

THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: March 1, 2022

TO: Finance and Audit Committee

FROM: Shannon Johnston, Acting Director, Finance
Paul Murray, Consultant

SUBJECT: City of White Rock 2022 Budget – Public Comment Summary

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Finance and Audit Committee receive the March 1, 2022, Corporate Report from the Acting Director of Finance, titled “City of White Rock 2022 Budget – Public Comment Summary.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an interim summary of public input received through the “Talk White Rock” online platform for the City of White Rock’s 2022 Financial Plan (Visitor Summary) for the period January 24 to February 22, 2022.

The Visitor Summary shows that during this period of time, there were 139 visits with 12 document downloads and three comments. Two comments required responses, and respondents received answers to inquiries through email.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
2021-F&A-072 November 22, 2021	THAT the Finance and Audit Committee approves a “LetsTalk” 2022 budget survey component for release in January 2022 as part of the 2022 budget process.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The City of White Rock Talk White Rock 2022 Financial Plan Visitor Summary (Visitor Summary) attached as Appendix A, shows there were 139 visits with 12 document downloads and three comments. Two comments required responses from staff, that were provided, and described below.

Comment 1 and Staff Responses

- It appears that there will be a projected increase in Grant Revenue of about \$5K for each of the next few years. Is it a good ROI to hire a \$101,000 Grant Writer FT Position? Consider retaining a grant writing contractor, whose comp would be based on results.

Staff Response: The increase in grant revenue is a general increase forecast in the Community Works Fund Grant we receive each year, and an application is not needed for it. The grant writer position is not included in the budget at this point. There are four positions including the grant writer that we have identified as capacity pressure points but given the other commitments in the budget already we did not feel comfortable recommending them. We wanted Council to know that and understand the impacts on service that it brings with it. With regard to the contracted grant writer thought, we know from experience that grant writers do not work on a commission basis, given the low probability of approvals in the programs we can compete for grants in. If we wanted to apply for grants as they arise, we would need to add a budget for either a contracted position or an employee position to provide the capacity to respond.

- Why have there been increased hirings in Rec & Culture during last two years when most programs were shut down due to Covid? In anticipation of opening events, consider using contractors for certain event management until certainty returns.

Staff Response: The increase in Rec and Culture hires is to bring staff back on that were not working during the shutdowns from the pandemic. This is bringing our staff complement in Recreation back up to the levels needed for normal operations during the course of the year. We are hopeful this will occur and need to plan for that.

- With Parks staff increased from 12 to 16, has there been a corresponding reduction in Contractors used for maintenance and projects. BTW - the City-Scaping is generally looking good this year.

Staff Response: In Parks, the increase in staff occurred in 2020 to provide the service levels directed by Council in 2019. This did not replace any contracts. There are some small reductions in contracts and no change in staffing in 2022.

- Could there be cost savings made by combining Departments, e.g. - roll HR in with Admin?

Staff Response: Combining HR with Corporate Admin generally would not allow for any savings from reducing employees in those departments. There is no overlap or duplication of positions, and the volume of work would still remain, so the number of positions would still be needed regardless of which department they were attached to. Both departments are quite flat in structure and both Directors would still be needed in a combined one department scenario. You can see from the department descriptions in the budget document the breadth of work and responsibilities that they cover.

- There is no projection of what Commercial Property tax increase will be. Almost all businesses in WR have had a terrible two years with Covid shutdowns, road construction, etc. Now is not the time to hit commercial properties with a tax increase. Consider shifting any budget increases from Commercial to Residential.

Staff Response: Generally speaking, the commercial property tax increase would be consistent with the residential increase that is noted in the document unless Council made a decision to shift a proportion from one class to the other as you suggest. I am sure that Council is aware of the impact of Covid on White Rock businesses and the residents as well and will be thinking of that when they consider the tax rates towards the end of the budget process.

Comment 2 and Staff Responses

- Is the expected revenue from new tenants living in several new high-rises accounted for in the budget? We don't see a line item. And if so, what is the projected revenue

Staff Response: Property tax revenue from all new properties added during the previous year is included in the budget as proposed. There is no specific breakdown for high-rises in the residential assessments or property tax revenues.

- Given the backlog in building permits, do you plan on hiring in the planning and development department?

Staff Response: No additional positions are funded or planned. We hope to fill currently vacant positions to provide capacity provided they are not eliminated through the budget process. Staff continue to process applications as quickly as possible.

- You have allocated 4 million to affordable housing, what is the plan? There's no mention of it in the budget. Just that you have 4 million set for affordable housing.

Staff Response: A \$4 million affordable housing budget will be carried forward in the 2022 financial plan. No specific project has been approved to date but including the budget will allow for one to proceed should Council decide to do so.

The third comment that did not require a response from staff is provided below.

Comment 3 No Staff Response Required

- It would be good to see more effective use of funds allocated to maintenance in White Rock. Requests for repairs of lighting on stairs between Upper Roper and Macdonald have been unanswered for over 4 years, despite requests from residents. Barricades put up in attempts to avoid lawsuits are moved and left for months after people take them down so their dogs can use the areas behind them. Ineffective seeding on the promenade area etc, etc. Covid is just the latest excuse used to avoid dealing with a wide variety of issues while council focusses on Christmas Lights and individual agendas.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The proposed 2022 Financial Plan has been reformatted and is presented using the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation method which will be implemented over the next two years. The material is available on the City's website "LetsTalk" platform.

Public input will continue during the public budget presentations process in March.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

No specific interdepartmental capacity or other implications from the proposed budget. All departments have been involved in preparation of the proposed financial plan and rates.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The proposed 2022 Financial Plan is linked and aligns with the Strategic Plan and Council strategic priorities and aligns with Council's feedback and approval.

CONCLUSION

The summary of visitors to the “Talk White Rock” online platform for the City of White Rock’s 2022 Financial Plan during the period January 24 to February 22, 2002 indicates there were 139 visits with 12 downloading the document and 11 visiting multiple pages.

Receipt of the report for information is recommended.

Respectfully submitted,



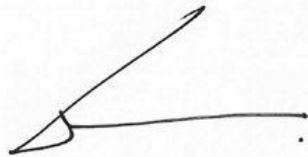
Shannon Johnston
Acting Director, Finance



Paul Murray
Consultant

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

This corporate report is provided for information purposes.



Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: City of White Rock Talk White Rock 2022 Financial Plan Visitor Summary