

Report to Council

Report Title: Budget Consultation 2021 Secondary Feedback

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

Department: Finance

Date: January 26, 2021

Report Number: FIN2021-03 **File Number:** C11FIN, F05

Attachments: N/A

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number FIN2021-03 – Budget Consultation 2021 Secondary 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, which includes information about the Municipal Budget, Budget Meeting dates, an FAQ, and interactive platforms of a 2021 Budget Survey, Q&A, and Ideas tool. Staff presented Report Number FIN2021-01 on January 12, 2021 with the initial feedback received from residents.

Analysis:

Staff have analyzed the secondary data received from the public regarding the Budget Consultation 2021 project from November 25, 2020 to January 22, 2021.

Secondary Feedback:

To date, the Budget Consultation 2021 Project launched on Build Your Brockton, has had a total of 318 visits, 69 engaged visitors, 174 informed visitors, and 257 aware visitors, including a maximum number of 50 visitors per day. Broken down further: Out of the 69 engaged participants, 68 participated in the Budget 2021 Survey, and 1 submitted a question.

Out of the 174 informed participants, 4 downloaded a document, 9 visited the key dates page (Budget 2021 Meeting dates), 3 visited the FAQ list page, 106 visited multiple project pages, and 69 contributed to a tool (becoming an engaged participant). The 257 aware visitors simply visited the project page.

Currently three documents have been uploaded to the project page. The Understanding Municipal Taxation (2020 Tax Dollar) document was downloaded three times. The 2021 Draft Non-Tax Supported Budget document, and 2021 Draft Tax Supported Budget documents were uploaded to the site once the Budget Agendas were finalized. The Non-Tax Supported Document has been downloaded once, and the Tax Supported Budget has not been downloaded.

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.

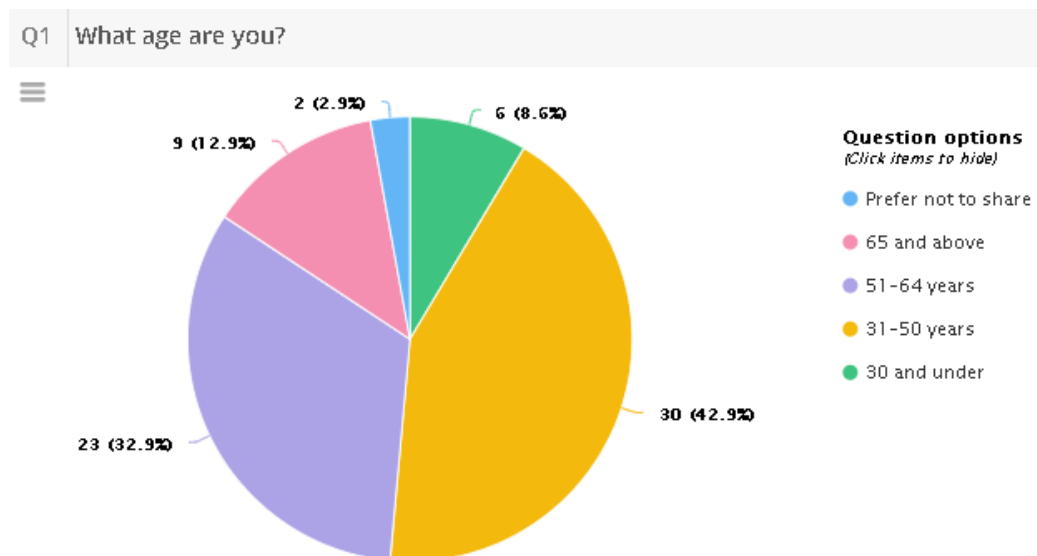
Budget 2021 Survey Secondary Feedback (November 25, 2020 to January 22, 2021):

Staff have seen a large increase in responses received since the last Council Report, and have communicated the Budget Meetings and Survey to residents through the Municipal website, social media, Council Agendas, Brockton Buzz Newsletters, and Business Newsletters.

The survey will close on February 1, 2021 at 12:00 a.m. and final responses will be brought forward to the February 9, 2021 Budget Meeting.

In comparison, on the 2020 Budget Survey, only 24 responses were received in total. Brockton ratepayers are far more engaged on the Budget this year.

To date, 70 Individuals completed the Budget 2021 Survey, which consists of 15 questions. Out of those 70 participants, the highest percentages of respondents are between the ages of 31-50 years (42.9%). The second highest percentage of respondents are between the ages of 51-64 years (32.9%).



Respondents identified that their top sources for information about the Municipality's budget are the Municipal website or social media. Many respondents have not looked for budget information before.

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, multi-residential (owner or tenant), and commercial properties. Currently, no participation has been received by owners of industrial

properties. Respondents are mostly 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	2.60
Increase user fees	3.01
Combination of increase in property taxes and user fees	3.06
Cut existing service levels to maintain current taxes	3.41
Cut existing service levels to reduce taxes	4.13
Increase property taxes	4.79

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 and programs”. Though “property taxes” also remain a high priority.

When asked what information residents would like to receive from the Municipality that they are currently not receiving, respondents suggested the following additional responses since the last Report:

- Breakdown on the budget including how tax dollars are being spent and why in order to remain accountable and transparent on decision making
- Residents continued to note their enjoyment of watching the Council Meetings from the comfort of their home
- Long-term planning with neighbour Municipalities
- Inclusivity for rural residents
- Information on crime statistics

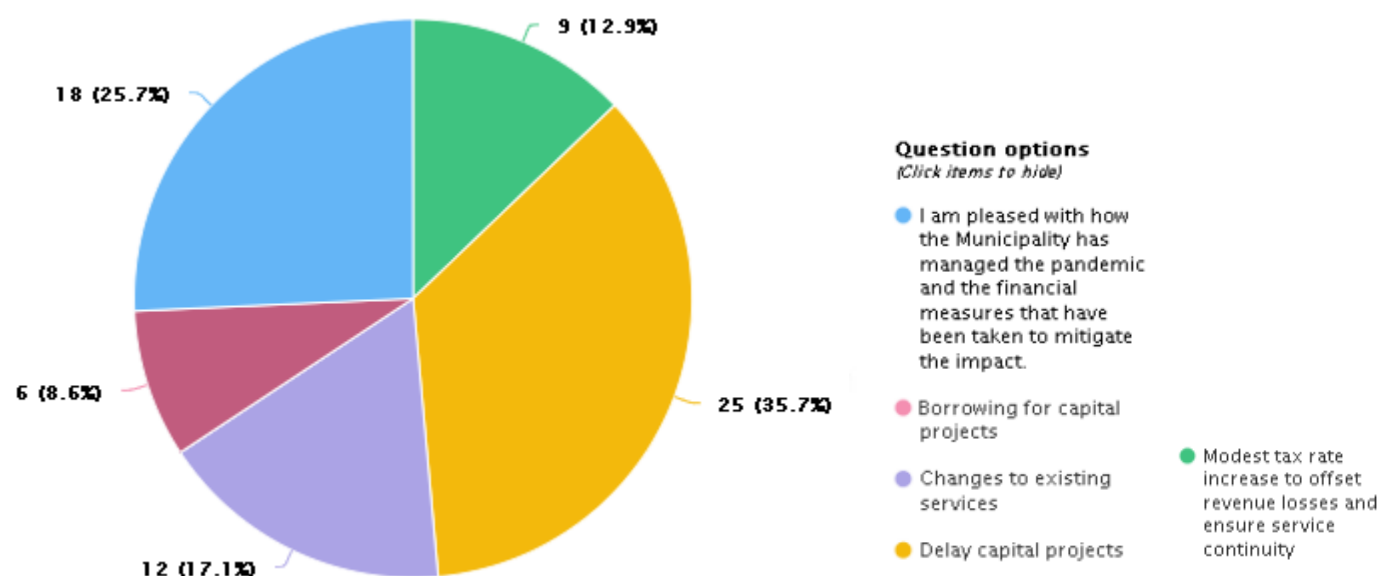
Residents were asked to identify whether they would support an increase in user fees for the following 4 services: Recreation (Ex. Rentals, Programs); Landfill (Ex. Tipping Fees); Cemetery (Ex. Plot, Columbarium, Niche Purchases); and Child Care (Ex. Program Fees). At this time, residents support an increase in user fees for each of the 4 services, though the results are very close.

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 all service areas; though some wish to enhance Public Works (Roads/Operations), and reduce General Government (Administrative).

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 since the last Report:

- Year-round servicing, including improved lighting
- Additional waste disposal containers
- Increased trails, or paths for bicycles
- Maintenance of ball diamonds and basketball courts
- Tree planting; environmentally-friendly parks
- Inclusion of rural communities
- A dog park
- A skate park
- Playground equipment for younger children/toddlers
- One suggestion was to develop a park on the Tim Hortons side of town

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 favour delaying capital projects, changes to existing services, 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 suggestions provided since the last Report are:

- Shared services with neighbouring Municipalities
- Lowered taxes

- Increased policing presence
- Inclusion/equality for rural residents
- Environmental planning/stewardship, including increased tree planting
- Continued supports for the community, including economic development
- Increased healthcare and mental health services
- Increased recreational programming, including both indoor and outdoor opportunities
- Investment in future planning for the entire community of Brockton

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 a final Report for the February 9, 2021 Budget Meeting summarizing the 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