



MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: Amherst town council approves operating budgets, tax rates

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – The Amherst town council approved its 2023-2024 general and water utility operating budgets as well as its tax rates when they met on Monday, April 24, 2023.

“The town, like everyone else, is not immune to inflation,” Mayor David Kogon said. “Despite inflation’s impact, our dedicated town staff have skillfully put together this year’s operating budget, enabling us to preserve all the excellent services we provide to our citizens, to continue improving our infrastructure, all the while keeping our tax rates at last year’s levels.”

The general operating budget was set at slightly more than \$21-million. The water utility’s operating budget was set at just over \$2.5 million. Tax rates remain unchanged from the previous year.

The general operating budget contains the budgets for police services (\$4,986,219), corporate services (\$2,747,349), operations, excluding water and sewer, (\$2,528,158), recreation facilities operations (\$2,076,084), fire services (\$1,988,745), communication and IT services (\$510,289), community living (\$736,334), planning and economic development (\$581,950), strategic initiatives (\$95,000), environment stewardship (\$71,780), solid waste (\$855,143), sewage (\$1,153,679), mandatory provincial contributions area rate (\$2,375,217) and community support area rate (\$658,911).

For the third year in a row, council did not increase the tax rates, setting the overall residential/resource rate at \$1.67 per \$100 of assessment and the commercial rate at \$4.47 per \$100 of assessment.

Council approved increasing the asphalt patching budget to \$250,000 from \$122,000. This will substantially increase the amount of street patching that can be completed during the 2023 construction season, which in turn improves driving conditions for the





residents and visitors. This is in addition to the more than \$770,000 in capital street paving included in the capital budget previously approved this spring.

The town's new Community Living Department will see a budget increase of about \$160,000, which will be used to increase grants to organizations that provide much needed services to our community, as well as funding for poverty reduction, accessibility improvement and diversity and inclusion initiatives. Increased funding in this department will also help improve community events held by the town and other organizations.

Within the police department, a two-year pilot project that previously established a civilian crime-prevention co-ordinator and a third officer in the major crime unit was made permanent. The major crime unit is responsible for handling complex and sensitive investigations.

Included in the communications-IT operating budget is funding for the purchase of software for a customer notification system. This system will allow residents to sign up for notifications for such things as festivals, events, street closures and other information. When in place, the messages may be delivered to home phones, mobile phones, personal emails and text to citizens who subscribe to the system.

The recreation facilities operating budget includes a onetime payment of \$542,560, that will pay off the last of the debt taken on 15 years ago to pay for the renovations that took place to the stadium. Paying off this debt early will save the town about \$100,000 in interest over the next five years.

While tax rates are remaining the same, the uniform charge for solid waste increased to \$268 per year from \$185 per year. The increase, the first in many years, is the result of a new collection contract with Miller Waste, with an increased expense of \$207,513, and an increased expense of \$54,325 for tipping fees to better reflect actual costs in recent years.

The town's general and water utility capital budgets were approved in February.

All the budgets can be found shortly on the town's website at:

<https://amherst.ca/budgets.html>





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