
A special scheduled meeting of Trenton Town Council was held in the Council Chambers on Thursday, April 30, 2020 beginning at 7:00 PM.

Present: Mayor Shannon MacInnis
Deputy Mayor Alec Dove
Councillor VJ Earle
Councillor Don Hussler
Councillor Steven Stewart
Wayne Teasdale, CAO
Troy Aikens – Finance Director
Marilou Sutherland, Deputy Clerk

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Shannon MacInnis.

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Stewart
Seconded by Deputy Mayor Dove
To accept the agenda as presented.
Councillor Hussler requested the minutes be recorded verbatim.
Motion carried.

Resolution Budget 2020-21

Mayor MacInnis

We will move along to our resolution, up first we have our budget 2020-21 before anyone makes the motion we will ask Wayne talk about the budget.

Wayne Teasdale

Well, I can - the changes were made from the budget meeting with the new rate being \$1.94 from \$1.62, the majority of that is the change up to the pollution control charge going back to the base tax. This year's total was something around \$70,000 we had spent out of owned source for capital items that we had incurred that was not of repair and maintenance but of capital by nature. We put allowance in of \$100,000. Other than that we are doing well with it. Aligned all salaries by table; we removed summer students because of not offering summer programs; removed the pool and programs. For the removal of the summer programs and pool and the like. Even through there is some discussion with other units about recreation those are embracing all recreation facilities. We're not so much pool or summer programs, there talking sports fields, baseball fields and all the other things. With that in mind again a rate of \$1.94 and adjusted down solid waste for two years now to \$122. For two years we have enjoyed a price break on that. Whether it is pick up or volume not sure in any event that

rate is going down from \$143 per household to \$122 for the year. Looked at the commercial piece as \$4.10 we didn't go up on that and I think we pretty well have census on that we need to move forward with project trying to work with commerce and long term leasing or construction or whatever the case may be. We need to be competitive and not put a great deal of burden on what little bit of commercial we have left if you will. Going to move forward with a positive tone. And at some point, adjust for that as we move along. The water rate as you know is set by the utility board, I know you folks haven't had an application for that in a long time for the increase. May want to have a discussion over the year on that to make sure terms of strategy to ensure there is enough in your water reserve to carry on having active equipment, secured equipment and facilities. Not a lot more I can add to the budget I did as per your instructions remove the summer activities based on the feedback. Back on honorarium it was the majority rule put that in as well. I think we are good to go. Unless there are any questions or you need any clarification if any I think I put in as much as I could factual of course. There is only doubt on the wellness center, they don't have their budget together yet I left a cushion if you will. The budget last year was 38,000, the actual cost was 48,000 I put in about 50,000 this year as the budget hoping if there's any problems at the capacity with hope that the feds may give them some relief money.

Mayor MacInnis

Thank you, Wayne, that was a great update. Maybe this is how it should be I will go around have each Councillor make his comments and questions rather than people just jumping in. I have one little comment. Actually, I have couple comments actually.

I'm in total favor of budget, I think Wayne did great job. When I break down the taxes and two additional user fees that are left which is hydrant charge as well as the garbage pickup. When I factor in the actual cost of what they are with the \$1.94 I believe it comes out to an actual total of 2.06-2.07. Do you know if that's correct Wayne?

Wayne Teasdale

I think I was around 2.06 don't know if it was that high I thought I was lower than that. Might be where we would be from last year. I would need to do the math. Don't think you are far off, Shannon. I have to say.

Mayor MacInnis

I always like to compare apples to apples when it comes to what we're used to for passing our budget. For the first two years it's been like 1.99 figure. We knew exactly where we're at and feel comfortable with it. I will start going around the horn at council. I'll start with Councillor Dove, do you have any any comments or questions?

