

Report to Council

Report Title: Budget Consultation 2022 Feedback

Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk and Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Department: Finance

Date: February 8, 2022

Report Number: FIN2022-05 **File Number:** C11FIN, F05

Attachments:

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number FIN2022-05 – Budget Consultation 2022 Feedback, prepared by Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk and Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer for information purposes.

Report:

Background:

The Municipality of Brockton launched the Budget Consultation 2022 project on our community engagement website, Build Your Brockton on January 7, 2022. The Budget Consultation 2022 project includes information about how the Municipality develops its budget, municipal tax payments, and property tax bill information.

The project also included the key dates of the 2022 Budget Meetings, Agendas and Video Recordings of the Budget Meetings to date, and Budget FAQ's. Members of the public were also able to interact with the staff through three platforms: a 2022 Budget Survey, Q&A, and Ideas tool.

Analysis:

Staff communicated about the Budget Consultation 2022 Project through the Municipal website, social media, Council Agendas, and Brockton Buzz Newsletters.

Staff have analyzed the data received from the public regarding the Budget Consultation 2022 project, and provided a summary of statistics for Council's consideration.

Overall Engagement

The Budget Consultation 2022 Project launched on Build Your Brockton, had a total of 213 visits, 92 engaged visitors, 104 informed visitors, 180 aware visitors, including a maximum number of 48 visitors per day. Out of

the 92 engaged participants, 91 participated in the Budget Survey, and 1 submitted an idea to include a dog park in Brockton.

Out of the 104 informed participants, 3 downloaded a document, 2 visited the key dates page (Budget Meeting dates), 15 visited multiple project pages, and 92 contributed to a tool (becoming an engaged participant). The 180 aware visitors simply visited the project page.

Several documents were uploaded to the project page including the Draft Tax Supported 2022 Budget, Draft Non-Tax Supported 2022 Budget, Special Council Meeting Agendas, Council Meeting Video Recordings, Understanding Municipal Taxation (2021 Tax Dollar) The Draft Tax-Supported 2022 Budget was downloaded twice, and the Draft Non-Tax Supported 2022 Budget was downloaded once.

The Budget Consultation 2022 Project page on Build Your Brockton was viewed through 4 different sources of traffic: directly through the Build Your Brockton site, social media, referrals, and search engines.

2022 Budget Survey Feedback:

The anonymous budget survey was available from January 7th to February 3rd consisting of 15 questions (identical to the 2021 survey). A total of 91 individuals completed the 2022 survey.

Total Survey Participation 2022	Total Survey Participation 2021 Comparison	Total Survey Participation 2020 Comparison
91 participants (Launched Jan 7 to Feb 3)	77 participants (launched Dec 1 to Feb 15)	24 participants (launched Jan 20 to Feb 21)

Demographics

Out of those 91 participants, there was a tie for the highest percentages of respondents – 33% were between the ages of 51-64 years, and 33% were between the ages of 31-50 years; the third highest were ages 65 and older (24%).

52% of respondents own rural residential property in Brockton, and 42% own urban residential property. Responses were also received from residents who own agricultural, commercial, and multi-residential (owner or tenant) properties.

Sources of Information for Budget

Respondents identified that their top three sources for information about the Municipality’s budget were:

- 1) Municipal website (48%)
- 2) Social media (29%)
- 3) Local newspaper or radio (29%)

Of note, 26% of respondents identified that they have not looked for budget information before.

Familiarity of Budget Process

Somewhat Familiar	Minimally Familiar	Not Familiar	Very Familiar
37%	30%	25%	8%

Programs and Services

Respondents identified that the value of programs and services received for their tax dollars were good, or fair.

Residents also identified their familiarity with the services and programs paid for with their tax dollars:

Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar	Not Familiar
75%	23%	2%

When asked to rank their preference for options of dealing with increased costs to pay for Municipal services, respondents identified their most desired option as a combination of cutting service levels and a small increase in taxes and user fees. (Note: "Avg. Rank" represents the most preferred option, with the lowest number being the most preferred).

