

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Thursday, October 8, 2020

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

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, Davin Heinbuck, Brian Horner, Mary Lynn MacDonald, Tracey McPherson, Kate Monk, Mari Veliz

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Doug Cook called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION #BD 74/20

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

“RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the October 8, 2020 Board of Directors Budget Committee meeting be approved,”

Carried.

DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest at this meeting or from the previous meeting.

DISCLOSURE OF INTENTION TO RECORD PROCEEDINGS

None

PROPOSED 2021 BUDGET

General Manager Brian Horner provided an overview of the 2021 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 2021. He noted the difference in the proposed 2021 budget and what was originally brought forward in the five year forecast. This change reflects a consideration of the current pandemic situation and the effect that it may have on member municipalities. Staff prepared the budget with a 1% 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. The proposed replacement of the Annex roof in 2020 was not completed, and as such, has been deferred to 2021. It is also proposed to begin the consultation process for making accessibility upgrades to the Administration Office in 2021. 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 2020 saw some challenges for Conservation Education department, due to both labour unrest in the education system and the cancellation of in-school learning in mid-March due to the pandemic. The 2021 education program and budget is based on the premise that school programs can be delivered in schoolyards or virtually in classrooms, and with the expectation that field trips, special events and day camps will take place in some capacity starting in spring 2021. In addition, the education staff have developed several programs for home-schoolers, online learners and families, adhering to COVID protocols.

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, for 2021 only a 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, and Davin Heinbuck, Water Resources 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, one example of which is the Ausable River Recovery project. There are no new projects proposed for 2021; however, there are a number of phased or ongoing projects. The Natural Heritage Systems Plan will build on the outcomes of the analysis of the Nairn Creek subwatershed to better integrate permitting site visits with conservation education about the importance of small, natural features on the landscape. 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) captured high quality aerial photography in 2020, and will be acquired in 2021. This is a key dataset for all ABCA programs and activities. Additionally, the relocation of the Exeter Stream Gauge Station, which deferred in 2020, has been confirmed to go ahead in 2021.

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. In August 2020, the province posted the proposed Phase II Directors Technical Rules on the Environmental Registry. This will require a revision of policies, and may increase the number of properties requiring a Risk Management Plan.

By agreement, ABCA delivers Risk Management Services for eight municipalities. These agreements are in place until December 2020. Currently, negotiations are underway for a three-year renewal of services for these municipalities.

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 ongoing invasive species management project will continue in 2021, with the continued control of phragmites and developing strategies for other species control such as Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Gypsy Moth.

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 2021 are the protection of supports for the elevated boardwalk at Bannockburn Conservation Area, installing eavestroughs on the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre, as well as installing an outdoor boardwalk and accessible door to make the lower level of the building accessible.

Finally, a third new project is to install rock to protect the low flow crossing and downstream bank from erosion at Rock Glen Conservation Area.

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 Project, and in 2020 Middlesex County introduced the Middlesex County Clean Water Project. Both of these programs will continue in 2021. There are no municipally funded grants available in Lambton or Perth Counties for landowners to access a similar cost-share program to improve rural water quality. Other projects that will take place in 2021, pending funding, include Canada Nature Fund, Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Fund, EcoAction, and Forests Ontario Foundation.

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. In 2021, the ABCA plans to replace the 2010 Dodge Ram pick-up truck with a similar vehicle.

Project Levy

Brian Horner presented the proposed project levy summary for 2021 at \$224,463 as compared to \$275,897 in 2020. This includes ongoing, phased and new projects proposed for 2021. The project levy dollars will be leveraged with other sources of funding to undertake projects totaling \$909,547.

General Levy

The general levy proposed for 2021 total \$1,108,907 in comparison to \$1,068,047 in 2020.

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 \$1,336,370 (0.56 per cent decrease) as compared to \$1,348,296 in 2020. Brian Horner reminded the directors that not every program area is sustained by levy dollars, and that staff did their best to reflect the effect of the pandemic on member municipalities.

The Board indicated that they would like to see the apportionment calculations provided by the province. Brian Horner agreed that he would send this information to the Directors.

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 15, 2020.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Doug Cook
Chair

Abigail Gutteridge
Abigail Gutteridge
Corporate Services Coordinator