Municipality of West Grey Committee of the Whole
Held on Tuesday, January 8, 2019 at 3:30 p.m.
At the Council Chambers – West Grey Municipal Office

Council
Mayor Christine Robinson, Deputy Mayor Tom Hutchinson, Councillor Beth Hamilton, Councillor Rebecca Hergert, Councillor Doug Hutchinson, Councillor Geoffrey Shea, Councillor Stephen Townsend

Staff
Laura Johnston, CAO/Deputy Clerk; Mark Turner, Clerk; Kerri Mighton, Director of Finance/Treasurer; Brent Glasier, Director of Infrastructure and Public Works

Declarations of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof - None

Items of Business

1) Director of Finance/Treasurer – Report FTR #01/08/19 (2019 Preliminary Budget)

   1) Wage Grid Adjustment for 2019

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) on a year-over-year basis in November was 1.7% for Canada and 1.8% for Ontario.

Hamilton-Townsend, Resolved that, the Committee of the Whole hereby recommends Council approves a 1.8% increase in the 2019 grid adjustment for municipal staff, Council, and volunteer firefighters effective with the first full 2019 pay in January. #COW 1-19 Carried.

2) Preliminary 2019 Budget Review

The CAO/Deputy Clerk and the Director of Finance/Treasurer noted the first 2019 draft budget is a high level overview with more detailed information to follow during future Committee of the Whole (2019 Preliminary Budget) meetings.

The Committee asked that future budget meetings identify what phase a capital project is at, and differentiate between committed projects versus requested projects.

The Committee asked for clarification respecting the budget process, and an explanation on how budget increase impacts taxes. The Director of Finance/Treasurer replied that department heads realize pressures on infrastructure, which is considered in their budget submissions, and indicated in terms of taxes, the $614,000 increase noted in the first draft of the 2019 budget,
would result in a tax increase of about $21/$100,000 of assessment if property assessments increased only by approximately 1.5%. (only on the municipal levy, County & School Board increase would be extra, however, school board taxes haven’t increased in the last 6-7 years.) The approximate average value of a dwelling in West Grey is $228,000.00. A $94,500 budget increase represents a 1% increase in the tax rate.

The Committee noted the past Council often set a targeted budget increase percentage for department heads to come back with for their initial budget submissions. The CAO/Deputy Clerk indicated the former Council did not set a target increase as it was left for the new council to determine.

The Director of Finance/Treasurer reported on some pressure points/projected department increases, including:

- West Grey Police Service 2% or $60,000 increase, due to a pre-negotiated settlement, $100,000 adjustment due to Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) re-allocation that is no longer there to off-set budget.

- Roads/Administration/Recreation – proposed new staffing positions to accomplish certain goals envisioned by Council (i.e. Communications Officer); assistant to Director of Infrastructure and Public Works to assist with existing workload and increased workloads, for example, environmental enhancements; enhancements to newly established Community Services/Parks & Recreation Department with the idea of building a recreation service rather than just providing services; small increase in Council budget; Source Water Protection grant ends, resulting in an approximate $7,500 added cost. No library budget to date.

The Committee questioned if part of the proposed Administration budget increase of 7.3% is due to the proposed hiring of new staff. The Director of Finance/Treasurer responded that it is largely due to the proposed new position, and also due to the proposed hiring of a consultant to complete an updated market comparison check for the employee pay grid.

The Committee noted the current Development Charges Study expires in early 2020, and asked if the cost for hiring a consultant to complete a new Development Charges Study starting sometime in 2019 is in the budget, and if a grant is available. The Director of Finance/Treasurer responded that a Development Charges Study is a 100% eligible expense, so it pays for itself and doesn’t hit the tax levy.

The Committee questioned if there are any grants on the horizon that can be taken advantage of. The Director of Finance/Treasurer stated it depends on the projects being considered, and the philosophy of Council in terms of does
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Council wants the availability of grants to determine what projects are applied for, or consider projects and determine if grants are available. The Municipality is waiting to hear back on its large Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) grant application for the Normanby-Minto Townline project, and on an accessibility grant application for an elevator for the West Grey Municipal Office, The Municipality is always investigating possible grants. The CAO/Deputy Clerk also mentioned the Municipality has submitted a grant for an enhanced municipal website.

The Committee suggested staff contact the local MP & MPP about possible grants and garnering support for grant submissions.

The Committee noted there have been grant applications submitted for the proposed “Big Dig” project in downtown Durham that were not supported in past couple of years, and questioned if a similar application should be submitted once again. The CAO/Deputy Clerk indicated the Municipality has presented delegations at past conferences respecting this project without success.

The Committee questioned how the budget can be properly constructed without knowing if the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) will be reduced or eliminated altogether. The Director of Finance/Treasurer stated it would be devastating for municipalities if the OMPF was eliminated entirely, as this program provides relief to municipalities to offset lost revenues due to rural properties having a reduced tax rate.

The Committee asked if West Grey has ever met with MPP Walker to address budget concerns, and have inquiries be made to neighbouring municipalities to understand how they were successful in obtaining grants. The CAO/Deputy Clerk noted West Grey worked with the Township of Chatsworth and an Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs to secure a rural economic development grant for an enhanced municipal website. The CAO/Deputy Clerk also mentioned that Grey County CAOs have arranged a number of meetings with MPP Walker that have been successful in promoting the concerns of Grey County municipalities.

The Committee indicated the Town of Minto was successful with certain road grant applications, so West Grey partnered with Minto for similar projects.

The Committee questioned if staff have received any responses to date regarding West Grey’s requests for delegation to the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Annual Conference. The CAO/Deputy Clerk replied that the Municipality has not received any responses to date, however, responses typically aren’t received until just prior to the conference date.
The Committee requested staff craft a resolution for consideration during the January 22, 2019 Council meeting that would petition the Province to retain the existing OMPF amount paid to municipalities, and to be circulated either to Grey County municipalities and MPP Walker, or potentially by broadcast email through the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks & Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) to all Ontario municipalities.

The Committee of the Whole asked if the Asset Management Plan being worked on will this budget or next. The CAO/Deputy Clerk replied that the Streetscan road project that establishes road conditions is finished. The roads and bridges study is 2/3 completed, but the whole project will be completed so Council/staff can discuss it as a whole. There will, however, be some bridges that will need to be dealt with immediately through this budget process.

3) Budget Meeting Dates

Hergert-Townsend, Resolved that, the Committee of the Whole hereby approves the following Committee of the Whole meeting dates for 2019 Preliminary Budget discussion purposes: January 17 & 18, 2019, and February 7, 2019, 9:00 a.m., and January 21, 2019, 9:00 a.m. (half-day), at the West Grey Municipal Office. #COW 2-19 Carried.

Adjournment
Hergert-Deputy Mayor Hutchinson, Resolved that, we do now adjourn at 4:55 p.m., to meet again on January 17, 2019, 9:00 a.m., or at the call of the Mayor. Carried.

Christine Robinson, Mayor
Mark Turner, Clerk