



City of  
**Peterborough**

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**To: Members of the Budget Committee**

**From: Sandra Clancy, Director of Corporate Services**

**Meeting Date: May 11, 2015**

**Subject: Report CPFS15-018  
Public Participation in City Budgeting Process**

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## **Purpose**

A report to identify actions that may be taken to enhance public engagement during the annual budget process.

## **Recommendations**

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report CPFS15-018, dated May 11, 2015 of the Director of Corporate Services as follows:

- a) That a public budget meeting, to allow for input by the community for items to be included in the budget, be held prior to the Budget Guideline meeting or during the Budget Guideline meeting.
- b) That the Public Budget Review session traditionally held subsequent to the Budget Committee Review Sessions, be held prior to the Budget Committee Review Sessions.

## **Budget and Financial Implications**

There are no budget and financial implications to adopting the recommendations in this report.

## Background

At its meetings held January 21, 2015 and again on February 2, 2015 Council heard from a number of delegates who supported the concept of Participatory Budgeting.

Participatory Budgeting is a large topic and is addressed through Report CPFS15-019 Participatory Budgeting dated May 11, 2015. However, the delegates also expanded the discussion to include greater public input into the over-all budget process itself.

Members of Council showed interest in exploring ways to enhance public participation in the budget process, and on February 2, 2015, approved the following motion:

That staff prepare a report on how to better engage the public in the annual budget process and report back at the next Budget Committee meeting.

This report responds to that request.

### Public Participation - Current Budget Process

Each year staff develop a draft budget in accordance with City policy, strategic documents, capital plans, and other priorities set by Council. All meetings are open to the public and agendas and minutes are posted on the municipal website.

Typically, in the June/July timeframe, staff prepare a Budget Guideline Report. The report details out the upcoming budget schedule, itemizes key financial impacts that are known and identifies financial risks where there is uncertainty; estimates real assessment growth makes recommendations on key topics such as property tax ratios and capital financing. Most importantly, given all the pertinent information available, the report seeks direction on what an appropriate all-inclusive tax increase may be.

The Operating and Capital Budgets are made available on line approximately one month before Budget Committee review sessions. This enables both Councillors and the community to review and seek information or clarification from City staff before the Budget Committee's review and the Public Meeting.

The following are the opportunities for members of the public to have input:

- The Council meeting when the Budget Guideline report is established - June
- The Budget Public Meeting during Budget Review sessions - December
- The Council meeting when the final Budget is to be approved - December

### **Other Civic Engagement Opportunities**

Civic engagement is a decentralized function at the City and occurs across numerous Divisions for many City initiatives, programs and services; applying a wide variety of methods, tools and products to inform, engage, educate, and consult the public and key stakeholders. Although not directly related to the Budget process, these opportunities do exist and are listed to demonstrate that there are additional ways to influence decision making at the City. Examples include:

- Citizen appointment opportunities to various boards, and committees such as the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and the Community Grants Committee;
- Public Information Centres, Public Open Houses for various capital projects and Planning/Policy Initiatives;
- Strategic planning and long-term visioning (eg. Vision 2025, 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan);
- Participation in various community networks and working groups such as Homeless Service Providers for program design and evaluation.

Opportunities such as these provide avenues to engage and influence City government.

### **Additional Opportunities Considered**

The ideas to increase public participation in the budgeting process have been summarized, in no particular order, as follows:

1. Participatory Budgeting – this item to be addressed through separate report;
2. Public budget meeting to allow for input by the community into items to be included in the budget, possibly prior to or during the Budget Guideline meeting;
3. Moving Public Budget review session that is traditionally held subsequent to the Budget Committee review sessions, to prior to the Budget Committee review sessions;
4. A Capital prioritization methodology that includes community input in the scoring;
5. Expanded Budget Committee that would include non-elected members;
6. The Chair of the Budget Committee inviting public delegations on each major departmental or program budget, including any related staff reports, after presentation to the Budget Committee; and
7. The Chair of the Budget Committee closing with a 15 minute public question period at the end of each sitting day of the Budget Committee to invite public comments on recommendations made during that specific meeting day.

## Recommendations

For the 2016 Budget process, staff recommend that items 2. and 3. be added as additional opportunities for public engagement to the budget process.

That a Public budget meeting, to allow for input by the community into items to be included in the budget, be held prior to the Budget Guideline meeting or during the Budget Guideline meeting.

This would provide the public with an opportunity to review the Budget Guideline report and specifically address items in the report and/or bring up other suggestions that they would like to see Council give staff direction on to include in a draft budget.

That the public budget review session that is traditionally held subsequent to the Budget Committee review sessions be held prior to the Budget Committee review sessions.

This change would move the traditional Public Budget meeting forward in the schedule where the public can have a copy of the Draft Budget and specifically address items in it and/or bring up other suggestions that the Budget Committee could then discuss and consider when they meet as a Budget Committee.

## Summary

It is important for the public to be able to provide feedback in the annual budget process. Some believe that providing that avenue in a public meeting just prior to the final Council approval is too late in the process and would like it to be included earlier. Two recommendations are being made in this report to provide an earlier opportunity for the public to become engaged.

Submitted by,

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