



The Corporation of the Municipality of Brockton

Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 13, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

Bruce County Council Chambers - 30 Park Street, Walkerton, ON

Council Present: Chris Peabody, Mayor
Kym Hutcheon, Deputy Mayor
Mitch Clark, Councillor
Tim Elphick, Councillor
B. Carl Kuhnke, Councillor
Gregory J. McLean, Councillor
Steve Travale, Councillor

Staff Present: Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer
Fiona Hamilton, Director of Legislative and Legal Services (Clerk)
Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer
Jessica Pinkse, Deputy Treasurer
Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services
Brad Thomson, Facilities and Parks Supervisor
Nicholas Schnurr, Director of Operations
John Strader, Operations Manager
Christine Brandt, Community Development Coordinator
Chris Wells, Director of Fire and Emergency Services
Dieter Wetz, Building and Planning Manager/CBO

1. **Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement**

2. **Acceptance of Special Council Agenda**

Resolution 25-01-01

Moved By: Gregory J. McLean

Seconded By: Tim Elphick

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton accept the Agenda for the Special Council Meeting (2025 Budget) on January 13, 2025 as amended to consider item 7.1 in the afternoon.

Carried

3. **Declaration of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof**

4. **Public Notification**

4.1 Public Hearing Notice - Minor Variance Application A-2024-082

5. **By-Laws**

Resolution 25-01-02

Moved By: Gregory J. McLean

Seconded By: Tim Elphick

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton authorize that the following by-law be read, enacted, signed, sealed, and numbered as follows:

- By-Law 2025-001 - Appoint Committee of Adjustment By-Law

Carried

6. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

6.1 Budget Consultation 2025 Feedback from November 12, 2024 Council Meeting

7. Delegations

7.1 Brian Currie - Brockton Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee

This item was considered later in the Council Meeting.

7.2 Bob McCulloch - Victoria Jubilee Hall

Maria Ballagh, Victoria Jubilee Hall Committee member provided an overview of the annual funding request to support Victoria Jubilee Hall. Ms. Ballagh summarized the work completed in the past year, including the elevator lift maintenance for \$5,000, repairs for the furnace and air conditioning unit, as well as \$3,500 repairs to fix a chronic sewer problem.

Ms. Ballagh noted that the number of shows and audiences was increasing with performances from the County Towne Players and Sing! Show Chorus. The Hall also featured Camp Spark with Studio 410 and County Towne Players, expanding their program to two (2) weeks this year.

The Hall also summarized the projects planned for 2025, including cameras for the porch to protect the new memorial benches and new stage curtains and coverings for the stage steps.

With all these concerns and aspirations in mind, the Victoria Jubilee Hall Committee was requesting funding of \$10,000 and the funding of the new stage curtains.

Ms. Ballagh responded to questions from Council about the funding requests and the other sources of revenue.

8. General Budget Overview

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer, provided an overview of the goals for the budget and the financial context creating economic pressure for the Municipality of Brockton.

Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer, provided an overview of the budget planning process with an initial starting point of 6.34% for operating and 2.84% for capital expenditures. Ms. Serratore also confirmed that a 1% tax rate increase equated to \$127,499 and further confirmed that there had been no change to the reassessment cycle.

Ms. Serratore further reviewed the reserve and reserve funds contributions being proposed for future planning. Ms. Serratore confirmed the auditor's emphasis on maintaining a 1:1 ratio for reserve funds to long-term debt, which Ms. Serratore confirmed the Municipality of Brockton had not achieved over the past few years.

Ms. Serratore pointed out the information provided that summarized the major changes over 2025 with key items for Council's consideration for items that had not been included in the budget.

9. Council Discussion and Questions on Tax Supported Operating Budget

9.1 Council

Fiona Hamilton, Director of Legislative and Legal Services (Clerk) summarized the changes in the Council budget related to the Accessibility Advisory Committee and advocacy efforts at conferences.