Q7 There are only a few ways to deal with increased costs to pay for Municipal services. Please rank the options (in order from 1 to 6 - 1 being most important, and 6 being least important) to balance the budget.

OPTIONS	AVG. RANK
Combination of cutting service levels and small increase in taxes and user fees	2.84
Combination of increase in property taxes and user fees	2.96
Increase user fees	2.98
Cut existing service levels to maintain current taxes	3.46
Cut existing service levels to reduce taxes	4.16
Increase property taxes	4.60

Residents were asked to identify whether they would support an increase in user fees for the following services. Residents supported an increase in user fees for three services, though the results were very close:

Service	Support
Recreation (Ex. Rentals, Programs)	Yes
Landfill (Ex. Tipping Fees)	Yes
Cemetery (Ex. Plot, Columbarium, Niche Purchases)	Yes
Child Care (Ex. Program Fees)	No

Residents were also asked to indicate if they would enhance, maintain or reduce the following 6 service areas portion of municipal taxes:

Service	Overall Preference
Parks and Recreation	Maintain
Landfill	Maintain
Police	Maintain
Public Works (Roads/Operations)	Maintain
Utilities	Maintain
General Government (Administrative)	Reduce

Residents were further asked to rate their satisfaction of with the delivery of the Municipality's various services, and identified their satisfaction with the applicable services provided, with the exception of the annual property tax amount.

When asked **what information residents would like to receive from the Municipality that they are currently not receiving**, respondents provided summarized suggestions of the following:

- Able to currently find information through the Municipal website (and emailed News Items), social media, Brockton Buzz Newsletter
- Comparison of tax allocation between urban and rural communities of Brockton
 - Further identification of how tax dollars are specifically allocated
- Increased communication, and transparency on decision-making processes
- Summary of current projects, goals, priorities being completed
- Additional communication on existing services, including:
 - Recreation programs
 - Upcoming events
 - Planning and Zoning information
 - Increased reports on by-law enforcement activity
- Future development, and asset management planning
 - Identify the available water supply as development continues to ensure sustainability
 - Plan identifying upcoming or current infrastructure improvements
 - Plans for addressing climate change, and sustainability

