



## **Regional Municipality of Waterloo**

### **Budget Public Input Meeting**

#### **Minutes**

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

150 Frederick Street, Kitchener, ON

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Present were: Chair S. Strickland, L. Armstrong, E. Clarke, D. Craig, S. Foxton, T. Galloway, D. Jaworsky, H. Jowett, K. Kiefer, G. Lorentz, J. Mitchell, J. Nowak, K. Redman, K. Seiling\*, S. Shantz and B. Vrbanovic

#### **Declarations of Pecuniary Interest under the “Municipal Conflict Of Interest Act”**

None declared.

S. Strickland provided opening remarks. He reminded delegations that final budget decisions will be made at the January 13, 2016 Budget Committee meeting.

#### **Delegations**

1. [Harald Drewitz](#), Kitchener Tax Watch Group, addressed the Committee regarding the Proposed Rate increase for the 2016 Operational Budget; a copy of his speaking notes is appended to the original minutes. He commended Regional Council for reaffirming its Regional Development Charges by-law and policies.

\* K. Seiling joined the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

Mr. Drewitz outlined his areas of concern, including lack of economic benefit to many local residents, the increase in the police budget, recovery of costs for Grand River Transit fares, and aligning the Regional budget with inflation. He expressed his concerns about the impact of a property tax rate on local citizens.

The Committee noted that comparator municipalities don't have a transit system in place; that the GRT Business Plan is coming back next year and that staff are monitoring the incremental costs related to the ION; and that the Region doesn't have any choice in the services that are downloaded by the Province.

In closing, H. Drewitz stated that there should be a task force with all levels of government to review the various levels of taxation.

2. Michael Schmitt, President, Supportive Housing of Waterloo (SHOW), Re: 2016 Budget - Delegation withdrawn
3. Jennifer Adams, Kitchener, Re: Waterloo Regional Police Service - Delegation withdrawn
4. [Fauzia Mazhar and Karen Spencer](#), The Family Centre/Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region, addressed the Committee regarding Transit Service to Family and Children's Services; a copy of their presentation is appended to the original minutes.

K. Spencer expressed appreciation to Regional Council for supporting the request for transit services and she noted that when the building was purchased staff believed that a bus route would be developed in the area. She cited the success of programs offered and the resulting need for public transit.

F. Mazhar thanked Regional Council for direction to provide better access to public transportation and she shared messages of support from various groups who are part of the family centre.

5. [Peter Durksen](#), Breslau, addressed the Committee regarding the Waterloo Regional Police Service Budget, and expressed his objection to an increase in the budget. He urged the Region to lobby Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) considering the high arbitration awards and to make it a top priority and to monitor progress.

S. Strickland advised that Regional Council has been lobbying the Province for more than a decade and without success but will continue to lobby.

6. Cameron Dearlove, Executive Director, Facile Waterloo Region, addressed the Committee regarding Transit Service to Family and Children's Services facility. He thanked the Committee for putting the option forward and he encouraged approval to improve access for local families. He summarized the organizations and businesses that will benefit from the route.

**Call for Delegations**

Chair S. Strickland called for delegations and Tom Mallozzi requested to address the Committee.

Mr. Mallozzi stated that he has recently moved to the Region from the Greater Toronto Area and while he enjoys living here, he is concerned with the high property taxes he pays. He encouraged Regional Council to reduce property taxes.

S. Strickland called for other delegations but none came forward. He thanked the delegations for coming out to share their views.

**Adjourn**

Moved by S. Foxton

Seconded by K. Kiefer

That the meeting adjourn at 6:36 p.m.

Carried

**Committee Chair**, S. Strickland

**Committee Clerk**, S. Natolochny

**PRESENTATION TO REGIONAL COUNCIL DECEMBER 16, 2015 @ 6:00PM.**

**PUBLIC INPUT SESSION FOR PROPOSED 2016 BUDGET INCREASE**

Good Evening!

FINAL DEC. 16, 2015

To: Mr. Chairman

Regional Chair

Members of Regional Council

I am very thankful my parents chose Canada to immigrate to, some 62 years ago and specifically to Waterloo Region 47 years ago. We are very fortunate this area has a diversified economy (especially the construction industry), therefore we are cushioned by the boom and bust cycles which occur in other parts of this our country.

