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Kim Arnott, SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER | Jun 23, 2010 - 6:32 PM | 0

Preliminary budget could boost local taxes 8.1%

Work on Oakville's 2011 municipal budget is underway, with town staff forecasting taxpayers could see an increase of 8.1 per cent on next year's local taxes.

When combined with the anticipated regional and education portions of the tax bill, the net effect would be to reduce the overall property tax increase to 3.9 per cent.

At a meeting on Monday afternoon, the Town's budget committee gave staff the okay to begin building next year's budget based on the forecasted increase.

A detailed budget to be developed over the coming months is expected to show spending increases due to inflationary costs, salary and benefit increases, and the cost of filling about 16 currently vacant staff jobs.

The budget will cover additional operational costs of about \$2.5 million to run the new 16 Mile Creek Recreation Complex, the new Transit facility and new parks, roads and equipment.

It will also provide increased money for hot mix paving, a capital levy and a levy to cover maintenance of local infrastructure.

Anticipated assessment growth of about one per cent will help bring down the cost increase for taxpayers, and no new services or service enhancements will be built into the budget.

Ward 6 Councillor Tom Adams, who chairs the Town's Budget committee, said he believes taxpayers will see concrete improvements, including newly-paved roads, for their additional tax dollars.

"I think there are very tangible benefits to the money being spent," he said. "I think the overall impact to the residents will be manageable and the value they're getting for their dollars is high."

As part of the report presented to the budget committee, town staff included a budget forecast for coming years. Tax increases are predicted to be in the 5.5 per cent range for both 2012 and 2013, assuming continued growth in assessment.

A comprehensive 2011 budget will be presented in December to a budget committee chosen from councillors elected in October. Public meetings on the budget will be held in January, with final approval of the budget expected for late January or early February.

Adams noted the Town will continue to encourage public involvement in the budget process and will be available to provide information sessions to interested local groups.

The 2011 Budget Forecast must receive approval from a meeting of the full Town council on June 28.

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