



**THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WEST LINCOLN  
SPECIAL COUNCIL MINUTES**

**MEETING NO. TWO  
February 5, 2024, 4:30 p.m.  
Township Administration Building  
318 Canborough Street, Smithville, Ontario**

Council: Mayor Cheryl Ganann  
Councillor Shelley Bradaric  
Councillor Mike Rehner  
Councillor William Reilly  
Councillor Jason Trombetta  
Councillor Terry Bell  
Councillor Joann Chechalk

Staff: Donna DeFilippis, Interim CAO/Treasurer  
Mike DiPaola, Director of Public Works and Recreation  
Brian Treble, Director of Planning and Building  
Nancy Fiorentino, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk  
Dennis Fisher, Fire Chief  
Justin Paylove, Deputy Clerk  
Katelyn Hall, Deputy Treasurer  
Kevin Geoghegan, IT Help Desk Analyst

Attendees: Rob Cosby

**1. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST/CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

For Confidential Matters

**2. CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS**

**Moved By** Councillor Shelley Bradaric  
**Seconded By** Councillor Terry Bell

That, the next portion of this meeting be closed to the public to consider the following pursuant to Section 239(2) of the Municipal Act 2001:

2.1 Township Solicitor (Andrea Mannell, Sullivan Mahoney)

Re: Legal/Solicitor-Client Privilege Matter - Township of West Lincoln vs Jonker

**Applicable closed session exemption(s):**

- litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the municipality or local board;
- advice that is subject to Solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose;
- personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees.

2.2 Township Solicitor (Michael Bonomi, Sullivan Mahoney)

Re: Personnel Matter - Identifiable Individual

**FOR DISCUSSION**

**Applicable closed session exemption(s):**

- litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the municipality or local board;
- advice that is subject to Solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose;
- personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees.

That, this Special Council meeting now commence in closed session at the hour of 4:30 p.m.

**Carried**

2.1 Township Solicitor (Andrea Mannell, Sullivan Mahoney) and Director of Legislative Services/Clerk (Nancy Fiorentino)

2.2 Township Solicitor (Michael Bonomi, Sullivan Mahoney) and Director of Legislative Services/Clerk (Nancy Fiorentino)

**3. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT**

The Township of West Lincoln, being part of Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land is steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk (Hat-i-wen-DA-ronk), the Haudenosaunee (Hoe-den-no-SHOW-nee), and the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-ih-NAH-bey), including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people

from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Township of West Lincoln, as part of the Regional Municipality of Niagara, stands with all Indigenous people, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.

#### **4. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND/OR CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest and/or conflicts of interest.

#### **5. STAFF REPORTS**

##### **5.1 Interim CAO/Treasurer (Donna DeFilippis)**

Re: Information Report T-03-2024 - 2024 Draft Operating and Capital Budget

Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, gave a presentation providing a greater detailed explanation of Recommendation Report T-03-2024, 2024 Draft Operating and Capital Budget.

Councillor Reilly inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis about the nature of the Community Engagement & Events Coordinator position and what they would be responsible for.

In response to Councillor Reilly's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that the position is responsible for coordinating all events put on by the Township.

Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, further explained that the position would also be responsible for fostering community partnerships to help support and improve the current event schedule, and also potentially introduce additional events in the future.

Councillor Reilly further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the by-law tracking software listed in the budget and what its purpose is.

In response to Councillor Reilly's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that the software would allow residents to track the progress of their by-law complaints submitted to the Township.

Councillor Reilly further inquired to the Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, that the budget line item to repair the traffic radar devices is distinct from the Niagara Region's speed cameras.

In response to Councillor Reilly's further inquiry, Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, confirmed that they are distinct.

Councillor Trombetta inquired to the Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about why the rehabilitation of the Township Administration Building parking lot was listed under "General Government" and not as a rehabilitation project.

In response to Councillor Trombetta's inquiry, Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that it was captured under corporate instead of transportation projects.

Councillor Trombetta commented that the Township Administration Building parking lot rehabilitation could be delayed.

Councillor Rehner agreed with Councillor Trombetta about delaying the Township Administration Building parking lot rehabilitation.

Councillor Rehner inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about how the media found out about the proposed increase to the levy before Council and if efforts to mitigate the levy increase have been undertaken.

In response to Councillor Rehner's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that the number discussed in the media is inaccurate and does not reflect the proposed increase to the tax levy, but instead the impact of Capital spending on the tax levy increase. She also confirmed that the efforts to reduce the impact of Capital spending on the tax levy increase from 2.71 per cent to 2.10 per cent were undertaken.

Councillor Rehner further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the total proposed tax levy increase, which he suggested is 6.34 per cent.

In response to Councillor Rehner's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that the municipal portion of the tax levy increase is 9.01 per cent, while the blended rate increase, which is the total increase to the tax bill received by taxpayers, is 6.34 per cent.

Councillor Rehner further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the proposed doubling of the environmental services budget.

In response to Councillor Rehner's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that this represents the total increase to 2024 Capital spending in totality for the Township, not just environmental services.

