



## North Oakville Councillor shot down by Committee

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NORTH OAKVILLE TODAY - Councillor Jeff Knoll was shutout at Thursday's Budget Committee meeting after he attempted to make several amendments to the Town's proposed 2011 budget adjustments.

During the Committee's final deliberations, the Ward 5 Councillor introduced six amendments, all of which were defeated.

Knoll's colleagues on the Budget Committee, Councillors Tom Adams (Chair), Allan Elgar, Ralph Robinson, and Mayor Rob Burton, voted as a group, shooting down each of Knoll's amendments one by one.

During the meeting, the Committee was considering a number of budget options, which included cost reductions.

The committee decided on \$3.4 million in reductions, whittling the Town's base budget increase down to 5.93 per cent, which resulted in an overall tax bill increase of 2.79 per cent. This would result in a \$27 increase on tax bills based on \$100,000 of assessment.

Knoll's failed amendments included adding a 1 per cent tax levy increase to begin paying for the up to \$200 million local share contribution for the new Oakville hospital, salvaging citizen advisory committees, not cutting late night weekday transit services, retaining the library service budget, eliminating the Town newsletter and reducing Town printing by 50 per cent.

The Town is expected to begin its contribution payment to the new hospital in 2015, when the hospital opens.

"I think that starting early saves us money in the long-term," said Knoll.

Knoll said that Town staff suggested that a 1 per cent levy would result in a 0.37 per cent increase to resident's overall tax bill.

Elgar and Burton both said they could not support the motion and expressed a belief that current Oakville residents shouldn't be the only ones paying for the hospital.

"I certainly would like to see the new people paying their fair share and not having the existing residents having to foot the bill," said Elgar.

Knoll also asked to strike the discontinuation of eight citizen advisory committees, including the Cultural, Environmental Strategic Plan, Oakville Harbours, Parks and Recreation, Traffic, Transit, Seniors' and Oakville Youth for a savings of \$50,000.

Mayor Burton suggested that there are other ways for residents to communicate with Town Hall.

"The people are not shy about approaching us individually, by telephone and by email and by attending at Council meetings," he said, "and so it's my belief that these have outlived their utility."

Late night weekday transit service was also on the chopping block for a savings of \$94,000.

Under this reduction, regular bus service would cease at 11:25 pm, but a late night zone bus service would remain.

Knoll argued that this cut could adversely affect those who work late in the evening and rely on the service to get home. He also said that a reduction in service could affect people's views on the reliability of the transit system.

"We're potentially damaging the huge strides we've made in our public transit system," said Knoll.

Transit Director Barry Cole said that the ridership on late night buses is extremely low.

"The last hour of fixed route service would be our weakest time," said Cole. "As the transit director I would hate to see it go, but if there was anything that we could offer in the way of efficiency, this would be it."

Knoll also wanted to strike a \$100,000 reduction in library service as well as the temporary closure of Woodside Library for 8 to 12 weeks while renovations take place for a savings of \$50,000.

Lori Sims, director of the library board said that the reductions would most likely be felt at branch service desks. She also revealed that the temporary closure of the Woodside Library would affect special needs and children's programs at the branch.

"Those cuts are going to have impacts on some of the people that are most vulnerable in our community," said Knoll.

Staff said that they determined that it was not possible to keep Woodside Library open during the renovations because the renovations were too substantial.

Sims then said the library would see what they could do to accommodate the children's and special needs programs elsewhere, "possibly not at the level we're able to offer it when the branch was open, but offer some measures to serve those users through that time."

Knoll then suggested that instead of reducing the Town newsletter to two publications per year for a savings of \$50,000, that the newsletter be eliminated all together for a further savings of \$71,000.

Finally, Knoll put forward a motion proposing a 50 per cent reduction in printing Town-wide.

"If we really think outside the box here and we think of ways, we can not only save money but potentially save a lot of trees in the process.

The motion, like all Knoll's amendments, failed.

The mayor then proposed an amendment that asked staff to give consideration to the reduction of the use of paper, which carried.

The proposed 2011 budget will go before Council for final approval on March 7.

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