

Wayne Baldwin

White Rock, BC

March 17, 2023

White Rock City Council

Re: 2023 DRAFT BUDGET

As a former two term Mayor and 23 year City Manager of White Rock I am shocked that the Finance Committee has proposed that the taxpayers should be subjected to a 9.17% tax increase for 2023.

Given the growth in the City's taxbase from the new construction, even equalling the CPI would be excessive, in my opinion. Rather, I would suggest a rate hike of less than 5% should be the target. Obviously, this will mean some major adjustments in the Budget – but so be it.

Without delving into the numbers in great detail, I offer two suggestions for consideration.

First, look at increasing revenues from pay parking.

I note with some concern that the City's website proudly proclaims that, "The City does not generate a profit from pay parking." Frankly, that is utter nonsense. As one of the authors of pay parking, I can say with absolute certainty that for decades , and until 2019, the prime goals of pay parking were to 1)generate sufficient revenue to maintain the City's signature attraction, the waterfront, and 2) to reduce taxation with the so-called "profit".

Purposefully decreasing the parking revenue by giving away free parking for 3 months a year and reducing the rates for a further 3 months a year is simply NOT in the best interests of the taxpayers to whom Council has a fiduciary duty. It may have benefitted the dog walkers from Surrey , but has resulted in a tax increase to White Rock taxpayers of something approaching 2% of taxation.

In short, get rid of the free parking and increase the “Shoulder Season” rates. Simply increasing the prime season rates is not sufficient particularly in light of the Translink tax increase to 24% and the increase in leasing costs to the BNSFR.

Second, the proposed increase of five staff in 2023 at an annual cost of about \$600,000, or more than 2% in taxes, appears to be completely ‘toned deaf’ and shows a remarkable indifference to the unprecedented tax increase that is planned.

With the possible exception of an additional Building Inspector, all the other hirings can be deferred to a more appropriate time. Increasing optional spending at a time when you are suggesting there should be an unprecedented 9% tax increase is just wrong.

Since most members of Council were elected on a ‘Reduce Taxation’ platform, it seems to me Council has to do much better than come up with a 9.17% tax increase with its first Budget, just a few short months after the election, in order to have any credibility.

Sincerely,

Wayne Baldwin

Former Mayor, and City Manager, City of White Rock