

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

Report

1st Special Meeting of the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee
December 7, 2020

PRESENT: Mayor E. Holder (Chair), Councillors M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga, S. Hillier

ALSO PRESENT: M. Ribera, C. Saunders, M. Schulthess, B. Westlake-Power
Remote Attendance: L. Livingstone, A. Barbon, J. Bunn, B. Card, K. Dickins, G. Elliott, G. Kotsifas, L. Morris, S. Mathers, J.P. McGonigle, D. MacRae, K. Murray, J. Raycroft, K. Scherr, C. Smith, B. Somers, S. Stafford
The meeting is called to order at 4:04 PM, with Mayor E. Holder in the Chair; it being noted that the following Members were in remote attendance: Mayor E. Holder, and Councillors M. van Holst, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga and S. Hillier

1. Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest

That it BE NOTED that no pecuniary interests were disclosed.

2. Consent

None.

3. Scheduled Items

3.1 Public Participation Meeting - Not to be heard before 4:00 PM - 2021 Budget

Moved by: M. Cassidy
Seconded by: A. Hopkins

That the following written submissions for the 2021 - 2023 Multi-Year Budget 2020 Public Participation Meeting BE RECEIVED for consideration by the Municipal Council as part of its 2020 Multi-Year approval process:

a communication dated November 29, 2020 from C. Butler; and
a communication dated November 30, 2020 from V. Lubrano III;

it being pointed out that at the public participation meeting associated with this matter, the individuals on the attached public participation meeting record made oral submissions regarding these matters.

Yeas: (15): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Motion Passed (15 to 0)

Additional Votes:

Moved by: S. Lehman
Seconded by: S. Lewis

Motion to open the Public Participation Meeting.

Yeas: (15): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Motion Passed (15 to 0)

Moved by: S. Hillier
Seconded by: S. Turner

Motion to close the Public Participation Meeting.

Yeas: (15): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Motion Passed (15 to 0)

4. Items for Direction

None.

5. Deferred Matters/Additional Business

None.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:41 PM.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

3.1 Public Participation Meeting – 2021 Budget Update

- J. Fontana – downtown resident – speaking with respect to the extraordinary times we are in and noting that a tax increase of 3.8% is highly irresponsible; requesting a tax freeze; noting that small business needs support, and this is not the time to raise taxes.
- A.M. Valastro – 123 John Street – speaking about the necessary revisions to the tree by-law, and the consensus that was presented at the first public participation meeting; this is not a big strain on the budget; noting the need to have additional by-law enforcement and move away from road-widening projects; and indicating frustration that staff and Council have not upheld the wishes of residents; focus on basics.
- M. Latino – lives in north-east part of town; call to leaders to act with a moral courage; noting the frustrations of citizens, a few months into summer – unprecedented number of Londoners coming together – Black Lives Matter; suggesting that the budget doesn't reflect trust in the community and the budget assumes that the police should be enhancing the lives of marginalized communities; cops are trusted. Basic reading of budget reveals this – call on leaders to act with a moral courage to trust communities to find solutions and requesting that Council align the budget to this, not police.
- A. Kane – BLM London – noting that there is a point in history, where there is a need to end the police; defund the police; police violence on black and indigenous lives; need to have actionable changes to defend us, not by funding the police; the purpose of divesting London police and creating alternatives – unarmed mediation teams, non-criminal incidents, mental health ambulances, unarmed traffic enforcement, etc.; noting that the safest communities have the most resources, not police; need to end police brutality, just like slavery and segregation.
- G. Harper – on behalf of BLM – defund the police; move budget to other areas – shift priorities; police training is not conducive to many of the calls that they have; shift funding to social services – better use of funds; understand the limitations of the police – paperwork should not be the focus of their time; more police does not solve crime; move funding to other sectors to reduce need; increase police does not make all of us safe and experts have written extensively about this matter; need not be another black youth growing up in a white society.
- D. Turris – speaking in favour of the business case for film – and in support of the proposed business cases before the committee; sharing their background and experience; noting that London has opportunity to participate in the film and television and that this would be an economic boost – creates opportunities in the community; have the training at Fanshawe and Western – then graduates leave, the establishment of the film office will keep them in London.
- J. Windatt – speaking in support of the film industry business case, and the amendment from Councillors van Holst and Squire; noting that they are a business owner, and event organizer; with pandemic all events were cancelled, now working in media; unprecedented hardship to own business and economy; media-based entertainment is in every home; industry has reacted quickly to COVID protocols; this would bring jobs and production \$ into local economy; facilitate a future for graduating students; great things are possible with initiative.