Ms. Hamilton responded to an inquiry related to reducing the election reserve fund, advising the necessity in setting funds aside for the upcoming election, and further that the reserve fund included funds for integrity commissioner investigations. Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer responded to a question and confirmed that the Municipality could borrow from its reserve funds but could not leverage long-term debt to fund our own operations.

Council discussed the costs associated with conferences, and whether that budget should be decreased.

9.2 General Government

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer provided an overview of the changes to the General Government budget.

Council discussed proposed reductions to the budget which would be further reviewed by staff.

Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer advised that many accounts payable transactions and year-end reconciliation must still be completed to provide an accurate reflection of 2024 actuals.

Action: Staff to conduct a review of 2024 actuals and whether there could be any reductions in the General Government budget.

9.3 Human Resources

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer provided an overview of the Human Resources Budget.

Council discussed whether legal expenses could be decreased to \$10,000.

Council discussed costs associated with technology, including phone costs, and whether efficiencies could be found through Microsoft 365. Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer and Ms. Watson advised that Microsoft 365 was slowly being integrated with staff; however, options to better use this technology would be investigated.

9.4 Economic Development

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer provided an overview of the Economic Development budget, noting recent plans that would assist the community, and the slight increase in training to support new staff, and the reduction of studies related to natural gas.

Ms. Watson responded to questions about the increase in service agreements, noting the support for the Saugeen Economic Development Corporation's Hawks Nest in 2025.

Ms. Watson responded to a question regarding the façade program, advising that bills for signs were submitted late 2024 and would be reflected in the actuals, noting that the grant funds were maximized due to high interest in the program.

9.5 East Ridge Business Park

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer provided an overview of the East Ridge Business Park budget, including increases in payments of long-term loans

for construction, noting that 4.3 acres were recently sold, and additional lots were expected to sell in 2025. Ms. Watson noted a \$15,000 expense for an archaeological study to prepare for future construction of the lands to the North.

Mayor Peabody advised that \$430,000 for a 4-acre parcel had been received for lands which would be developed this year.

Council asked whether a portion of the proceeds from the sale of lands could be used to offset the tax rate. Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer explained the Transfer to Reserve Fund which relates to long-term debt transfers, and further that sale proceeds had historically been applied to the construction loan to decrease the amount being borrowed.

Ms. Serratore advised that Phases 3 and 4 were within the construction loan and were likely to become long-term debentures in 2025, such that the overall debt would be increased by \$120,000 plus interest for 25-30 years.

Council asked about the interest rate and current amount of the construction loan. Ms. Serratore advised that once the project was substantially completed Infrastructure Ontario was notified and the loan converted to a long-term debenture.

Action: Staff to determine the interest rate and amount of the construction loan.

Council discussed the current timeline for any future expansion. Ms. Watson advised that the current projects have nearly been completed, and the Municipality was continuing to receive inquiries about lands. Ms. Watson noted that the \$15,000 archaeological study would make the remaining 38 acres more attractive, and there was a possibility that the entire parcel may be sold based on a recent Request for Proposal received.

Mayor Peabody noted that Infrastructure Ontario has identified the East Ridge Business Park as a premiere place to invest within Ontario.

Action: Staff to analyze options of reducing the transfer to reserves and using land sale proceeds towards the loan to ultimately decrease the tax rate, along with providing more information about the interest rate and amount of the construction loan.

9.6 Tourism/Visitor Information Centre

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer provided a summary of the Tourism budget, including an overall reduction by leveraging the new Municipal website rather than a separate tourist website, and a reduction in Visitor Centre wages as staff would be overseen by the Community Services Department.

Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer responded to questions about the recoveries budget, advising that the revenue consisted of donations, or fees from businesses for the Hometown Christmas Market.

9.7 Public Works

Nicholas Schnurr, Director of Operations provided an overview of the Public Works budget which included a reduction in service agreements due to the graders being purchased rather than continuing the leases, an increase in engineering services to plan for a future works shop expansion, an increase in hard and loose top maintenance, and an increase in equipment maintenance due to inflation.

