio stations were scheduled throughout the week of January 10-14, 2025.

a) Presentation

The Chair asked to hear from the Treasurer. Ms. Lochtie presented highlights from the 2025 draft Operating budgets and local boards, including a review of Library and PBIA. Ms. Hawthorne presented the Water/Sewer budgets including a review of rates for water, sewer, sewer waste management. Ms. Bellaire presented the draft Capital budgets, including an overview of the state of City infrastructure for the City of Pembroke.

b) Comments from the Chair of Finance & Administration Committee

The Chair is also the Chair of Finance & Administration Committee, and the following items were noted:

- Thanked the Treasurer and staff for the dedication and professional work on preparing the 2025 draft budget.
- Proposed increase for the 2025 budget is driven from several factors: rising policing costs, wage adjustments, asset management requirements, reopening of the Kinsmen Pool and other essential expenditures.
- Aging infrastructure including roads, sidewalks and recreational facilities places a additional burden on the budget and acetates difficult decisions for the future.
- Province of Ontario needs to reassess its approach to downloaded programs which are straining on municipal budgets.
- Trial transit and new recreational amenities will help expand the tax rates by attracting new residents and businesses; to improve the community overall.

c) Comments from the Vice Chair of the Operations Committee

The Chair asked to hear from the Vice Chair of the Operations Committee. Mayor Gervais noted the following:

- Thanked staff for their work on the budget
- The 2025 budget is challenging; that committee is trying to arrive at a budget that is workable, manageable and able to allow the municipality to grow.
- City Auditors indicated that the City of Pembroke is at a low risk level for debt use, and sound financial picture.
- Operations department: The budget reflects work needs to be completed.
- City of Pembroke is a single tier municipality. This budget is a reflection on the total cost to do business for the municipality. Other lower tier municipalities can be compared to the City rate however it is not inclusive of what the County of Renfrew rate will be on top of it the lower tier rate.

d) Comments from the Chair of the Parks and Recreation Committee

The Chair asked to hear from the Chair of the Parks & Recreation Committee. Councillor Lafreniere noted the following:

- Provided a summary of the events/activities from 2024; Canada Day, Waterfront activities, new activities within the downtown core etc.
- Highlights for 2025: two more positions needed for the department
- 2025 Capital Projects include:
 - Additional park bench replacements
 - Park lighting at the Kinsmen & Pansy Patch, Paving Parking lot at Pansy Patch
 - Creating a reserve for upcoming Centennial project, replace play structure at Kinsmen Park.
 - Upper Ottawa Valley Little League committee received the Blue Jays Care Foundation Grant of \$88,000. In partnership with the City, these monies will go to field drainage work on diamond 3, and will benefit all the ball players.
 - Trail development
 - Marina Dock improvements
 - New Equipment: mower, utility vehicle & Olympia Ice Resurfacer, with support from Silverstick.

e) Comments from the Chair of Planning & Development Committee.

The Chair asked to hear from the Chair of the Planning & Development Committee. Councillor Jacyno noted the following:

- Thanked everyone for attending the meeting.
- Two options when making this budget: increase taxes or service reductions.

f) Comments from the Public

The Chair asked if there were any comments received from the public. Ms. Lochtie indicated that 7 comments or questions have been received from the public. Of the written submissions received there were two main categories. First concern was over the size of the levy increase of 8.98% and the desire for the City to concern for residents on a fixed income and their ability to pay. Second was the concern raised against garbage along the Algonquin Trail. The County owns this trail, they have indicated that the City can install garbage and perform routine maintenance, however, will not contribute any resources (manpower or financial) to address the concerns. The City Operations department has indicated that materials have been purchased for touchdown areas to be installed in the spring/early summer of 2025.

- Registered Participants

The Chair stated that at this point in the meeting, members of the public who have registered to address the Finance and Administration Committee members will be called upon. He indicated that if time permits, he would invite anyone in the audience who wished to address the Committee to come forward. If we run out of time, he asked those who wished to submit their comments in writing or stay and speak with Committee members following the meeting.