Some other positive remarks with regards to this council:

1. Glad to see you reaffirming policy not to defer fees on a commercial product especially when Development Charges collected between Aug.1, 2014 – July 31, 2015 are only \$38M versus the \$66M expected for 2015.
2. Recognizing that Waterloo Region has the second-highest debt per capita among similar municipalities, you are cutting back on your capital spending.
3. Commend you for doing a study monitoring the impact of LRT on the central corridor. I suggest monitoring the difference in the increased taxes collected in this same area before and after the LRT is completed. This one objective measurement should be included in your list.

Areas of concern:

1. Many citizens are still not benefiting from our local economy, therefore the Region needs to keep property tax increases as low as possible. As per an article in the WR Record on Dec. 1, 2015, Wendi Campbell, the Executive Director of the food Bank of Waterloo Region is quoted to saying "The number isn't going down...we're still feeding similar numbers of people." Apparently in 2014, the number of families with children, using the Food Bank was 49%. Council needs to keep all citizens in mind, not just the middle class!
2. Police Budget – a 3.5% increase over 2015 versus inflation of approximately 1 – 1.2%! I did make a presentation to the Police Board on Dec. 2, 2015 and will not repeat myself.
3. Grant River Transit recovery from fares. We suggest there needs to be a plan that will increase the current recovery level from fees from the present 39% of operating costs, to 50%.
4. In a Kitchener Post article dated Oct. 30, 2015, I was surprised to read the Finance Committee Chair said "he'd like to see an increase in line with inflation, about 2.5%." Inflation for 2015 is approximately 1 – 1.2%. Even more concerning is the price of food is increasing at around 4%(which is why I mention the Food Bank earlier), while our most vulnerable citizens are not benefitting from the lower gasoline prices compared to last year. When one studies how the Consumer Price Index is used for pay and pension increases across Ontario and Canada, many citizens are really being squeezed by their increases versus their expenses. With Regional Taxes at around 50% of our Municipal Property Tax bills here in the Region, a 3.7% increase to the Region's rate is, **just not acceptable!**

5. Some macroeconomic factors why citizens can not afford a tax increase beyond the rate of inflation. BNN recently reported:

- A. CDN \$ at an 11 year low – which means food prices will just continue to increase
- B. The Canadian economy shrunk again in September as weakness spreads beyond energy.
- C. A Bank of Canada Report dated Nov. 9, 2015, slower longer term growth is a new economic reality.

I appreciate the opportunity to present to you this evening.

I will make myself available to meet with anyone of you, to go into more details supporting the points I am making in this presentation. I will be glad to answer any questions.

Thank you for your time.

Harald Drewitz, CPA, CMA

Chairperson, Kitchener Tax Watch Group



# **Presentation to Waterloo Regional Council Planning and Works Committee**

**Dec 16, 2015**

**Fauzia Mazhar**







- **Sharing thanks from some of our partners**







Thank you for including a BusPlus option for Hayward / Hanson area in 2016 budget.

I want you to know that your decision in favour of providing the BusPlus option will make very positive impact on this community.





To: The Regional Council

My name is Mona Loffelmann. I'm the Co-Founder and president of AFRO (African Family Revival Organization) part of the Community Hub at the Family Centre. I would like to thank the Regional Council for including a bus route to FC and FACS in the 2016 budget.

We have many individuals that live far away from FC and FACS and have no source of transportation, some of our clients are disable and it is very difficult for them to get off the bus at Courtland - Walton Avenue and walk all the way.

Thanks again

Mona





In 2011, KidsAbility relocated some staff services from our Waterloo site to a new Kitchener program in the Family Centre. This was done in order to provide better access to our services for families who live in the south part of Kitchener. In 2014, we expanded to offer KidsAbility Autism services from the Family Centre location as well. Families have been so happy to have services closer to their homes, schools and child care programs. We now serve well over a thousand children each year from this facility.

Having improved public transit will make KidsAbility's services more accessible to families who have not been able to access therapy for their children due to lack of transportation. It will ease the struggle of parents who make the long walks from bus stops with young children, being carried or in strollers. They will be so appreciative of improved public transit service. It will also improve our accessibility for youth to attend appointments independently. Our services run more effectively with the help of volunteers, many of whom are students, who will now be able to use public transit. Providing public transit to this underserved area of Kitchener will open doors for many families and individuals who will use the system and we thank the Council for your responsiveness to this issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Bea Henry

Client Services Manager

KidsAbility, Kitchener



We would like to thank the Regional Council for accommodation and meeting the needs of the community.