- Caller #1 – S. Franke – ward 11 resident – suggesting that emissions continue to rise, notwithstanding initial drop at the beginning of the pandemic; requesting funding allocations to climate change; noting the August update – screening to apply to future transportation projects; suggest that all projects go through this and a public screening process; make available to the public prior to any funding – the climate screening tool; noting cost mitigation opportunities that would also save money; suggesting that this is not a business as usual year; every budget requires evaluation through the screening tool, with a report to Council prior to any budget allocation.
- Caller #2 – A. Tucker – 280 Queens Avenue – submitted some information about sustainable development – in terms of an island; raising several questions related to the Core Area Action Plan and the associated funding for this; questioning the need.

Caller #3 – N. Evans – Congress of Black Woman – noting that they are alarmed by the wellness checks that have gone wrong; the organization understands the importance of policing, however it must be noted that the police are not equipped to manage the volume mental health emergencies; need to examine the possibility of redirecting funding to better trained response teams; suggesting the need to hire more black and indigenous officers; increase funding to social services; redirect funding into black community projects and away from the police budget.

- Caller #4 – A. van der Voort – speaking in support of growing the film sector in London; suggesting that Council plan ahead to support this industry; there a number of resources existing already in London; support the film industry here in London.
- Caller #5 – R. Carver, Associate Dean, School of Contemporary Media Fanshawe College Faculty of Creative Industries – speaking in support of the film industry in London; noting their work with staff on the business case, and now is the time for this in London; Fanshawe is a key participant; without it, will mean that London is under-represented; suggesting that there is spin off industry – including costuming, hoteling, etc.; there is anticipate a surge in demand, during and after COVID.
- Caller #6 – M. Amadasun – Argyle resident; noting their personal experience with systemic racism; discrimination and systemic racism exists, we all have a part to play – speaking in support of defunding the police by no less than 15%; the police do not keep us safe; doubling support of housing, long-term care, public service support; suggesting training to be made available to all government employees about unconscious bias; training needs to be from those communities who are being discriminated against; need more representation in the workforce, and this would minimize or reduce discrimination; funding and investment in the black community – give tools and access for various systems, so that all voices are at the table.
- Caller #7 – second paragraph in the budget – confirmed commitment – this needs to be followed-up by defunding the police budget; be that change – reallocate funding to addiction services, housing and recovery services.
- Caller #8 – S. Lewkowitz – this option is an important equity option in the process; speaking on behalf of the Urban League; support the call from Black Lives Matter, solidarity needs to be backed up with action; open the discussion on the police budget; suggesting that the pandemic has not affected everyone equally; the anti-racism lens is a good first step – but we require a full equity lens – make this a priority; only way to make this happen; historic investments – vital

that investments continue, austerity is detrimental; need to invest in services that support all people; asking for an additional budget public participation meeting, following the debate, and the establishment of Council priorities.

- Caller #9 – M. McIntosh – Londoner since 1978 – proud to be a Londoner, Black London Network – faith-based network; first-hand experience of black Londoners and black organizations; put investment into black organizations that support the community and anti-oppression racism; community grant program to support anti-black and all racism forms; money is a barrier, access funding comes with many barriers; common systemic barrier is the criteria to qualify for funding; requires that partnership is necessary to access funding opportunities; community grant process – extend anti-racism funding across multi-year budgets; demonstration of sustained commitment, but finding additional funding for additional anti-black racism initiatives; noting that action is required and the multi-year budget needs to support black-led organizations.
- Caller #10 – K. Web – resident of London – stating a land acknowledgement and urging Council to start meetings with an indigenous land acknowledgement; police is 18%, which is very high – this needs to be cut in half and allocated to social services, housing community services.
- Caller #11 – D. Day – resident – London police service is 18% of budget vs 2-3% for housing; increasing housing will reduce needs in other areas, including hospitalization; noting that people of colour are disproportionately negatively affected.
- Caller #12 – M. Metcalf - Vice President External Affairs University Students' Council – speaking in support of transit funding; advocating for some policy change related to accessible and reliable transit; noting decrease in service time is disproportionality affecting marginalized communities; restore services to 100%, for the safety of students; suggesting COVID has not affected every Londoner the same; speaking against the delay on the implementation of the green bin.
- Caller #13 – M. Moussa – requesting the removal \$13 million – for the consultation for new city hall; removal, not deferral – new city hall needs to come off the table, and allow the rate-payers to comment; money should be spent on infrastructure; doesn't like multi-year budgets; city hall consultants cost is excessive and needs to be removed.
- Caller #14 – D. Aboud – speaking in support of the business case for the film industry; noting this is a growing opportunity, including for job creation; attraction of crews, money from production companies, a great deal that can be taken in by the City of London; graduates from London's 2 great film schools leave the City – job creation is for all walks of life; strongly urge the funding of an office and believes that London can be successful in this realm.

From: butler.chris

Date: November 29, 2020 at 3:01:25 PM EST

To: "Saunders, Cathy" <csaunder@london.ca>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] SPPC 2021 Budget Meeting - Public Input - Chris Butler - Added Agenda

Cathy – Please post this as added Agenda for the Dec 7 – SPPC Budget Meeting as I’m not comfortable attending in a City Hall Conference Room .