Mr. Schnurr responded to an inquiry from Council on the engineering costs for expanding the works shops, and the estimated timeline, noting that the Walkerton works shop is too small, and the benefit in having the engineering completed when applying for grants and planning for future needs.

Mr. Schnurr responded to a question about the increase in fuel, noting that the 2024 actuals are not yet finalized.

Action: Council to revisit the works shop expansion discussion at a future budget meeting.

9.8 Streetlights

There was no discussion or questions related to this item.

9.9 Materials Management

Council noted the significant increase in opening Cell 3 at the Walkerton/Hanover Landfill, and discussed potential options. Fiona Hamilton, Director of Legislative and Legal Services (Clerk) noted that Council may wish to have a discussion in Closed Session to preserve the Municipality's bargaining power with the agreement.

Council discussed the service agreement with the Town of Hanover, and the impact to residents of Brant and Greenock who pay taxes towards a landfill they are restricted from using.

Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer responded to a questions about the option of taking the \$370,000 Cell 3 expense from reserves, advising that the suggestion could not be recommended as there are only \$30,000 in the new reserve fund.

9.10 Brockton Child Care Centre

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer provided an overview of the budget, including increasing capacity for the before/after school program, finalizing the Centre's Implementation Plan, introducing a communication source (app) for users of the Centre, an increase in wages for administration support, and an increase in training, and an increase in food costs. Ms. Watson also advised that staff were in discussions with the Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board to increase shade at the Centre. Ms. Watson noted the separation of revenue sources to include grant opportunities, and the before/after school programs.

Council acknowledged staff's efforts over the past 6 months to ensure stability for families and continuity of service during the transition period. Council asked about the increase in food costs and whether an exemption to the procurement policy would be required.

Council further asked about plans to collaborate with the Community Services Department for before/after school programs. Ms. Watson noted the requirement to complete the Centre's licensing renewal, legislative requirements, service stability and meet immediate priorities for staffing at this time, with future opportunities and projects to be addressed later in the year and into 2026 once administrative leadership is in place.

Ms. Watson responded to a question about a potential savings in wages due to the Manager's recent retirement, noting that the budget included full wages for staff positions to avoid fluctuation and that Council and staff are mindful of how any changes to the budget related to salaries may impact CWELCC funding.

Action: Staff to review any potential savings from unfilled staffing positions along with the parameters of the CWELLC funding.

9.11 Fire Services

Chris Wells, Director of Fire and Emergency Services provided an overview of the budget, including a focus on training and a review of service agreements.

Mr. Wells responded to an inquiry about the timeline for dispatch services, noting that the agreements recur annually, however staff would be reviewing the costs for that agreement in 2025.

Council congratulated staff and all those involved with the Brockton Regional Training Centre for the large increase in revenue benefiting the community. Mr. Wells noted that the revenue had also allowed for an offset of costs associated with maintenance and equipment.

Mr. Wells responded to a question about the Elmwood Fire Department service agreement increase, advising that the \$70,000 increase was for a capital expenditure approved by Elmwood Fire Joint Board of Management for a building expansion to allow for decontamination. The decontamination had been identified as a priority from a health and safety perspective, and recommendations from the Ministry of Labour related to cancer prevention and ensuring firefighters could complete decontamination procedures prior to leaving the facility. Mr. Wells noted that the Municipality did receive \$10,000 in grant funding for the project.

Mr. Wells responded to an inquiry regarding the funding commitment, advising that staff were actively pursuing additional funding opportunities. The total budget was \$250,000 for the completed project. Mr. Wells responded to a follow-up question that the Municipality of West Grey had removed the project from their 2025 budget.

Council debated whether the project should be removed from the budget, or deferring it for a number of years to maintain a joint venture with West Grey.

Council requested that the item should be added to the next Elmwood Fire Joint Board agenda, noting that at the previous meeting it was discussed that both Councils would support this project. Council discussed the importance of maintaining consistency among both Walkerton and Elmwood Fire Departments.

9.12 Emergency Management

Chris Wells, Director of Fire and Emergency Services advised that the Municipality had taken a large step forward in emergency management with a new Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and various training complete, as well as planning for the ERP annexes and additional emergency training planned in 2025.

Fiona Hamilton, Director of Legislative and Legal Services (Clerk) and Mr. Wells responded to an inquiry from Council surrounding emergency management training, noting that the Head of Council participates in all training as Council's representative, although additional training opportunities could be investigated.

9.13 Health and Safety

No further comments noted.

9.14 O.P.P. and South Bruce O.P.P. Detachment Board

Fiona Hamilton, Director of Legislative and Legal Services (Clerk) noted the challenges associated with this year's budget because of the change in the Community Safety and Policing Act, and Detachment Board structure. Ms.

Hamilton advised that the South Bruce Detachment Board had just started meeting after resolving some insurance challenges, and a proposed budget was prepared to present to each municipality. Councillor Elphick noted that in the absence of all five (5) Council's approval of the budget, it would go to the Ministry of the Solicitor General for approval.

Mayor Peabody confirmed the Bruce County had a delegation with the Ministry of the Solicitor General at the ROMA Conference, and Brockton was awaiting confirmation from the Ministry on its delegation meeting request.

Councillor Elphick confirmed that \$5,000 was being budgeted per Municipality, for a total overall budget of \$25,000 for the South Bruce O.P.P. Detachment Board.

Resolution 25-01-03

Moved By: Steve Travale

Seconded By: Gregory J. McLean

That the Council of the Municipality recess from the Open Session at 11:57 a.m.

Carried

Resolution 25-01-04

Moved By: Gregory J. McLean

Seconded By: Tim Elphick

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton return to Open Session at 12:38 p.m.

Carried

9.15 Animal Control/By-Law Enforcement

No further comments noted

9.16 Recreation

Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services provided an overview of the budget, noting the accomplishments of the previous year, and highlighting the significant increase for tree removal to align with pre-COVID budgets, and the increases to reserves for playgrounds and future Olympia replacement. Ms. Gillis advised that several invoices for 2024 were still to come.

Council commended staff for the number of accomplishments in the previous year. Council encouraged increasing revenue streams to support programs and collaboration with the Child Care Centre programs. Ms. Gillis noted that staffing compliments must be met prior to expanding programming across departments.

Ms. Gillis responded to a question about the increase in transfers to reserves, noting that staff had set aside funds to upgrade playgrounds as recommended in the Recreation Master Plan and replace the Olympia which had reached it lifespan.

Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer advised that there was \$267,344 in reserves, with an additional \$117,500 proposed for 2025, for a projected balance of \$384,844 for recreation as a whole, with a separate reserve fund for a future recreational facility.

Council asked about the cash-in-lieu of parkland, and whether those funds could be used for recreation equipment. Ms. Serratore noted that there was \$88,000 in parkland reserves, not including any 2024 year-end transfers, and that these funds were earmarked for future park's needs.

Ms. Serratore responded to an inquiry regarding the amount in investments, noting that \$800,000 was in long-term investments for the recreation facility. Ms. Serratore responded to a question regarding where investment interest was allocated to, noting that interest earned in investments was reinvested into reserve funds.

Council discussed whether the reserve transfers should be decreased, and the best method of planning for the future, while being cognizant of the impact to today's taxpayers.

Council suggested that a portion of the interest rates be used to offset the current tax rate.

Ms. Serratore responded to an inquiry, clarifying that the amount in investments, and the amounts held as cash within the reserve fund account which would accrue interest at a lower rate. Ms. Serratore responded to a follow-up question that staff can review the reserve fund balances and identify opportunities for short-term investments, noting the unanticipated expenses that occur throughout the year, such as equipment maintenance, and recommended that the entire reserve fund not be invested, though incremental increases could occur annually.

