

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Thursday, October 10, 2019

9:30 a.m.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Ray Chartrand, Doug Cook, Adrian Cornelissen, Bob Harvey, George Irvin, Dave Jewitt, Marissa Vaughan, Alex Westman

DIRECTORS ABSENT

Mike Tam

STAFF PRESENT

Bev Brown, Geoff Cade, Abbie Gutteridge, Brian Horner, Mary Lynn MacDonald, Tracey McPherson, Kate Monk, Mari Veliz

CALL TO ORDER

Chair George Irvin called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION #BD 73/19

**Moved by Dave Jewitt
Seconded by Bob Harvey**

“RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the October 10, 2019 Board of Directors Budget Committee meeting be approved,”

Carried.

DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

None

PROPOSED 2019 BUDGET

General Manager Brian Horner provided an overview of the 2020 budget preparation by staff, as well as the format for the information session. Each department will present the budget for their program and a summary of the individual projects that are proposed for 2020. Staff prepared the budget with a 1.5% wage increase on the pay grid.

Corporate Services

Brian Horner presented the consolidated Corporate Services budget, and provided an overview of the services provided by this department. It is proposed to replace the roof of the Annex in 2020, as per the approved Five Year Forecast. The amount of \$5,000 continues to be set aside annually in a reserve to meet building accessibility legislation.

Education

Kate Monk, Stewardship, Lands and Education Manager presented the Conservation Education budget. Revenue for providing effective and meaningful outdoor education experiences comes from the municipal levy, program fees, donations, foundations, provincial and federal governments. Staff promote environmental awareness through classroom programs, field trips, day camps, the water safety awareness program, community presentations and special events. It was noted that in previous years there was a surplus of funds that could be carried forward, but that surplus is beginning to run low.

Floodplain Management

Geoff Cade, Water & Planning Manager presented the four main components of the floodplain management program. They include the maintenance of 16 erosion control projects, 7 flood control projects, the flood forecasting and warning system and the Port Franks ice management project. Since 1996 the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has provided a 50% grant toward three of the projects; however, in 2020 only between a 20 and 23% funding grant is expected. New projects include repairs of the erosion protection at Walker Drain, concrete repairs at Morrison Dam, as well as safety railing replacement at Morrison Dam.

Environmental Monitoring

Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Manager and Tracey McPherson, GIS/IT Coordinator assisted Geoff Cade in presenting the Planning and Regulations program and Environmental Monitoring project factsheets and budgets. In some cases, funds are deferred to meet the funder's year end. Mari Veliz explained that some projects are fully funded through other partners, but that the project levy contribution often leverages other sources of funding, some substantial, to undertake environmental and monitoring projects. There are no new projects proposed for 2020; however, there are a number of phased or ongoing projects. The Natural Heritage Systems Plan will continue to complete the mapping of the Nairn Creek subwatershed, which will provide guidance to staff for measuring ecosystem health. Additionally, work at the Huronview Demonstration Farm will continue with the Huron Country Soil and Crop Improvement Association and the County of Huron. Tracey McPherson noted that the South Western Ontario Orthophotography Project (SWOOP) will be capturing high quality aerial photography in 2020, which is a key dataset for all ABCA programs and activities. Additionally, the Exeter Stream Gauge Station is expected to be relocated in 2020 as the nearby bridge will be widened and replaced.

Drinking Water Source Protection

Mary Lynn MacDonald, DWSP Co-Program Supervisor presented the Drinking Water Source Protection budget. There are no levy dollars allocated to the Drinking Water Source Protection budget. The Province funds ongoing mandatory implementation responsibilities for Source Protection Authorities. The implementation body for each source protection policy coordinates implementation costs.

By agreement, ABCA delivers Risk Management Services for eight municipalities. These agreements are in place until December 2020. April 2020 will mark the end of the implementation phase for this program.

The province has stated a commitment to this program, but as yet there has been no confirmation of ongoing funding.

Property Management

Kate Monk summarized the goals of managing the ABCA properties and water bodies, which includes conservation areas, wildlife areas, management areas, conservation forests and agricultural land. Property management revenue is generated from timber harvests, farm land rental and the Parkhill CA campground lease. Any surplus in property management through woodlot harvesting operations is used to compensate for the shortfall in the recreation services budget for maintaining conservation areas. The invasive species management project will continue in 2020, with an emphasis on continued phragmites control.

Recreation Services

Kate Monk explained that the ABCA provides essential recreation areas for municipal residents and tourists. The routine maintenance of facilities at the conservation areas is carried out by ABCA employees. The ABCA has a part-time contract with one individual to provide property patrol and enforcement duties. Revenue is generated by gate fees at Rock Glen Conservation Area, hunting passes and community donations. Proposed new projects for 2020 are the replacement of decking on the bridges at Bannockburn Conservation Area, major maintenance for the Rock Glen gate house (including siding, windows, door, ceiling and lights), and completing the trail surfacing on the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area Trail.

Stewardship

Kate Monk reviewed the private-land stewardship budget wherein staff provide one-on-one technical advice, site visits, and assistance with paperwork in connecting landowners with cost-share funding to maximize grants for their stewardship projects. The annual goal is to complete 100 projects. Expenses in the stewardship program are offset with tree sales, providing tree planting plans, phragmites management spraying and forest management plans for clients. The County of Huron continues to provide grants to landowners for stewardship projects through the very successful Huron Clean Water Program. There is no municipally funded grants available in Middlesex, Lambton or Perth Counties for landowners to access a similar cost-share program to improve rural water quality.

Vehicle and Equipment

Kate Monk presented the vehicle and equipment motor pool budget. There is no project or general levy required for the vehicle and equipment budget as the revenue received when charging mileage and equipment rates to the users' programs offsets expenses. The tractor is scheduled to be replaced in 2020.

Project Levy

Brian Horner presented the proposed project levy summary for 2020 at \$280,249 as compared to \$325,504 in 2019. This includes ongoing, phased and new projects proposed for 2020. The

project levy dollars will be leveraged with other sources of funding to undertake projects totaling \$719,798.

General Levy

The general levy proposed for 2020 total \$1,068,047 in comparison to \$998,637 in 2019. Some of the difference is due to the reduction in MNRF funding.

Proposed 2020 Budget

The proposed fee schedule and pay grid were presented for review as these figures were used in preparing the consolidated budget. The combined project and general levies total \$1,348,296 (1.82 per cent increase) as compared to \$1,324,139 in 2019. Brian Horner reminded the directors that not every program area is sustained by levy dollars, and without the reduction of funding from MNRF the combined levy would have been reduced from 2019.

The Board indicated that they would like to see an overview of the provincial reductions to funding at the next meeting. Additionally, the Board is interested in pursuing the possibility of recuperating the cost of some of the legal fees from properties owners who commit Regulations violations, which result in court proceedings. Staff members will investigate this matter further.

Initial comments from the Board were positive on the presentation of a reasonable budget for review. Further direction and discussion will be held at the next Board meeting on October 17, 2019.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

George Irvin
Chair

Abbie Gutteridge
Healthy Watersheds Technician