

STAFF REPORT TO FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

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DATE: August 16, 2023

TO: STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND AUDIT

NAME AND TITLE: Walter Babicz, City Manager

SUBJECT: Budget 2024 Community Engagement

ATTACHMENT(S): None.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Audit RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated August 16, 2023 from the City Manager titled “Budget 2024 Community Engagement”.

PURPOSE:

To provide an overview of how the City will seek public input into the 2024 municipal budget.

BACKGROUND:

The City annually presents opportunities for residents to provide input on municipal budget priorities. This has typically involved both digital and in-person opportunities. The results are provided to Council at the start of budget deliberations to aid in decision-making. Due to the pandemic, in 2020 and 2021 the public meetings moved online to allow citizens to ask questions about services through the Zoom platform.

In 2022 the City, again provided a budget survey using the Citizen Budget platform but added five additional service level surveys. The five satisfaction surveys focused on important City services with a goal to understand how satisfied citizens are with the following services and receive their suggestions on improvements:

- Roads and sidewalks
- Parks and trails
- Events and recreation
- Snow and ice control
- Protective services

Due to the timing of the municipal election, there were no in-person opportunities offered in 2022.

2024 engagement

To allow for citizens to participate in a more robust way, some additions are included in the engagement process this year while maintaining the annual budget survey. The following opportunities are proposed:

- A budget 2024 engagement page will be created on the City’s website to host all the engagement opportunities and financial information.

- When projected numbers for the cost of services in 2024 are available they will be shared with the public through the City budget webpage. All financial reports presented to Council will also be hosted this page so all information regarding the 2024 budget can be found on one location.
- Beginning in early September staff will launch the five satisfaction surveys. This is an opportunity for citizens to share their views on five core municipal services: parks and trails, events and recreation, roads and sidewalks, snow removal, and protective services. This will allow residents to provide feedback on their satisfaction with services that they are most interested in. Their feedback will assist staff in determining where to focus efforts and budget requests for 2024. These surveys will also be printed and available at City Hall for those who prefer paper copies. Those responses will be manually entered by City staff.
- In late October, the annual Citizen Budget survey will launch. Due to the nature of the survey, it is only available digitally.
- Staff will work with the library to determine if computers and assistance might be available to assist citizens who would like to take the digital survey.
- In October the City will host an open house event with a budget overview presentation and an opportunity for citizens to ask questions. The event will be held in the evening at the Conference and Civic Centre. The City's senior leadership team will be present to respond to questions. City Council is invited to attend to listen to the questions and information shared.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This public engagement plan is in alignment with the Council priorities under the Pillar, City Government and Infrastructure.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The City has an existing contract with Ethelo for using the Citizen Budget platform this year so there are no additional costs associated with the survey. Advertising will be covered within the existing communications budget.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

With the budget survey, five satisfaction surveys, and a community open house event, this budget consultation will be the most robust in several years. Community feedback will be presented to Council in late November prior to budget deliberations.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Julie Rogers, Communications Manager

Meeting Date: August 28, 2023