Ms. Serratore responded to a question, advising that the Municipality's long-term debt was double the amount of the reserve funds, recommending that a balance be reached by increasing the reserve fund contributions and lowering the long-term debt. Ms. Serratore suggested that leveraging long-term debt was not feasible as Brockton's debt levels inched closer to the Annual Repayment Limit and funds should be set aside for future infrastructure needs.

Ms. Serratore further cautioned that should the Municipality not appropriately manage its debt, there may be limited opportunities to move forward with projects.

9.17 Physician Recruitment

Brian Currie, Brockton and Area Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee member presented the Committee's 2025 budget, noting the success in signing five (5) new physicians.

Council congratulated the committee on their accomplishments over the past 19 years, and discussed whether the mandate of the Committee should be expanded to include healthcare recruitment as a whole.

9.18 Library

No further comments noted

9.19 Cemetery

No further comments noted

9.20 Municipal Drains

Fiona Hamilton, Director of Legislative and Legal Services (Clerk) provided an overview of the budget. Ms. Hamilton responded to an inquiry about the increase in insurance, explaining that the insurance was reallocated between departments, although certain drains do require securities and letters of credit.

Ms. Hamilton discussed the challenges with municipal drains, and the timeline associated with receiving Provincial grants and recouping the borrowing costs associated with the drain.

9.21 Planning

Dieter Weltz, Building and Planning Manager/CBO provided an overview of the budget, including the focus on service agreements with the review of the Official Plan and Zoning By-Law.

9.22 Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority

Council discussed the increased budget as a result of the Provincial freeze, and options available. Council expressed their discontent with the increase.

9.23 Heritage

Fiona Hamilton, Director of Legislative and Legal Services (Clerk) responded to a question about the next Doors Open event, advising that the Committee had not yet committed to a date for a future event, due to large-scale community events occurring in 2026.

9.24 General Discussion on Operating Budget

Council asked whether police reserve funds could be used to offset the increased policing contract costs. Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer explained how the reserve fund was used in previous years, advising that the fund could be used to reduce the policing contract cost.

Council asked whether a clothing allowance was included in the Brockton Child Care Budget. Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer advised that staff had not included funds within the budget, but could add the item for inclusion, and conduct a full review of the Clothing Allowance Policy.

Council reviewed a list of optional items to consider including in the budget.

Council supported removing the \$30,000 transfer to reserves for playground equipment.

Council suggested whether community partnerships could help fund the cost of the Victoria Jubilee Hall curtain replacement and decided to reduce the donation to \$8,000. Council further discussed the heritage reserve funds and whether this project could be funded through one of those reserves.

Council supported reducing the Chepstow Lions Club ball diamond donation to \$10,000.

Council approved the Elmwood Community Centre Board's capital request for \$3,000.

Council discussed the investment for the recreation reserve fund. Ms. Serratore advised that in 2023 the investment was in a negative, and information has not yet been provided for 2024, although staff suspected that the investment may have stabilized. Ms. Serratore noted that a report would be brought to Council about the annual investments.

Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services explained the lifespan of the Olympia, noting that it currently has 3,200 hours and has reached its lifespan in 2024 and had a major repair completed in 2024. The equipment would not last more than 2 years, and the cost to replace it would be approximately \$180,000. Council agreed to maintain a transfer to reserve funds for the Olympia.

10. Overview of Capital Requests

11. Council Discussion and Questions on Capital Requests

Chris Wells, Director of Fire and Emergency Services provided an overview of the capital requests focused on maintaining programs, bunker gear, and radio equipment.

