



MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: Overall tax rates remain unchanged as Amherst approves general operating budget and community support area rate

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – The overall commercial, residential and resource tax rates in the Town of Amherst will remain unchanged from the previous year.

Council made the decision to keep the overall tax rates for the 2020-21 fiscal year at \$1.655 per \$100 of assessment for residential and resource properties and \$4.455 per \$100 of assessment for commercial properties when it met on May 25, 2020.

At the same time, council adopted the final two stages of the budgetary process when it approved a general operating budget of slightly more than \$14 million and a community support budget of \$469,144.

The tax rate to raise the money for the general operating budget was set by council at \$1.187 per \$100 for residential and resource properties and \$3.987 for commercial properties. The tax rate for the community support budget was set at 7.1 cents per \$100 of assessment for all property types.

Earlier this year, council approved a mandatory provincial contribution tax rate of 39.7 cents per \$100 of assessment for all properties. This rate raises the money the town is required to collect on behalf of the province for education, corrections, housing, property valuation services and the regional library. That portion of the overall budget is just over \$2 million.

The tax rates for the general budget, the mandatory provincial contribution rate and the community support rate are combined to make the overall tax rate.



Altogether, the town's 2020-21 operating budget is slightly more than \$18.3 million.

"This budget ensures the town can continue providing essential services, like police, fire protection and sewer services, at current levels while providing the flexibility needed to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic," Mayor David Kogon said.

CAO Greg Herrett echoed those comments.

"The budget has been structured such that the town can be responsive as things change with COVID-19, while maintaining the current tax rate," Herrett said. "It's important to note that while this budget represents estimates based on the best information that we have to date, if we have learned anything through the pandemic, it's that some events are simply not predictable with any degree of accuracy, and we expect there will be significant variations from budget this year."

Despite the challenges caused by the pandemic, Herrett said he feels optimistic about the next year for the Town of Amherst.

"This budget allows the town to complete necessary infrastructure projects while maintaining tax rates," he said.

"Cash flow remains a significant uncertainty. We hope that the Property Tax Financing Program and the province's Municipal Operating Loan Program provide the necessary assistance to help both our impacted taxpayers and the town without significant negative long-term impacts."

The general operating budget contains the budgets for police (\$4,334,207), fire (\$1,817,746), planning/strategic initiative/environmental stewardship (\$463,281), transportation and public works (\$2,430,476), economic development (\$247,716) and recreation (\$1,910,387) services as well as internal services performed by the corporate services department (\$2,842,014).

The community Support Area budget contains the budgets for services that, in the opinion of council, provide support to the community. These include grants to organizations (\$180,569), the Cumberland YMCA grant (\$103,835) and funding for community events (\$53,500), as well as the budgets that cover the town's tax exemption (\$92,440) and tax reduction (\$42,000) policies.

While the overall tax rate remains the same, it does not necessarily mean the bill residential, resource or commercial tax payers receive will be the same as last year's bill. The amount paid is determined by the provincial assessment, which is established by the provincial Property Valuation Services Corporation.

The corporation pegged the town's 2020-21 residential assessment at slightly more than \$394 million, a 0.4 per cent increase over the previous year. The commercial assessment was set at just under \$133 million, a six per cent increase over the previous year. The resource



assessment was set at just under \$1.7 million, an increase of 0.6 per cent over the previous year.

The full operating and capital budgets will be posted to the town's website in the near future.

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