The Chair called upon Karen Walsh, Isabella Street

Ms. Walsh noted the following:

- Thanked staff for the presentation given.
- Kinsmen Pool is scheduled to reopen tomorrow.
- Residents on fixed income will experience tough times with high tax rates
- Increase in staff – how can the residents afford it
- CAO Unrau new vision – lots of plans, plans that need to implement
- Professional Grant writer – need to ensure the City is not missing out on funding.
- Capital Project Isabella Catchment Study – Moffat to Doran – needs to get done.
- Roads/Sidewalks – some will be removed, impacts accessibility.
- Police Services – Option to combine the two municipalities, to help with increasing costs.
- New Business- creates new jobs, which will increase the tax base. The City needs to grow.
- Legal Fees – regarding a Charitable Organization
- Partners need to contribute, Township of Laurentian Valley. Focus on being creative, new vision for Pembroke.
- Preparation of the Budget: City has limited resources, needs growth.

Ms. Lochtie noted the additional funding had been increased in the 2025 budget for Professional Services specifically for grant writing.

- Non- Registered Participants (time permitting)

The Chair called upon Ellen Vandersleen, President of the Pembroke Horticultural Society

Ms. Vandersleen noted the following:

- 2025 suggestions:
 - New signage Pansy Patch Park
 - Loads of gravel added to the parking lot in front of Pansy Patch Park, Horticultural Society to help with the cost
 - Build a bridge across the Pansy Patch Park, barriers to be installed for unauthorised vehicles.
 - Garbage cans to be placed along the street along Algonquin Trails.
 - Improving Paul Martin Drive – Planting trees, flowers and other things; allowing the corridor to become a noted entrance to the City.

The Chair called upon Mike Gaudette, 569 Elizabeth Street

Mr. Gaudette noted the following:

- 8.98% tax increases cannot continue. Hard times for residents on fixed income.
- OPP shocking increase for all municipalities
- Concerned for the young people/children. Pilot transit project should be an option, for both seniors and youth.

g) Comments from the Finance & Administration Committee members.

The Chair asked to hear from members of the Finance & Administration Committee.

The Chair asked to hear from Mayor Gervais; Mayor Gervais indicated that he had no further comment.

The Chair asked to hear from Councillor Jacyno; Councillor Jacyno indicated that he had no further comment.

The Chair asked to hear from Councillor Kuehl. Councillor Kuehl noted the following:

- Thanked the Treasurer and the entire finance team.
- Council meetings being recorded and available for streaming on YouTube
- More transparencies: Budget meeting detail packages are available on the website for all residents to view.
- Social media posts – comparing numbers versus City of Pembroke, other municipalities need to remember the numbers are only part of the equation. The County portion needs to be included in the comparison. The City of Pembroke rate increase includes the County portion, all in.
- Residents need to appreciate the services within the City.
- Past budget increases of 2% will stay in the past; raising taxes every year needs to happen.
- Thanked everyone for attending the meeting

The Chair asked to hear from Councillor Lafreniere. Councillor Lafreniere noted the following:

- Pembroke OPP is much different from Town of Petawawa; Pembroke has a much larger business population, more downtown core, social housing, hospital and more streets for patrolling. Additional staffing for the Pembroke OPP will happen over the next few years.
- Services provided compared to our neighbours, depends on where the residents want to spend your money.
- 2% tax increases are in the past.

Mike Gaudette indicated concerns regarding that 2016 was the last MPAC assessment.

Ms. Lochtie noted that the MPAC reassessment will impact both taxes between property classes and differences within the classes. Any imbalance between classes can be adjusted by tax ratios, which will be considered once MPAC updates their assessment.

The Chair thanked everyone for coming and asked those who wished to be notified of the Finance & Administration Committee's decision, please leave your name, address, and postal code with the staff members at the back of the room.

6. Adjournment

Motion:

Moved by Councillor Lafreniere

Seconded by Councillor Kuehl

That the Finance and Administration Committee Public Budget Meeting on January 14, 2025 adjourn at 8:04 p.m.

Carried