Deputy Mayor Dove

Just a couple of comments Shannon, the comments are around the rink. I noticed in our operating capital we are putting another 10 grand into a furnace, another 10 grand on a storage facility. Into a structure that cost the town of Trenton taxpayer \$150,000 last year. I would be okay with that if for the record the Town Council is going to be putting a together committee to investigate I mean as soon as this pandemic is over and social distancing is all gone or maybe before that. A committee that would investigate bringing that \$150,000 down to zero. In my opinion this should have happened before we put the floor in the rink. We should have as a council sat down with the people that are run this structure and say hold on a minute now, you are costing us 17 or 18 cents on our tax dollars and what are you guys doing to do to bring that number down. So, if that's the intent of this committee or this council to put a committee together to bring that number down from 150 to somewhere closed to zero I'd be happy with that. That's about all I have to say.

Mayor MacInnis

Thank you Councillor Dove. I would agree that it is an area that if the town is spending that much money, I'm sure Darryl would love to have few extra people sitting around the table giving him some ideas or at least helping him with his thoughts on how we can bring in more revenue to drive that number down.

Wayne Teasdale

Can I add to that?

Mayor MacInnis

Go ahead.

Wayne Teasdale

My plan for the town is to combine the efforts of Parks and Recreation personnel namely Craig with Darryl to come up with not only winter programs but summer programs that would yield more attention to the arena to offer up as much money back on building as possible. I think I'm fair to say Darryl is very good with winter activities but not so much for summer but that's because there's never been a drive on behalf of the town to use the arena in such a way that there is money to be made except for odds and sods and volunteer. And I think we need to look as commercial thing that could provide income to those that are using it as well as the town. I agree with the committee it is my hope to create that committee, I was going to call it recreation committee only because I was going to embrace all of the facilities that are of recreation nature. An example would be why can't we do or offer up a home show weekend. Or why can't we offer up a trailer show or things like that. That attract a lot of people to the town. So, these are the conversation I wish to have in the up and coming year with the management team we have together now.

Deputy Mayor Dove

Thank you, Wayne, at least I know that there is some thought or direction towards that deficit that currently the rink holds. So, thank you.

Wayne Teasdale

You are welcome.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay thank you

Hello – are you there?

Councillor Stewart

We are here Shannon

Councillor Hussler

You are on mute – again

Mayor MacInnis

I couldn't hear anyone else.

Laughter

Mayor MacInnis

Okay now we will go to Councillor Hussler if you have any comments.

Councillor Hussler

Yes, I have some comments first of all I would like to thank staff I'm sure there was a great amount of effort put into coming up with the figures. Basically my argument is where we are sitting with the tax base is concerned. I don't agree with the 2.06 I think we are more on that. Depends on what the assessment of the home is valued at and where you come in at. That's the bottom line. Higher assessed homes where you spread that solid waste and hydrant over the higher assessed than yes, it will bring the actual cent on the tax rate down. But when you are down under 75,000 it brings it up even higher. So I would just like to comment in relationship to it and a comment as far as the rink is concerned. The rink has been there a long time and it has flourished and it has it's ups and down but it is a decision for the citizens made. There was a time that the rink made money. As much money in the summer as it did in the winter, with bingo's. And other things that took part in the rink that basically went by the way side. But I agree with Wayne perhaps there is something else other than bingo because bingo was a major, major fundraiser for the rink. But the rink as you say is a decision for the citizens. I don't know about you the rest of council but I have heard it in my time in council it said loud and clear that they are proud of the rink. They want to maintain it. But I agree with comments that they also want to see that price come down. Any work on that would be serving. But in the mean time I'm sure I don't need to argue any more that's my biggest thing is user fees on my

