



PORT COLBORNE

MEDIA RELEASE

Approved 2021 Operating Budget focuses on COVID-19 recovery and community support

Port Colborne, ON (Nov. 24, 2020) – Port Colborne City Council approved the 2021 Operating Budget at last night's meeting, which focuses on maintaining core programs and services, COVID-19 pandemic expenditures, economic development growth, and community support.

In 2021, Port Colborne taxpayers will see an overall increase of 2.44 per cent in property taxes per household, or about \$82 more than last year. This increase will help support the following:

- Allowing residents financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the flexibility to defer property tax bill payments, water, and wastewater billings without penalty until March 31, 2021. Residents interested in taking advantage of this deferral program, can visit portcolborne.ca.
- Increasing the community grant program by 20 per cent. The City is now able to provide more funds to local non-profit organizations in the community that directly benefit the citizens of Port Colborne and enhance their quality of life, especially during a pandemic. In addition, the City has included funding for programs provided by Hospice Niagara and Pathstone Mental Health.
- Expanding the student placement program to create more opportunities for students to gain hands on experience at a local municipality. By creating more student positions, the City is able to fill staffing needs among various departments, in a cost-effective way, in order to maintain core programs and services.
- Increasing economic development capacity by creating a Tourism Coordinator position. COVID-19 has significantly impacted the business community, including those who rely on tourism. Moving forward, a key objective is to create a new Economic Development and Tourism division at the City, focused on supporting local businesses and partnering with key stakeholders on resiliency and recovery initiatives, while attracting more residential growth, commercial and industrial investment, and tourism.
- City staffing to offset COVID-19 related needs, including an additional Information Technology Specialist and Communications Officer. As the pandemic continues to increase digital interactions, as well as the need for timely and accurate information, additional staffing is required to ensure the City continues to provide exceptional customer service to residents.

“It’s clear that COVID-19 impacted the entire City,” said Bryan Boles, Director of Corporate Services. “When putting together this budget, we took into consideration the needs of the corporation and our residents. We also know the pandemic has impacted the community differently, so by providing flexibility to property tax payments, we’re hopefully alleviating stress to some of our residents.”

Being the first municipality in Niagara to approve their 2021 Capital and Operating Budgets, Port Colborne City staff are now able to move forward with priority projects and key initiatives with greater clarity.

“We understand COVID-19 is evolving and ongoing,” said Scott Luey, Chief Administrative Officer. “The budget presented to Council outlined standard departmental needs that we usually anticipate yearly, but it also included COVID related expenses that we’re predicting we will need. We realize things change quickly and I’m confident the 2021 Operating Budget will allow us to navigate through the coming year with financial flexibility.”

The 2021 Operating Budget was a collaborative effort by all departments, which included input from both City Council and staff. Staff advanced budget recommendations to Council after considering internal and external factors including understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic is on-going; taxpayer affordability, organizational financial flexibility and a desire to continuously improve levels of service; processes and organizational structures.

“City Council was impressed by the 2021 Operating Budget that was presented,” said Mayor Bill Steele. “We appreciated staff’s approach to ensuring resident needs are being met, while clearly identifying opportunities where we can save money. We support this budget and appreciate the time and effort that went in to creating it.”

City staff will be bringing forward the 2021 Water and Waste-Water budget, once rate information from Niagara Region is received, expected sometime in the next few weeks. More information will be available soon at www.portcolborne.ca.

About City of Port Colborne

Located on the south coast of the scenic Niagara Region, Niagara’s Port of Call has found the perfect balance – successful industrial and commercial sectors, comfortable and scenic residential areas, white sand beaches, unique culinary choices, the world class Sugarloaf Marina, fishing, golfing, trails, shopping districts along the historic Welland Canal and an energized festival and entertainment scene that includes live theatre – truly a community that adds to the overall Niagara Experience.

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