We are very excited about the new BusPass option. Most of our clients are from low income families and public transportation is the only means to get around. The big issue we face on a daily basis is the Family Centre location is not easily accessible. Especially those with young children, disability and the elderly. It's also difficult to run programs at the Centre for our clients.

Adding a bus route will for sure make it accessible for those in need and increase our service level.

Fadhwa Yusuf, African Family Revival Organization





*On behalf of Bereaved Families of Ontario – Midwestern Region (BFO-MR) I would like to thank Regional Council for its support of including bus service to The Family Centre as part of its 2016 budget. BFO-MR provides peer support to children, families and individuals in the community who are grieving the death of a loved one. Our groups are offered free of charge with many of them taking place in The Family Centre building. Accessibility is critical. Without a public transit option, we are limiting the amount of people who can receive the support they need during a tremendously difficult time of their lives. They have enough to worry about and often times find it difficult just walking in the room to get support, never mind the added complexity and stress of finding accessible, affordable transportation to get here.*

**Jaime Bickerton**

Executive Director

Bereaved Families of Ontario-Midwestern Region





Dear Regional Council,

I would like to thank you for being supportive by providing bus services to The Family Centre & Family and Children Services.

Now, our community youth and some of our community members can easily reach our programs and activities.

From my experience as an organization member of the community hub, it has been difficult to run programs and set meetings with the community people, because some of the adults and most of the youth who are supposed to attend our programs do not have cars, so some days, even I cannot make it to the Family Centre to do work or attend meetings, because there is no bus and I do not always have a car.

Thank you again in the name of our community & all the people who need to access FC & FACS.

On behalf of :

Najda Now Canada Not for Profit Syrian Humanitarian Organization.



# Thanks For Your Time!



- Please come visit us!
  - Family & Children's Services Main Offices – 200 Ardelt Ave.
  - The Family Centre – 65 Hanson Ave.
- Please get in touch!
  - [Fauzia.mazhar@facswaterloo.org](mailto:Fauzia.mazhar@facswaterloo.org)
  - 519-7576-0540 ext. 2762
  - [www.thefamilycentre.ca](http://www.thefamilycentre.ca) / [www.facswaterloo.org](http://www.facswaterloo.org)
  - @TheFamilyCentre on Twitter

Presentation to Waterloo Region Council Meeting- Wed Dec 16 2015- Peter Durksen

My concern- the projected increase in police board budget and its impact on the property taxes in the Region of Waterloo.

1. I believe we can all agree that the increase in the Police board budget is due largely to arbitration awards to police board contracts in various municipalities of the province.
2. I believe we can further agree that workers in emergency services such as police and fire run some danger or risk in fulfilling their duties, but workers in industries such as construction and agriculture do so as well.

And if we want to include pressure in positions which deal with life and death issues for clients, one could add to that list the medical profession and caregivers, such as parents, parents of minors have life impacting responsibilities 24 hour a day, seven day a week , not 40 hours a week.

My point is that fire and police workers do not have the edge on working in life and death situations.

3. I believe we can also agree, that left to its own devices, our provincial govt will not take initiative in the correcting the arbitration system.

The reason being that the prov govt is under extreme pressure from the public sector unions or associations such as firemen, police, teachers, and the Ontario Public Services Employees Union.

These assoc's are not the largest numerically but their political clout, their voting clout, collectively is huge because of their solidarity, and the prov govt will do everything possible to stay on the good side of such unions. The under the table payments to teachers in the last round of bargaining are but one example.

4. The solution: In one sentence, Waterloo Region council and all Ont municipal councils must lobby their MPP's frequently and aggressively concerning the high awards made by the arbitration system.

Specifically, Waterloo Regional council should arrange appointments with each of the four MPPs in Waterloo region separately, or jointly, and urge them to make changes to the arbitration system one of their top priorities.

In addition, the mayors of each of the three cities, should urge the MPP in whose riding his city is located to do the same.



-Township councils should do the same.

Having met with the MPP's, early in 2016, council should ask for a progress report in September 2016, to demonstrate that it is serious in its requests for changes to the arbitration system.

The public sector assoc's and unions lobby the gov't in a very systematic manner, and you as our elected representatives must do the same, because we expect you to work in the best interests of the people of this region.

- And the best interests of the people Waterloo Region at budget time are salary and benefit increases no more than the rate of inflation.

Thank you.