Nicholas Schnurr, Director of Operations provided an overview of the capital requests to resurface Concession 8 between Bruce County Road 19 and Sideroad 30, ordering a new plow truck to replace the aging fleet, purchasing a replacement grader, completing roadwork at the intersection of Durham and McNab Streets which would be in conjunction with Bruce County construction plans, replacing a culvert crossing at the Zettler Municipal Drain, and replacing Structure 16 Brant as recommended during bridge inspections.

John Strader, Operations Manager responded to questions about the consequences of closing the bridge, noting the impact to farmers who use the structure regularly as they own property on both sides of the creek. Mr. Strader noted the minimal cost to replace the box culvert in comparison to other bridges.

Mr. Strader responded to a question about whether reserve funds and grants could be used for the intersection work at Durham and McNab, advising that staff have provided a rough estimate based on engineering costs, although the project involves replacing a historic watermain, and Bruce County would be creating a crosswalk with crossing lights, and new sidewalks would be installed leading from the Durham Street Bridge along McNab Street. Mr. Strader noted the number of unknowns related to this project, such that staff provided a best estimate for the Municipal costs as complete plans were not yet available.

Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer noted the minimal funds available in the roads reserve fund which were also used for infrastructure maintenance projects throughout the Public Works Department.

Council discussed the recreation capital projects, including the epoxy pool flooring and the Walkerton Community Centre table replacement. Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services and Brad Thomson, Parks and Facilities Supervisor responded to questions from Council about the replacement of the tables, noting that 15-20 of the 50 tables require replacement and that the tables were used in both the auditorium and main level for events.

Council discussed alternatives for the pool flooring. Mr. Thomson explained staff's current process for maintaining the pool floor and rationale behind the epoxy recommendation in order to prevent mold or slipping hazards.

Council reduced the annual donation to Victoria Jubilee Hall to \$5,000.

Council approved replacing eight (8) exterior doors at the Walkerton Community Centre for an annual cost of \$8,500 in 2025 and 2026.

Council approved replacing tiles at the Walkerton Community Centre as part of a careful asbestos remediation plan.

Council discussed the diving board proposal, and whether community donations could be made towards the project cost.

Ms. Serratore noted an additional capital project to replace a John Deere mower in the Recreation Department for a cost of \$31,000. Ms. Gillis provided rationale on the proposal to replace the 23-year-old mower with 36,000 hours, which was used to maintain municipal parks and road allowances in Walkerton. Staff were considering electric mowers, but those mowers were currently outside of the Municipality's price range.

Mr. Thomson responded to questions about the electric mower, noting that staff were investigating grant opportunities and further that a battery-operated mower would last approximately 8 hours and result in a \$12,000 savings in gas.

12. Current Tax Rate Implications

Action: Staff to review the comments, actuals and approvals for further discussion to occur at the February 11th meeting.

13. Closed Session

Resolution 25-01-05

Moved By: Steve Travale

Seconded By: Gregory J. McLean

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton will enter into Closed Session at 2:30 p.m. in order to address a matter pertaining to:

- Information explicitly supplied in confidence to the municipality or local board by Canada, a province or territory or a Crown agency of any of them - **Grant Funding Allocation**
- A position, plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiation carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the municipality or local board - **Municipal Contribution Agreement**

Carried

Resolution 25-01-06

Moved By: Tim Elphick

Seconded By: Gregory J. McLean

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby approve the direction provided to staff in Closed Session.

Carried

14. Confirmation of Proceedings

Resolution 25-01-07

Moved By: Mitch Clark

Seconded By: Tim Elphick

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton authorize that the following by-law be read, enacted, signed, sealed, and numbered as follows:

- By-Law 2025-002 - January 13, 2025 Confirmatory By-Law

Carried

15. Adjournment

Resolution 25-01-08

Moved By: Tim Elphick

Seconded By: Mitch Clark

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton does now adjourn at 3:15 p.m. to meet again on January 14, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

Carried

Mayor - Chris Peabody

Director of Legislative and Legal Services (Clerk) – Fiona Hamilton