



Staff Report

Report To: River District Board of Management

Report From: Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services
Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services

Meeting Date: November 8, 2023

Report Code: CS-23-106

Subject: 2024 Draft River District Budget

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-23-106 respecting the Draft 2024 River District Budget, the River District Board of Management:

1. Directs staff to provide notice of a public meeting to be held on January 10, 2024;
2. Requests that pending the approval of the budget by the Board and City Council, the City make the River District Coordinator position a permanent full-time role funded by the Board; and
3. Directs the Chair to send correspondence to the City to indicate a request to meet to extend the current agreement.

Highlights:

- The *Municipal Act* establishes the requirement for Business Improvement Areas to prepare a budget and hold a meeting where the budget can be discussed.
- The attached draft 2024 budget includes a 2% levy increase to members.
- Following consideration of the Board, a notice of the meeting of the Board where the budget is to be discussed with the membership will be given.
- The draft budget, as presented, continues to move forward with the implementation of the River District Action Plan, maintains

complimentary business-sponsored parking, provides for a partnership with the City on beautification and maintenance as well as promotion and experience development in the River District, and provides a sustainable long-term opportunity around the River District Coordinator role.

River District Action Plan Alignment:

The 2024 budget supports the River District Action Plan in the areas of Branding, River District Management, River District Experience Development as well as River District Promotion.

Previous Report/Authority:

None.

Background:

In 2019, the Owen Sound Downtown Improvement Area Board of Management (OSDIA) and the City of Owen Sound entered a new partnership that allowed complimentary parking in the River District area sponsored jointly by the City and DIA. This agreement was updated in 2021 with a term ending in February of 2024.

City staff provides support to the Board, expertise, and staff resources in the areas of: Branding, Marketing and Promotion, Events, Beautification and Maintenance, as well as financial oversight and administrative support for the Board including the production of agendas, minutes, etc. with overall leadership, direction, and oversight coming from the Board.

2020 was the first full year of operations under this partnership agreement.

During the year, the Director of Corporate Services provides updates to the Board respecting the budget. New in 2023, the Director of Corporate Services shares detailed monthly financial transactions with the Board's Treasurer.

With respect to Business Improvement Areas, the *Municipal Act* requires:

Budget

205 (1) A board of management shall prepare a proposed budget for each fiscal year by the date and in the form required by the municipality and shall hold one or more meetings of the members of the improvement area for discussion of the proposed budget. 2002, c. 17, Sched. A, s. 40 (1).

Council to Approve

(2) A board of management shall submit the budget to council by the date and in the form required by the municipality and the municipality may approve it in whole or in part but may not add expenditures to it. 2001, c. 25, s. 205 (2); 2002, c. 17, Sched. A, s. 40 (2).

Analysis:

The draft 2024 Operating Budget is presented (attached).

Key items in the 2024 draft budget include:

- A 2% increase in the levy amounting to \$5,102.
- A significant reduction in the cost of business-sponsored parking.
- An increase in revenue expected from the sharing of parking pass revenue.
- Fully funding the River District Coordinator position.
- An allocation to events and promotions of \$31,300. The detailed allocation of this to the various events and promotions will be based on the direction associated with the February 2024 report; however, this funding envelope will be planned for this use.
- Contribution to flowers, sidewalk maintenance and street washing is the same as in previous years.
- Includes a \$10,000 contribution to reserves. This would be added to the Board's existing reserve for use in a future special capital project or initiative.
- Expenses relating to the Board celebration event, education and networking remain along with a planned \$2,000 donation to the Citizens on Patrol.

The budget as presented includes levy to the membership of \$260,208.

Based on 253 properties in the area, the average levy increase is \$20.16.

Unlike previous years, the 2024 budget does not include a transfer from reserves and is a sustainable budget, continuing to also set a modest amount of funds aside in the reserve.

Staff recommends that any annual costs associated with website maintenance or content creation that require external resources be considered by the River District Board of Management in the context of their annual Marketing and Promotion Plan.

Following the public meeting and approval of the budget by the Board and Council, it is recommended that the Board request the City make the River District Coordinator position a full-time permanent role funded by the Board. As a housekeeping item, it is also recommended that the job title be River District Coordinator. In the past, this position was the Community Development Coordinator.

Additionally, in accordance with the current agreement, the Board and the City are to determine if they wish to enter into negotiations to update and extend the agreement. This is included in the recommendation for consideration by the Board.

Financial Implications:

The overall levy would increase by 2% with the average impact per member estimated at \$20.16. Staff are recommending the draft budget including a 2% increase go forward to the public meeting.

There are 253 properties in the River District within the City of Owen Sound. The River District tax rate for 2022 is 0.00460741.

In addition to the River District Board mandate regarding maintenance and beautification and promotion, the City also supports the River District area in many ways:

- In 2023, approximately \$100,000 in costs were incurred by the City to support activities in the River District including maintenance, horticulture, arboriculture, and watering. This does not include activities such as street sweeping, or additional costs of waste pick-up performed by Public Works and Parks Division staff that are provided in kind.
- The River District benefits from a number of events and activations delivered by the City paid for by the Municipal levy. In 2024, these will include Music at the Market and Outdoor Movie Nights.

- The City continues to replace and upgrade the on-street poles in the River District as part of the City's capital program. Several new replacement trees have been and will be planted by the City at no cost to the River District.
- The River District receives weekly waste and recycling pickup.
- Other services provided at an enhanced level in the River District include daily waste pick up from the on-street receptacles, weekly street sweeping, and snow removal, including clearing of banks and snow piles from lots.
- The River District is given priority for programs under the City's Community Improvement Program, including the Façade and Structural Improvement Program, Accessibility Grant Improvement Program and Landscape Grant Program.

Communication Strategy:

As required by the *Municipal Act*, the City Clerk will prepare for a notice of a meeting of the membership for the purpose of discussing the draft budget and following approval by the Board, the budget will be presented to City Council for approval.

Consultation:

Viveca Gravel, Community Development Coordinator
Adam Parsons, Manager of Parks and Open Space
Briana Bloomfield, City Clerk

Attachments:

1. 2024 Draft River District Budget

Recommended by:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services
Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services at pcoulter@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1252.