Mayor Holder / Budget Chief Morgan / Councillor’s >> Please consider this public input for your review and recommendations for consideration / action going forward for the Dec 10 – 11 Budget Meetings.

My Current Status >> Fixed Income Senior , homeowner current paying 15 % of my pre-tax income for City of London taxes and applauded at the double inflation annual increases for now the 6th year in a row. This is un-sustainable going forward .

Budget Review Conclusions

- The proposed “ savings “ to date offered up by Finance Team (4.4 % to 3.8 %) are welcome but are really just time shifting planned 2021 tax increases to 2022 , and offer little concrete hope .
- It’s clear to me and many , that if the City of LDN continues to recommend 2.9 % to 3.0 % tax (double BOC inflation) annual increases in the Operating Budget just to cover “ existing services “ ; then this 2021 and all budgets going forward are not sustainable when combined with the often welcome 1.0 % new program spending that this City needs . (Affordable Housing etc)
- Continuing on this path is already and will continue to erode the publics confidence that our fairly new 4 year Budget Planning process has the flexibility under C- 19 type challenges to offer up hope for rate payers and our already decimated commercial sector. This is not a “ drive by budget year “ folks.

Recommendations 2021 and Going Forward – For review / consideration / action – Dec 9 – 10 MTGS

1. REDUCE & challenge the City of London’s targeted increase from 3 % to 2.0 % to sustain “ existing services “ . The Assessment Value Increases offered up later in Q1 - 2021 by our CFO can be prioritized to cover of any pressure points at the CFO’s discretion.
2. Increase the annual target for the City of London’s contribution to the Annual Service Improvements Program (eg – Continuous Improvements) from the minor \$1.2Million per year to at least \$2.4 Million starting in 2021 . The target has not changed in 5 – 6 years and offers up an opportunity for London to harness the commitment , innovation and ownership our front line employees have shown while working remotely during our C- 19 shared crisis with out the red tape. Empower this now and it will not stop.
3. Eliminate any ratepayer funded budgeted inflows into the “ Special Projects & New Initiatives Reserve Fund “ (discretionary fund) for 2021 and probably 2022. You already have \$156 M to \$162 Million in this fund and trust me that plenty of “ discretionary “ liquidity compared to me.
4. Apply the annual \$1.0 M to 2.0 Million in surplus Operation Budget Funding directly to offset our rate payer 2021 tax deduction opposed to “ paying down debt “ per the by-law. Both 2020 – 21 budget years should be consider C – 19 exceptions and treated with some outside the box solutions for taxpayers. (Were still eating kraft dinner & hotdogs with many in the community) .
5. Fund the CIP program – \$\$\$ grants for development fees & brown soil clean up waived and transferred to taxpayers to fund so that they be funded “ **perpetually** “ from the Assessment Value Growth Fund . Growth pays for growth RIGHT ? At the moment I pay for this growth at about \$1.6 M - \$2.0 Million a year at can’t afford to fund developers any more in the ever expanding CIP zones. . I get that the CIP Programs can promote growth (good metrics hard to come by) but covering off funding from the AVGFund makes this a perfect circle , IF and only IF the CIP program remains viable.

BUDGET PROCESS – Fix This Please ASAP

- Change the current by-law requiring Council to select and vote individually on any “ Service Reductions “ to met our ever increasing financial budget challenges back to one of general direction to the City Manager and CFO on the percentage reduction % required. This is the norm almost all Canadian Cities with only Calgary (broke) and London as exceptions . This by – law “ CHECKMATES “ council before they get started and consensus is shifted to you not on the City Amin.
- Going forward , we need a paradigm shift in what the Assessment Value Growth Fund targets for payouts. There isn’t a successful business or organization I know that takes it’s “ NEW REVENUE “ from growth and rewards those parts of the organization that have delivered the

same services in the same way with little or no measurable innovation and expects to survive going forward.

THXS – Chris Butler – 863 Waterloo St > Looking for 8 Brave Votes to Start the Process.

From: Vincent Lubrano
Sent: Monday, November 30, 2020 12:56 PM
To: SPPC <sppc@london.ca>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support For Budget Modification

Good Afternoon,

I am writing you today as a citizen of London because I have read the proposed modification to the 2020-2023 Multi Year Budget and I am in favor of the changes and am in hopes you will approve the changes and pass it on to the full council for approval. I spoke in favor of the original budget at the public participation meeting in January so I'm pleased to see the changes are minimal in the context of the overall budget. I believe the changes are strategic and do the job for our current environment. I know it is unpopular to raise property taxes at any time and even more so in a time of crisis. But I think it is prudent to keep moving forward with the overall plan and direction of the city as best we are able. I agree in revising it to 3.8% and do not think this places too much of a burden on most property owners.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Vincent Lubrano III
London, ON