



STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG

Regular Council

Report to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors

From: Adam Giddings, Treasurer, Director of Corporate Services

Report Number: COR-2024-013

Council Meeting Date: July 31, 2024

Subject: **2025 Budget Dates and Community Engagement Program**

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1. Recommendation:

THAT Council receive the Staff Report for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council endorses the 2025 budget deliberation schedule and corresponding community engagement recommendations.

2. Executive Summary:

The following report outlines an accelerated budget deliberation schedule and new community engagement tactics. Early planning will ensure Council has sufficient time to analyze the Town's budget, hear from the community, learn about key initiatives for 2025 and conduct important discussions before setting the budget for the coming year. With the goal of having the budget approved in December 2024, this will allow the Town of Cobourg to create a realistic budget plan, ensuring staff have the appropriate time to complete the work identified and make the most of the investments in taxpayer's dollars.

3. Background

The Town of Cobourg undergoes an annual budget process to align the financial resources required to provide the programs and services that establish the high quality of life we enjoy in our community. The budget is presented by the Treasurer, with input from municipal staff on their individual departments. It is then presented to Council for review and deliberation prior to final approval.

Each year, the Corporation is faced with variables that are outside of Council or staff control. Aging infrastructure, inflation, policy changes, unexpected funding opportunities, and the changing needs of residents. Council must make budgetary decisions, based on the immediate and future needs of the community. To help Council make informed decisions, we draw upon community input to gain insight into the desire of our residents, as well as Council's Strategic Plan, to ensure that the financial decisions we make now, will help achieve the future vision for Cobourg.

4. Discussion:

2025 Budget Deliberation Schedule

- **Phase One Community Engagement:** August 1 – September 6, 2024
- **Draft Budget published to EngageCobourg.ca:** October 21, 2024
- **Divisional Budget Presentations**
 - October 29th: SPP Committee
 - Phase One Community Engagement Report presented to Council
 - Cobourg Library Budget Presentation
 - Art Gallery of Northumberland budget presentation
 - Cobourg Police Services budget presentation
 - October 30th: Community Services, Protection and Economic Development Committee
 - October 30th: Public Works Committee
 - October 31st: Corporate Finance and Legislative Services Committee
- **Phase Two Community Engagement:** October 29 – November 12, 2024
- **Council Budget Review:** November 26, 2024 SPP Standing Committee Meeting
 - Phase Two Community Engagement Report presented to Council followed by detailed review of the budget.
 - *November 28, 2024 – Additional SPP Standing Committee meeting to complete detailed review of budget, if required.
- **Budget Approval:** December 18, 2024

The 2025 Budget Community Engagement Plan will have two phases:

Phase One Community Engagement: August 1 – September 6, 2024

Phase One Community Engagement will focus on receiving input for the development of the draft budget. Staff will seek insight for Council on the current programs and services residents feel require additional funding and/or staff attention as well as community recommendations for programs and services that align with Council's Strategic Plan. This information will help staff prepare the draft budget to be presented to Council in October.

Engagement Tactics:

- Survey on EngageCobourg.ca
- Council Budget Information sessions
- Community delegations to Council

Phase Two Community Engagement: October 29 – November 12, 2024

Phase Two Community Engagement will seek community feedback on the draft budget. Where possible, participatory budgeting will be made available if Council is faced with making decisions between services based on funding. The results of Phase Two Community Engagement will be presented to Council prior to the detailed budget review session in November so that Council will have insight from the community as they make their final budget decisions.

Engagement Tactics:

- Survey on EngageCobourg.ca
- Community delegations to Council
- Social Media community education and budget promotion

Thriving Community Key Performance Indicator: Community Engagement Meets Population Sample Size

As per the Town of Cobourg 2024 Operational Plan Staff have set a Key Performance Indicator to ensure community engagement for major projects receive enough community feedback to be considered an appropriate sampling of Cobourg residents. In setting this goal, staff have discussed introducing new methods to engage with residents in a manner that is convenient and accessible.

Council Budget Information Sessions:

In response to resident feedback and to improve community engagement practices, the Town of Cobourg is introducing Council Budget Information Sessions for phase one community engagement. During the month of August, each member of Council will host a budget information session where residents can ask questions or provide recommendations for the 2025 budget. Recommendations shared in these meetings will be added to the Community Engagement report to be received by all of Council.

Budget Information Sessions can be held in person at Victoria Hall, over the phone or via Zoom/Teams on the following dates:

- August 6, 2024, from 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. – Mayor Cleveland
- August 12, 2024, from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. – Deputy Mayor, Nicole Beatty
- August 13, 2024, from 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. – Mayor Cleveland
- August 14, 2024 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. – Councillor, Aaron Burchat
- August 19, 2024 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. – Councillor, Miriam Mutton
- August 26, 2024 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. – Councillor, Brian Darling
- August 29, 2024 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Councillor, Adam Bureau
- September 3, from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. – Councillor, Randy Barber

During the 2024 Budget Deliberations, staff found success breaking the budget down into smaller, key budget items on social media. For example, throughout the year, staff receive significant feedback regarding Cobourg Transit on Facebook. Therefore, when Council was deliberating the 2024 Transit Pilot Project, having that information detailed on Facebook was a convenient way to reach those transit users and drove a lot of people to our community survey. Following Phase One Community Engagement and the divisional budget presentations, staff will once again use social media to promote key budget items for community input.

5. Financial Impact and Budget

This report informs the dates for the 2025 budget deliberations.

6. Relationship to Council's Strategic Plan Priorities 2023 to 2027 and beyond:

☒ Thriving Community

The 2025 Budget Community Engagement plan will help staff achieve the Thriving Community key performance indicator, Community Engagement Meets Population Sample Size.

☐ Service Excellence

☒ Sustainability

The updated budget deliberation schedule and community engagement plan supports staff's efforts to improve project tracking and reporting and enhance our financial plans.

7. Public Engagement:

The 2025 Budget Deliberation schedule and community engagement program will be hosted on EngageCobourg.ca for community input and review.

8. Attachments:

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**9. Report Not Considered by
Standing Committee Because:**

☒ Time Sensitive Issue (information received too late for Standing Committee consideration)

☐ Urgent Matter (issue arose after this month's Standing Committee Meeting)

☐ Other: Click or tap here to enter text.