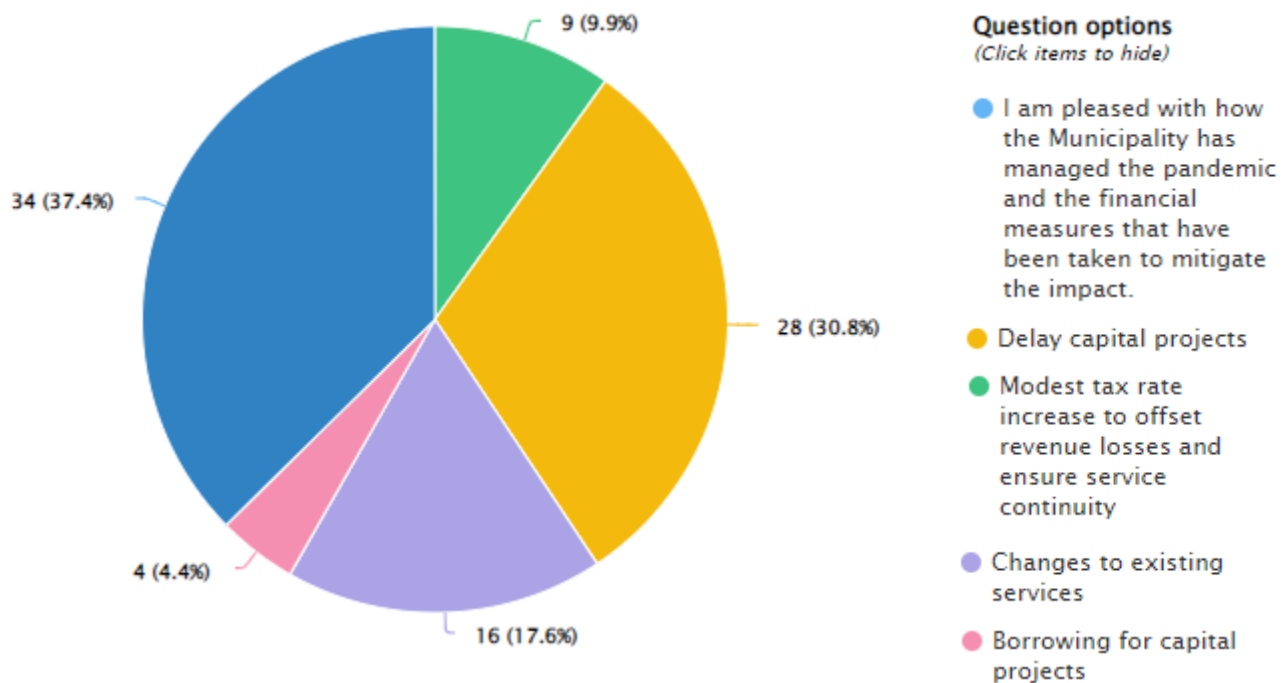
Budget Considerations / Future Planning

Respondents were asked to identify their **top 3 most important concerns** facing the Municipality at this time.

The top 3 concerns were:

- 1) Roads, drainage, streetlights, sidewalks etc.
- 2) Property taxes
- 3) Growth, development and sustainability

Residents were once again asked to identify their opinion on **how the Municipality should continue to respond to COVID-19 pressures**:



When asked to provide **ideas for the development of future parks, trails and outdoor green spaces**, residents suggested including:

- Accessibility
 - Paved walkways or bike paths
 - Upgraded playground equipment
 - Lighting upgrades or installations (motion sensor or timed)
- Interconnected throughout the town/trail system
- Dog park
- Accommodations or upgrades for cycling/biking
- Use for all ages, all sizes
- Picnic tables, benches, and seating areas
- Washrooms, water fill-up stations
- More activities/spaces for youth (ex. Basketball court, skate park)
- Seasonal opportunities:
 - Indoor walking in winter
 - Outdoor skating rink (*Note: We are currently operating Skating Oval at Lobies Park)
- Upgrade existing facilities or parks
 - Update tennis courts or pickleball court
 - Additional pet waste and garbage/recycling disposals
 - Advertise soccer park facility
 - Increased maintenance
- Additional tree planting and natural play areas

When asked to provide **ideas on how to build a better, stronger, community**, residents suggested:

- Long-term planning for infrastructure and development
- Increasing housing availability
- Upgraded recreation facility/arena, and municipal office
- Fair treatment of all residents/taxpayers
- Protection of rural resources
- Increased high speed internet access for rural areas
- Additional or upgraded recycling or composting programs
- Increase policing presence
- Efficient spending and support for healthcare services
- Continued support for community organizations and businesses (*Note: Some feedback inquired on the management of the BIA and allocation of duties as the Municipality is still providing support)
- Continue to support current residents, families, and newcomers
- Increased advertisement of events and community gatherings (as COVID-19 restrictions allow)
- Upgrade parks and greenspaces

In summary, Brockton residents enjoy the programs and services provided, are somewhat familiar with the budget process, are in favour of increasing user fees and property taxes to pay for Municipal services. Residents feel it is important to plan ahead for our continued growth, setting aside funds for infrastructure and asset management needs, as well as encouraging community support and belonging as we hopefully begin to fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff thank the respondents for completing the 2022 Budget Survey and sharing their participation on our community engagement website. Once the Budget is formally approved, a Press Release will be shared with the community, and the Budget Consultation 2022 Project will be archived on Build Your Brockton shortly afterwards.

Strategic Action Plan Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Strategic Action Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Heritage, Culture, and Community | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Quality of Life | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Development | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Municipal Governance | Yes |

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective?
N/A

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer