

Report to Council

Report Title: Budget Consultation 2021 Final Feedback

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

Department: Finance

Date: February 9, 2021

Report Number: FIN2021-04 **File Number:** C11FIN, F05

Attachments:

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number FIN2021-04 – Budget Consultation 2021 Final 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 included 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, and Report Number FIN2021-03 on January 26, 2021 with additional feedback received from residents.

Analysis:

Staff have analyzed the final data received from the public regarding the Budget Consultation 2021 project from November 25, 2020 to February 1, 2021 and have provided it here for Council's information.

Final Feedback:

The Budget Consultation 2021 Project launched on Build Your Brockton, had a total of 383 visits, 75 engaged visitors, 199 informed visitors, and 309 aware visitors, including a maximum number of 50 visitors per day. Broken down further: Out of the 75 engaged participants, 74 participated in the Budget 2021 Survey, and 1 submitted a question.

Out of the 199 informed participants, 8 downloaded a document, 10 visited the key dates page (Budget 2021 Meeting dates), 4 visited the FAQ list page, 125 visited multiple project pages, and 75 contributed to a tool (becoming an engaged participant). The 309 aware visitors simply visited the project page.

Three documents were uploaded to the project page. The Understanding Municipal Taxation (2020 Tax Dollar) document was downloaded four times. The 2021 Draft Non-Tax Supported Budget document was downloaded three times, and 2021 Draft Tax Supported Budget document was downloaded four times.

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.

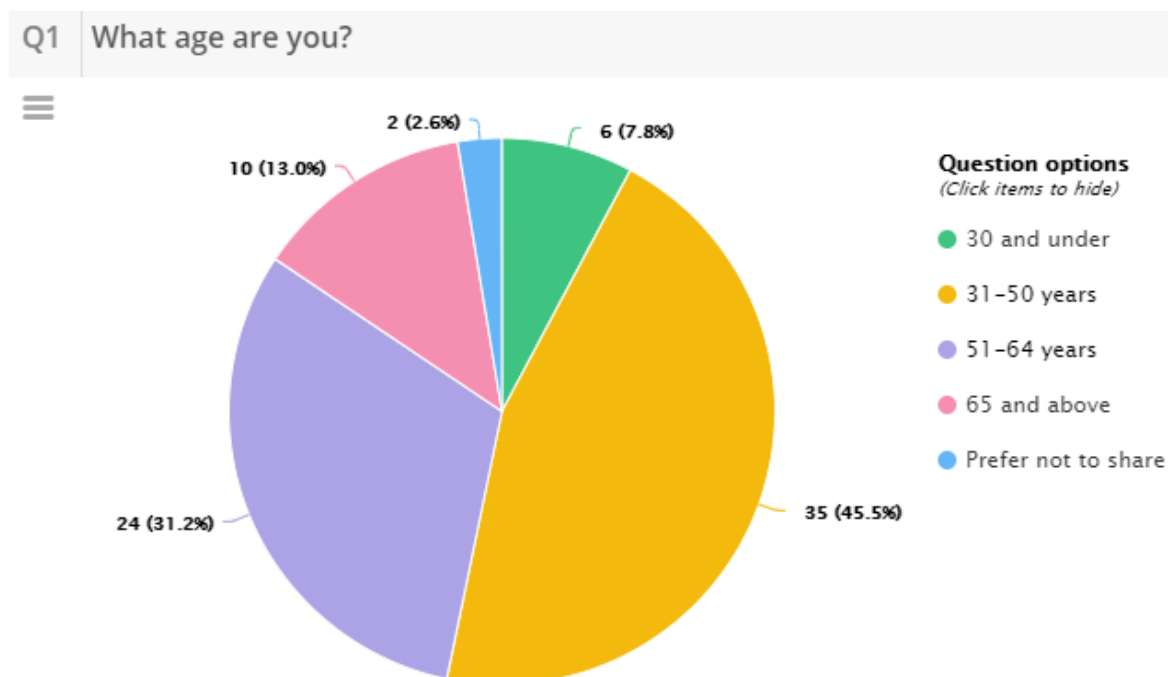
Budget 2021 Survey Final Feedback (November 25, 2020 to February 1, 2021):

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

The survey closed on February 1, 2021 at 12:00 a.m. and the survey was archived on Build Your Brockton. The final responses have been summarized in this Report for consideration at the February 9, 2021 Budget Meeting.

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

A total of 77 Individuals completed the 2021 Budget Survey, which consisted of 15 questions. Out of those 77 participants, the highest percentages of respondents were between the ages of 31-50 years (45.5%). The second highest percentage of respondents were between the ages of 51-64 years (31.2%).



Respondents identified that their top sources for information about the Municipality's budget as 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. No participation was 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	2.64
Increase user fees	2.96
Combination of increase in property taxes and user fees	3.06
Cut existing service levels to maintain current taxes	3.42
Cut existing service levels to reduce taxes	4.14
Increase property taxes	4.78

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

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 tax revenue from all communities in Brockton to understand percentages of taxes within the entire Municipality
- Long-term planning

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). Residents support an increase in user fees for each of the 4 services, though the results were very close.

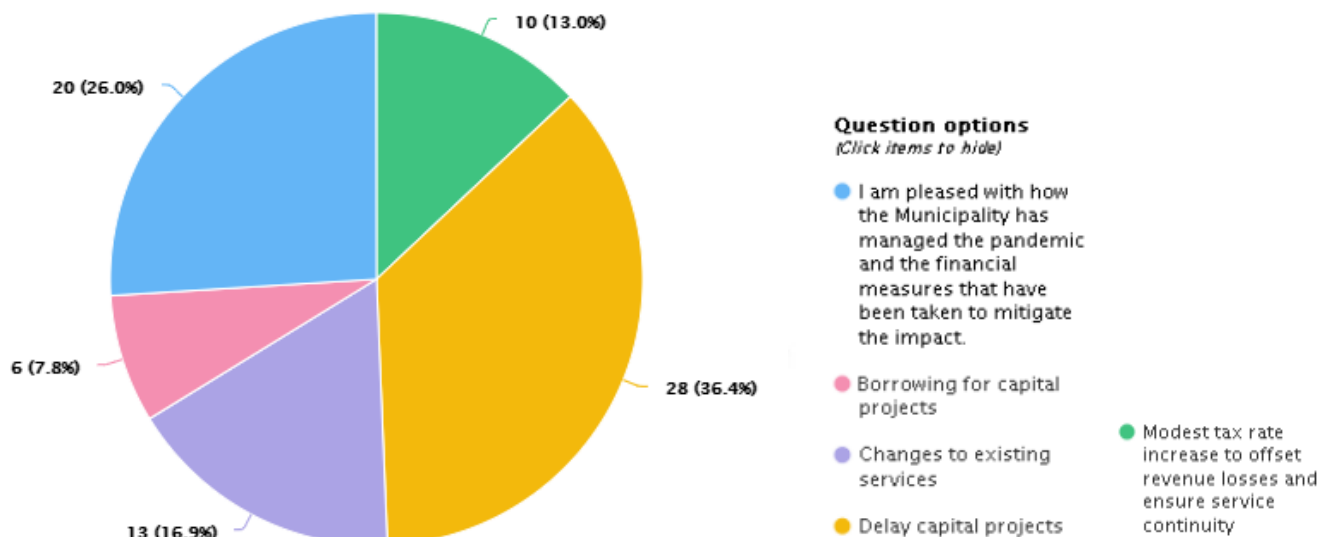
Residents were also asked to indicate if they would enhance, maintain or reduce the following 6 service areas portion of municipal taxes: Parks and Recreation; Landfill; Police; Public Works (Roads/Operations); Utilities;

General Government (Administrative). Residents support maintaining all service areas; though some wish to 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 were:

- Opportunities for environmental education and/or interaction
- Additional trails, and/or increased opportunities on trails such as additional lookout points, waste disposal containers, and signage.
- Motorized and non-motorized trails, including a request for additional maintenance.

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 were:

- Increased community events after the pandemic is completed
- Increased beautification in downtown Walkerton
- Resurfacing tennis courts and adding pickleball courts
- Increased outdoor opportunities, including a walking track, and suggestions for additional recreational programs, such as another scavenger hunt.
- Scholarships for ECE Workers and PSW's for long-term care homes (Note: The Municipality does have a partnership with Fanshawe College for ECE workers already)
- Additional focus and support for rural initiatives
- Attracting sustainable industry and job availability

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 thank the respondents for completing the 2021 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 2021 Project will be archived on Build Your Brockton shortly afterwards.

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