objection to include user fees and our budget to collect extra taxes. Everyone is aware that's my big thing is user fees. Everyone is aware of my decision however this is a special meeting to pass a budget where it will have negative effect on our community it will have more effect on some than others. As an elected official I have the right to go on record to speak on a motion. It seems we are in such a hurry that we can't wait until our regular May 12 council meeting. Who knows by then we may have a mechanism I feel by then we will still be in isolation. Have some type of mechanism put in place to allow citizens to be informed. Success for any plan, bylaw, or budget is public education. If we were to sit down as a committee we may be able to overcome the many challenges facing us during this isolation. Public education is probably the biggest challenge we are going with this budget and bylaw. The use of user fees in communities has a negative perception for most citizens and not for only those gaining with the user fee are at time in favor but I want to emphasize that not all. The geographic of Trenton tells us the following homes under \$25,000 make up for 14% of the community, homes under \$50,000 make up for 11%, homes under \$75,000 make up 26%, homes under \$100,000 make up 23%, homes under \$150,000 make up 18% that is a whopping 92% and leaves only 8% that make up the above \$150,000 assessment. The majority of 51% taxpayers are under the \$75,000 bracket. The lower the assessments the more effect it has on the tax you are paying. Utilizing user fee as opposed to unified tax rate. I don't see any real winner here. Unlike other large communities Trenton does not have the assessment to warrant user fees. In fact, public perception in any community is that user fees are a tax grab. If user fees were the answer why do they not use them in other areas where residents can benefit depending on how they are utilizing the services. Taxpayers over 65 make up 20% of our population and do not use anywhere near many of the services we provide in the town. They live in the town, brought up their children, build up our parks, our schools and before the water disaster in Walkerton Trenton enclosed the reservoir before most other communities. That is a huge example of many accomplishments in our past Trenton has always been a forward-thinking community. During most time we always had large operating capital reserve. The provincial health authority initiatives encouraged most seniors to stay in their homes as long as they can. Not price them out of the town. In resourcing I spoke to people, tax payers of various ages and various assessments, some that owned upward of \$200,000 homes and some with multiple properties, some who came from generations that founded our town whose ancestors who sat on council long before we were born. Trenton is Trenton. Once a flourishing town and now rebuilding from economic factors that put us where we are. But together we always get through. We were there before this is nothing new. When we started in 2018 it was supposed to be the cash cow that was going to boost us into the perspective future instead it plunged us into a deficit of more than \$225,000 I believe I'm being conservative when I say that amount. That was a negative time in our town's history not one we are willing to learn from. I remember at a meeting in 2018 when we first introduced these user fees in attendance some residents from the out laying streets in our town who did not receive water and sewer they were jumping for

joy when their tax bills went from 1.99 down to 1.34. Who is going back to them telling them the percentage of this user fees put on them will be well above the original rate of 1.99. We will hear from them. Others saw the real picture potential of the hard reality of higher water bill. I imagine we will hear from them as well. At that meeting we left the residents with the perception that if it didn't work, we would go back. I didn't see any residents in attendance really believing that. In fact, they shouted back "no you won't" and they were right. When our financial advisors advised us about the huge deficit at the early part of last year. That we were facing at the end of last year Council voted to go to continue on in the wrong direction. This led us to increasing user fees and taxes to an unbelievable amount. Residents spoke loud and clear of that. Of all the water bills brought to our attention it was the one that exceeded \$3900 for one quarter stands out to me. I hate to always be the doom and gloom and to applaud council to remove the sewer charge it certainly is a move in the right direction and I'm sure the citizens will applaud. You will remember last year when our current CAO gave us a reality check for the second time that we were heading for another deficit if we did not react. So, we increased our user fees by 72 cents. 72 cents for sewer and increased taxes by 24 cents. I reluctantly voted yea to keep our heads above water. At the same time, I introduced a motion to council to form a committee to look at the tax rate. The motion passed unanimously that was in June which gave us plenty of time to sit down and review. That never materialized that leaves a question as to why. And why are we moving forward with bylaw and user fees because of the COVID 19 situation and the public was not given the opportunity to question. I do not approve of the explanation given that they had the time to question. In Trenton a town hall meeting was always the way Trenton voiced their concerns and citizens relied on that. Because COVID 19 they did not get the opportunity to attend the public meeting on the new bylaw. It passed four to one with me voiced nay. Further to the user fees this council is proposing a 23% increase in their own pay which is received by honorarium. That is unacceptable and I want no part of receiving such a hike. This council has plenty of time to react and discuss and come up with a tax rate that would be fair to all. Therefore, I will be voting nay on this budget for all the reason is given. Thank you mayor, council and CAO.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay, thank you Donnie

We will move over to the other side of the table. Councillor VJ Earle do you have any comments or questions?

Councillor Earle

To me I think it is a fair budget. In my own opinion I feel there are some ups and downs with it. I feel it is better than ones we have had in the last few years. I just have three questions about the operating budget. This \$49,000 that we are putting aside for sidewalks and curbs. How much curb and sidewalk will we get?

Wayne Teasdale

We are still working that out. We have four 01 operators qualified to do this work. The decision we have to make is whether we go with asphalt or concrete curbs. We know the asphalt curbs will smash up with the snowplow and don't last as long. With the amount we had set aside we are just going to see how far we can take this and maybe there may be a combination of both concrete and asphalt. We want to look at it from this perspective that I'm also trying to embrace the sidewalk work. So, the same thing applies to sidewalks, do we look to go with curb or I'm sorry asphalt as you know heaves, splits, goes every which way and the walk becomes unstable. Someone with a walker or wheelchair would be better off on the yellow line or we look to asphalt. So, we haven't really concluded VJ what options we've defined yet.

Councillor Earle

Okay, that my next question is about the \$10,000 storage unit. I thought we discussed buying a rail car?

Wayne Teasdale

So, what I did was make an allowance for a C can for the back of the rink. Darryl is trying to get one with side door so it is easier to have the tractor if you will be able to move in. I was thinking we could get one with a back door. If we got a 48-foot container we could put it in the back of the building by the exit door where they bring their stuff in. And then we could lock it up secure. We are still having discussion and we are still pricing. Darryl is looking to see what's out there. We are coming in around anywhere between 8 or 9 plus the delivery of it. But we are still working that out.

Councillor Earle

Okay, when you mentioned the honorariums earlier you didn't really say what the final vote was. Are you allowed to?

Wayne Teasdale

Well there was five of them and it got the majority.

Councillor Earle

So, it was 3-2 vote right?

Wayne Teasdale

Yes, that is correct.

Councillor Earle

Okay that's all from me. Thanks.

Wayne Teasdale

You are welcome.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay thanks VJ. Councillor Stewart, do you have anything to add?

Councillor Stewart

Saving the best for last.

Mayor MacInnis

Of course.

Councillor Stewart

There you go. I would like to thank the staff, I know it was hard, we don't have a lot to work with. I have a pheasant pecking at my window here, I guess it's time to feed it. But anyway, the C Can issue there. I think you can pick one of those up for around \$3000. I'm going to leave that alone. The rate that had previous years the numbers we were given lead us to believe that this would work. Okay and this is my opinion this is what interrupt out of it. That the numbers from former CAO that this would work, and it was something we would try. So, we tried it for couple years and it didn't work. People wanted something different. So, I think the \$122 for the solid waste charge is fair because it's for everybody. There is no one paying more than the guy next door regardless of your assessment. You are only entitled to x number of bags whether you have an assessment of \$20,000 or \$200,000. So that part there doesn't bother me a bit. As Councilor Hussher did say the rink has been here a long time. Knock on any door and say something about doing something to the rink, you best be running out the driveway. People like the rink even people who don't use the rink. It's a Trenton staple. The assessments in the town are very low, there are houses and I knocked on houses four years ago and houses I go on viewpoint and I can look at their assessment and I'm thinking to myself. There is no way the assessment is where its at. I can't see a property in Trenton being assessed for any less than \$50,000 that's my personal opinion unless it's vacant land. As far as the sidewalks go and what not, I mean we can only do what we can do. I know we do only have four people and they are going to put their heart and soul into it. We got some good staff there. It is going to need to be thought out, very cautiously on how we do it and what we can get our best, get our biggest bang for our buck for it. The facility, I'm going to ask you something here Wayne. It says capital reserve lower section on the operating budget, so it says here, replacement of heating furnace for the "area".

Wayne Teasdale

For the arena, did I spell that wrong? It should be "arena", I meant to say arena must be auto correct on that. Sorry.

Councillor Stewart

Okay, anyway I was wondering what the "area" was. So we have money set in the capital aside for the work to be done in the basement in the building.

Wayne Teasdale

At town hall?

Councillor Stewart

Ya

Wayne Teasdale

I put an amount in there for repairs and maintenance and I'm hoping that we can get it. It's under the initial piece which is the governance piece you'll find the property maintenance of town hall is within that and I put some money in there to facilitate that. I have to get known for that, I have to get known what's all involved for that, I'm hoping through the public works that we get a specialist in to look at that to see what we should and can do.

