

Report to Council

Report Title: Budget Consultation 2021 Initial Feedback

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

Department: Finance

Date: January 12, 2021

Report Number: FIN2021-01 **File Number:** C11FIN, F05

Attachments:

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number FIN2021-01 – Budget Consultation 2021 Initial Feedback, prepared by Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk and Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer for information purposes.

Report:

Background:

The Municipality of Brockton launched the Budget Consultation 2021 project on our community engagement website, Build Your Brockton on November 25, 2020. The Budget Consultation 2021 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 2021 Budget Meetings on January 19, January 20, and February 9, 2021, and Budget FAQ's. Members of the public are also able to interact with the staff through three platforms: a 2021 Budget Survey, Q&A, and Ideas tool.

Analysis:

Staff have analyzed the initial data received from the public regarding the Budget Consultation 2021 project from November 21, 2020 to January 8, 2021.

Initial Feedback:

To date, the Budget Consultation 2021 Project launched on Build Your Brockton, has had a total of 165 visits, 32 engaged visitors, 90 informed visitors, and 139 aware visitors, including a maximum number of 26 visitors per day. Broken down further:

Out of the 32 engaged participants, 31 participated in the Budget 2021 Survey, and 1 submitted a question.

Out of the 90 informed participants, 1 downloaded a document, 3 visited the key dates page (Budget 2021 Meeting dates), 57 visited multiple project pages, and 32 contributed to a tool (becoming an engaged participant).

The 139 aware visitors simply visited the project page.

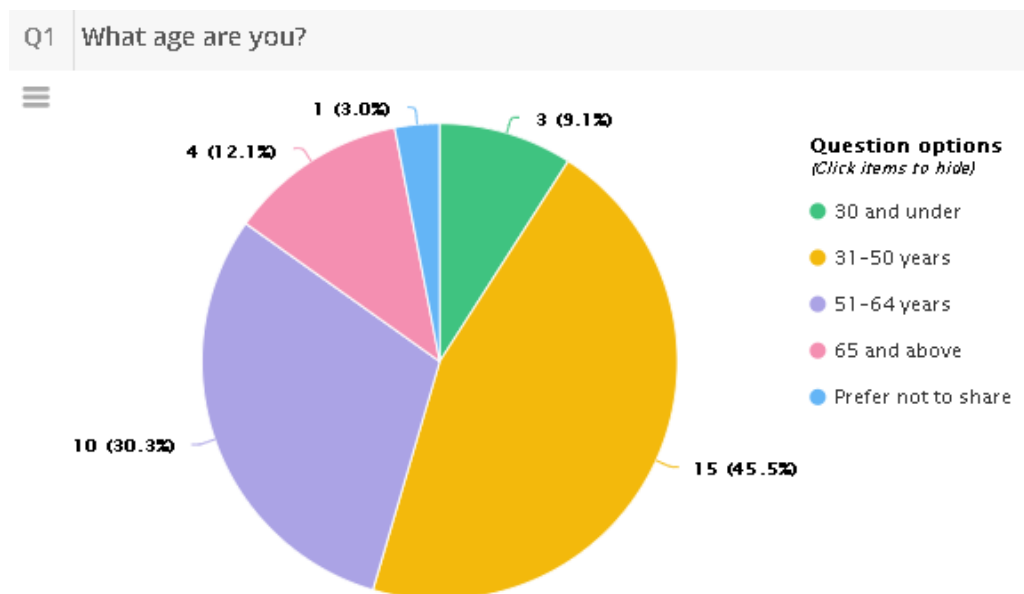
Currently only 1 document has been uploaded to the project page. The Understanding Municipal Taxation document was downloaded once. The 2021 Non-Tax Supported Budget document, and 2021 Tax Supported Budget documents will also be added once they have been finalized.

The Budget Consultation 2021 Project page on Build Your Brockton was viewed through 5 different sources of traffic, with the main sources identified as directly through the Build Your Brockton site, social media, referrals, search engines, and email.

Budget 2021 Survey Initial Feedback (November 21, 2020 to January 8, 2021):

To date, 31 Individuals completed the Budget 2021 Survey, which consists of 15 questions.

Out of those 31 participants, the highest percentages of respondents are between the ages of 31-50 years (45.5%). The second highest percentage of respondents are between the ages of 51 and 64 years (30.3%).



Respondents identified that their top two sources for information about the Municipality's budget were the Municipal website, and members of Council or staff.

The majority of respondents who completed the survey own both urban and rural residential property in Brockton; however, responses were received from residents who own agricultural, and multi-residential (owner or tenant) properties. Currently, no participation has been received by owners of commercial or industrial properties.

Respondents are pleased with the value of programs and services offered by the Municipality they receive for their tax dollars.

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	2.15
Increase user fees	3.03
Combination of increase in property taxes and user fees	3.09
Cut existing service levels to maintain current taxes	3.55
Cut existing service levels to reduce taxes	4.42
Increase property taxes	4.76

Respondents were also asked to identify their top 3 most important concerns facing the Municipality at this time. The top 3 concerns are 1) “Roads, drainage street lights, sidewalks etc.”, 2) “Growth, development and sustainability”, and 3) “Provision of recreation facilities, parks, trails”.

When asked what information residents would like to receive from the Municipality that they are currently not receiving, respondents suggested:

- Breakdown on the budget, details on available services, and how tax dollars are being spent; including transparency on the source of annual increases in the budget.
- Residents enjoy watching the Council Meetings from the comfort of their home, and would appreciate additional information/briefs following the meetings. It was also noted that residents would appreciate less Closed Session meetings.
- Additional information about the area for new residents
- Progress on the recycling program
- Residents also noted their appreciation for the Municipality’s continued communications, especially through social media accounts.

Some services provided by the Municipality charge user fees but run a deficit as the user fee charged does not cover the total cost to provide the service. These deficits are then funded by municipal tax dollars. Residents were asked to identify whether they would support an increase in user fees for the following 4 services:

- Recreation (Ex. Rentals, Programs)
- Landfill (Ex. Tipping Fees)
- Cemetery (Ex. Plot, Columbarium, Niche Purchases)
- Child Care (Ex. Program Fees)

At this time, residents support an increase in user fees for each of the 4 services.

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

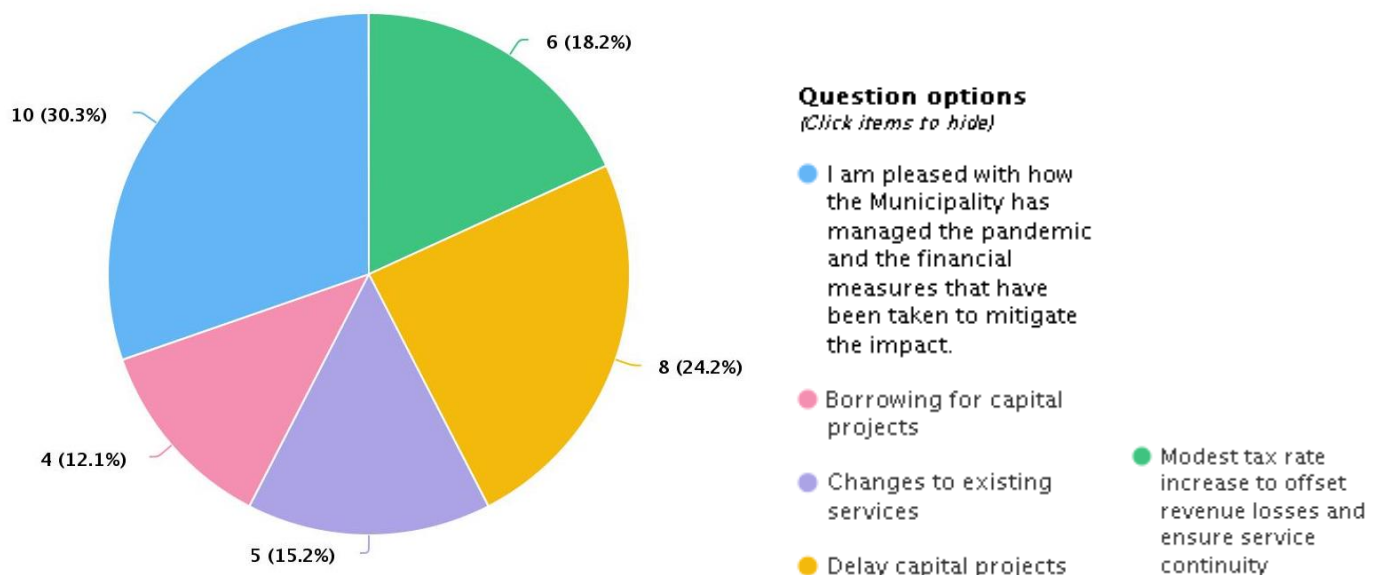
- Parks and Recreation
- Landfill
- Police
- Public Works (Roads/Operations)
- Utilities
- General Government (Administrative)

At this time, residents support maintaining the majority of the service areas, and wish to enhance Public Works (Roads/Operations).

Residents were further asked what they would like to see included in future parks, trails and outdoor green spaces. Residents are pleased with the amenities and green spaces in Brockton; however, the top suggestions included:

- Accessibility
- Maintenance or expansion of trails
- A dog park
- Washroom facilities
- Waste disposal containers

The Municipality surveyed residents on their opinion of how the Municipality should respond to pressures related to the COVID-19 pandemic due to a loss in revenue and available Provincial Funding to assist. Respondents are pleased with how the Municipality has managed the pandemic and the financial measures that have been taken to mitigate the impact, but also favour delaying capital projects and having a modest tax rate increase to offset revenue losses and ensure service continuity.



Finally, residents were asked their ideas on building a better, stronger, community. The top suggestions are:

- Inclusion/equality for rural residents
- Economic development
- Investing in the future of the community
- Continued communication with organizations, service clubs, and residents to maintain unified goals for Brockton
- Fair and reasonable tax rates

In summary, Brockton residents enjoy the programs and services provided, are familiar with the budget process, are in favour of increasing user fees and property taxes to pay for Municipal services, and feel it is important to set aside a modest amount of funding for future infrastructure needs.

Staff will prepare additional Budget Consultation 2021 Feedback Reports to Council for the January 26, 2021 and February 9, 2021 Council Meetings with final data collection from residents.

Sustainability Checklist:

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

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? | 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, Jr. Deputy Clerk



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer