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December 11, 2014

**JOINT FINANCIAL SERVICES, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, OFFICE OF THE CAO  
REPORT – 2014-53**

TO: Mayor Tony Van Bynen and Members of Council  
Committee of the Whole

SUBJECT: 2015 Budget Schedule and Community Engagement

ORIGIN: Corporate Communications, Financial Services, CAO

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**RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Joint Financial Services, Corporate Communications, Office of the CAO Report-2014-53 dated December 11, 2014 regarding the 2015 Budget Schedule and Community Engagement, be received and the following recommendation be adopted:

That the schedule set out in this report be approved for the 2015 budget process.

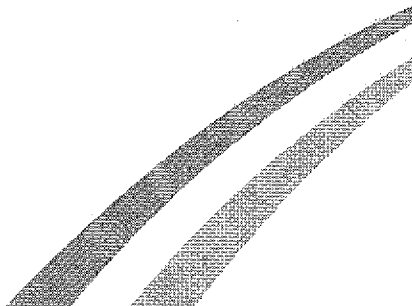
**COMMENTS**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to finalize the schedule for the 2015 budget and provide an overview of the budget consultation and public engagement strategy.

**Summary**

The 2015 budget will aim to maintain current service levels while also addressing major budget drivers and planning for growth. This report recommends the 2015 budget process commences in December, with final approval scheduled for April 20, 2015. Extensive public consultation and community engagement will take place in January and February. In non-election years, established practice is for Council to pass the budget in December prior to the start of the new fiscal year. As a result, staff will commence the 2016 budget process in Q2, 2015 with a targeted approval in December, 2015.



The preliminary draft budget will be presented late in February. This recognized the fact that the new Council will be undergoing a strategic priorities exercise and allows an opportunity for alignment as appropriate.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Town of Newmarket continually strives to improve its budget process and implemented innovative communications tactics to engage residents and garner feedback. Newmarket has been recognized for best practices in budget communications by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), Municipal Finance Officers' Association (MFOA) and the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO). A number of other municipalities have adopted Newmarket's approach to budget communications.

As a Strategic Focus Area, Community Engagement is a critical component in the development of the Town's budget and planning for the future. In 2014, the Town engaged hundreds of residents and had 378 residents participate in the budget process through an online interactive survey (up from 300 respondents in 2013). The online budget tool asked residents "how would you like to see your tax dollars spent" and provided the opportunity to maintain, increase or decrease services in eight areas of service delivery. This included a callout to 15,000 residents encouraging and promoting participation in the online budget tool.

The Town also garnered additional qualitative and quantitative feedback by attending a number of community events and hot spots (Farmers' Market, Go Train station). A variety of traditional communications tools and tactics including radio ads, town page, website and media releases were also utilized.

## **Budget Process/Schedule**

ACTIVITY	DATE
Fees & Charges for early approval – public meeting	December 8
Fees & Charges for early approval – Council approval	December 15
Commence discussion on Council priorities & budget process	December 15
Treasurer meets one-on-one with Members of Council	January - February
Community Engagement	January - February
CoW Presentation – Preliminary draft budget (presentation of Community Engagement results to date)	February 23
Draft budget info available to public and on website	March 2
CoW – Public meeting on the draft budget	March 16
CoW and public meeting on remaining Fees & Charges	April 13

### **Community Consultation and Engagement**

The goal of the budget Communications Plan is to continue to increase community awareness and engagement in the budget process.

This year, budget communications will continue to focus on driving online participation and engagement, complemented by a variety of additional tools and tactics, which include;

- Interactive online budget tool
- Public meetings (CoW)
- Town website, flash banners, social media
- Newmarket Now e-newsletter
- Postcards (for distribution at town events and facilities)
- Media releases/advisories
- Print ads (Snap'd and Newmarket Era)
- Radio ads (The Jewel)
- Call out to residents to encourage participation in online budget tool (approx. 15,000 households)

### **CONSULTATION**

The budget schedule and community engagement approach were prepared by the Financial Services department in collaboration with the Corporate Communications department. The Strategic Leadership Team and the Operational Leadership Team have also reviewed and provided feedback.

### **Next Steps**

In January, the Treasurer will begin one-on-one meetings with each member of Council and Councillor tool kits which provide further information on the 2015 budget will be provided. Community engagement will begin in January with the launch of the online budget tool.

### **CONTACT**

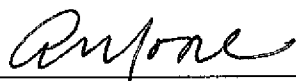
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