Councillor Stewart

Now when I drop down to where it says Hemlock Group.

Wayne Teasdale

Yes

Councillor Stewart

1.9 million

Wayne Teasdale

Yes

Councillor Stewart

That sewer line, our sewer line for the lift station to the park in front of the office, down to main line on First Street. Will it take, will it handle what we have.

Wayne Teasdale

Well, I hope so because if you are saying the first piece of the application of that we didn't get was crucial for the Hemlock to take place then you are telling me something I didn't know. I know we fixed a clogged pipe on Park Street down and I know that the flow is beautiful, all the way through. We've been monitoring that every two weeks and that's flowing so if there's clogged pipe up at the Park it is unknown to me. The only way I'm going to have the same thing happen, that will have to be an item we have to address in time. I will tell you this I personally feel that if there is something along the infrastructure outside the park that is causing harm or possibly infringing on the capacity of the park I think the Hemlock Group in all responsibility is going to have to look at that in the moneys they that received. That is something we need to address of course. But I mean there's not much point in building at the park if I can't get the water to flow out of it.

Councillor Stewart

Well that's where I was going to go.

Wayne Teasdale

Okay we will be very caution there Steve to know that.

Councillor Stewart

Okay like I said, the rest of it just once more thank everyone for doing what they did you know to help make this go and I know no body went without, the rink or the park or public works or water treatment but I guess there was some savings in the individual places I know council certainly appreciates that. And on that note I will turn it back over to the Mayor.

Mayor MacInnis

Thank you Councillor Stewart. We are back everyone had a chance to comment so at this time I would like to accept a motion to approve.

Councillor Stewart

I move that we approve the budget for 2020-21 as presented.

Mayor MacInnis

Thank you Councillor Stewart

Deputy Mayor Dove

And Alec Dove will second that your worship.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay thank you Councillor Dove. We have a motion and a seconder. Any other questions on the motion? All in favor...

Councillor Stewart says yes

Deputy Mayor Dove says yes

Councillor Earle says yes

Mayor MacInnis

And Donnie is a "no"

Councillor Hussler

I was waiting for you to call opposed. Nay.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay sorry I did that wrong. Anyone with a "nay"

Councillor Hussler

Nay Don Hussler

Mayor MacInnis

Thanks Don

Councillor Hussler

That's spelled with a double "s"

Mayor MacInnis

Thank you. Motion carried. Thank you.

We'll move along to our water budget. Wayne, you want to speak on this for a second?

Wayne Teasdale

There's not a lot to talk about in terms of the water. As you all know as I mentioned, don't want to sound like broken record. You know we need to look at the review of the water in terms of revenue in and revenue out and determine the need for the water to have the same thing as operating. One of the advantages of the water I'll say is through the utility review board that the depreciation number is said to go over to the water reserve fund every year which is very powerful and a smart thing to do. As a matter of fact I think all towns should be doing that with operating rather than picking and choosing the dollar valves. So the reserve right now is sitting at close to \$500,000 and we do have some capital items as I noted on the sheet I provided you with today. And I think we need to look to accept the capital budget as noted with the resolutions for you folks to sign at a later date. But the operating budget for water is basically similar as last year except for few odds and sods if you will. There has been some savings in labour, I think only two people are needed in the water. We've had a really good turn around this month with regards to finding a replacement for Stan. We have a very qualified person, I'm happy to have him and so is Stan. Stan actually retires today folks. Just in case you don't know I think the town owes him certainly an appreciation of some sort. We will talk about that at a later date. But he is willing to stay on and assist as we go along. I will be talking to as we go along with it. In terms of the budget again it is pretty straight forward. I put a slight bump to revenue on the budget for water. This year some people may be relaxed enough to want to consume a little more water and have more generated on the base meter, revenue rather. Really all I did for that so if you get a lot more we get a lot more folks we would be happy with more revenue in any capacity.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay does anyone have any questions on the water budget.

Councillor Hussler

Yes, Mayor Don Hussler here. I just, for clarity again I'm just a little confused with the procedure. Because the moneys all come out of the same pot so basically what I said we are collecting fees I was always under the procedure and I don't know anything different and I have attended many, many not only Trenton but in other communities. But the budget is the budget this includes water and

everything and we never sat down and separated them different. I'm pretty well 99% sure that's the way it goes. Why are we having three or four separate votes when actually what we are voting on is the budget. So, the budget includes the way we collect taxes, our revenue and expenditures which includes our capital which includes our water. I don't see the need to have four different votes unless someone can basically correct me if I'm wrong. That's the way we have always did it. If you will recall basically budget is presented in total which included the water and the other budgets as one budget and I either pass or it doesn't pass.

Mayor MacInnis

I actually think you're right on this one Don. Does any one have a problem with accepting all of it as being passed as a complete budget?

Councillor Stewart

When I made the motion to pass the budget I was passing the complete budget. My motion was – I'm in favor with Donnie's comments there.

Wayne Teasdale

If I may – Donnie you are correct. But I know historically here that there is number of resolutions in other words you guys divided up the budgets for resolution so we were just following your practice here at the council for resolution. I'm totally in favor of the comment that when you pass the budget of 2020-21 that you are embracing operation, both water and operational as well as capital for all capacities and we will follow up with written resolution to designate the same that we are asking for complete approval. There should be one motion for budget with whereas, whereas, and then the final resolution that they accept the budget. That's what I would say you could do and tonight we should be following practice from other years.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay so Steve made the motion and Alec second the motion for the budget are you guys okay with including everything in your motion?

Councillor Stewart

I am that's what I thought I did.

Mayor MacInnis

And VJ you voted on it, are you okay with that?

Councillor Earle

Yes

Mayor MacInnis

And Don are you okay with that as well?

Councillor Hussher

Yes I'm okay with a "nay".

Mayor MacInnis

That concludes our resolution portion of it and unless everyone has anything else to add we are at the end of our agenda. Any other questions or comments?

Councillor Hussher

Yes Mayor, I have a comment I attended a REN meeting yesterday and I have a lot of information that came out of it, however, I just need to get it all together basically check back with Sarah and tomorrow I will send it out to you. I think ever community was really pleased with what Sarah and the board presented yesterday. We don't have a strategic plan yet but we will. The board is making sure they have their "i" dotted and their "t" crossed. We have a lot of the projects that they have done and plan to do and finalization of last year's budget. And have determination moving forward of course there's always the problem trying to get budgets done before April 1, trying to get the province and all other committees. It all comes in at once with final figures and what have you. Anyway, tomorrow I will forward what I have anyway. If you have any questions or concerns please get back to me. So, I can get you the proper answer. We will go from there. I was very impressed with some of the projects that the province and the rest of the country are taking a look at doing immigration and some taking of the other things that REN is looking into. So, it is a great step forward.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay, thanks Don. I will just let everybody know the wellness center budget meeting is set for this Monday. It was actually supposed to be last week but Greg that runs the wellness center, he actually lives in Debert and he knew two or three families that were killed, his wife works with two of them. And one of the shootings that happened in Debert happened about 500 meters from his house. So, he was quite shaken up, he needed another week to get himself together before we have another wellness center meeting. Unfortunately, we won't be having that until Monday. So, we are a little bit behind with our budget then we wanted to be as soon as we have that I will pass on the information to Wayne and Council. With that and if no one else has any other.

Councillor Stewart

One more thing while I have you on the line. I want to bring you up to date on the library board. Erin Stackhouse our chief librarian – everything is looking good, they still have some staff working and there is some staff off that are being covered by the government. And the other is I was speaking to Lisa Smith at Glen Haven Manor and so far so good we haven't had any cases at the manor. You may have noticed a construction trailer sitting outside. Kind of confusing that's for staff. It's a change house for staff to change at in the building before they go in. They go in separate doors and leaving they go through that building

to deposit their clothes. Anyway want to bring people up to speed on that.
Thank you.

Mayor MacInnis

Okay, thank you Steve.

Okay guys if no one has anything else. Want to thank everyone for tonight's meeting.

Call for adjournment

Councillor Stewart

I'll move.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.