Councillor Rehner inquired to the Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about the potential to defer some of these capital projects in order to reduce the increase to Capital spending.

In response to Councillor Rehner's inquiry, Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that several capital projects have been delayed previously, and rely on work that is being scheduled by the Niagara Region, and so it would not be able to be delayed.

Councillor Rehner further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the cost of growth and if pursuing growth is beneficial when we look at the budget and recognize the costs required to support growth.

In response to Councillor Rehner's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that assessment growth through the creation of a new residential or industrial property, or the renovation of an existing property, is how the Township is able to afford to provide additional services. The Township is mandated to grow, so growth cannot be denied, but the location of growth will change its upfront cost. Developing land that has not previously been developed is expensive, as it requires the introduction of all necessary municipal infrastructure, compared to repurposing land or adding new properties to existing infrastructure, where and when possible. Ultimately, it is a complicated issue, but in short, not all growth is the same, and while some may be costly, on the whole, growth does pay for increased municipal services.

Councillor Rehner further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the possibility of provided multiple budget scenarios to Council to demonstrate the impact on the tax levy increase of adding and removing different budget line items.

In response to Councillor Rehner's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that work has been done to reduce the tax levy increase already. To reduce the tax levy increase to 3 per cent would require a drastic cut to services and service delivery.

Councillor Bradaric inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about what the current residential-to-commercial tax ratio is in the Township.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis explained that 87 per cent is coming through residential and farm properties, industrial is 6.75 per cent and commercial is 6.32 per cent.

Councillor Bradaric inquired to the Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about the potential to conduct an energy audit at the West Lincoln Community Centre to look into the utilities costs for the building.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's inquiry, Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that they are not currently in a position to conduct such an audit, and that the utilities cost increases are large compared to previous years because this has been the first year of full operations at the West Lincoln Community Centre, coupled with increasing costs. He suggested that such an audit could be conducted in the future and that he will look into the costs of such an audit.

Councillor Bradaric further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the use of average urban energy user consumption rates in the draft budget.

In response to Councillor Bradaric's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, confirmed that average energy consumption rates were used in the budget.

Councillor Reilly inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the impacts of Bill 23 on the municipality's tax revenue and the inclusion of that within the budget.

In response to Councillor Reilly's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that that will be included in the final budget, but was not in this draft.

Councillor Reilly further inquired to the Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, about the prospects for growth in the Township.

In response to Councillor Reilly's further inquiry, Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, explained that 2024 will likely remain a slow year for growth, due to the timelines for projects from developers as well as the timelines associated with bringing municipal infrastructure to urban expansion lands.

Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, further explained that without occupants they do not see assessment growth from a property.

Councillor Reilly further inquired to Mayor Ganann about the implications of the name change for the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, and when public consultation is coming for that project.

In response to Councillor Reilly's further inquiry, Mayor Ganann explained that there are no further financial implications associated with the hospital name change, and that public consultation is ongoing in the form of an online survey.

Councillor Rehner inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer about the new position in planning that was meant to be funded by the landowners group and how that is situated currently.

In response to Councillor Rehner's further inquiry, the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis explained that a new planning position was to be paid by the landowners group for four years, but that in the last quarter of last year, news came forward that they would no longer cover the cost of that position. In response, the Township is now planning to use some of the planning reserves to cover these costs.

Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, further explained that the landowners group initially thought it would be in their interest to support the use of another planner at the Township. In the end however, after two members left the landowner's group, this has left funding for the position in limbo, and so he stated that it is best to prepare the budget with the expectation that the Township will receive no funding for the position.

Councillor Rehner further inquired to the Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, that if the funding for the position is unlikely to go forward, should the Township still be pursuing the creation of the position.

In response to Councillor Rehner's further inquiry, Director of Planning and Building, Brian Treble, explained that with the new fee structure associated with the lands newly added to the urban boundary, there still certainly will be value in the position and it will be largely covered by the increased fees, but that the position must be paid for now in anticipation of future growth.

Councillor Rehner inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about the impact on the tax levy increase from deferring capital projects versus making cuts to operating expenses.

In response to Councillor Rehner's inquiry, the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that Council will be provided multiple budget options, but deferring a capital project one or two years, because of the way that the reserve funds are calculated, will not impact the tax levy increase. To reduce the tax levy through cuts to capital projects will require projects to be cancelled or deferred five or more years. Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis inquired to the Chair and Council if they would like the budget options to include cuts to services.

In response to the inquiry from Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, Councillor Chechalk explained that no stone should be left unturned, but preferably budget cuts could be realized through finding operational efficiencies rather than requiring service cuts.

In further response to the inquiry from the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, Councillor Trombetta explained that nobody wants to see service cuts, but that perhaps employees in certain departments could be redeployed to others to provide assistance when and where necessary.

In further response to the inquiry from the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, Councillor Reilly explained that staff should provide Council with multiple budget options that cover different approaches, including service cuts, maintaining services, and also tax increases.

In further response to the inquiry from the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, Councillor Rehner agreed with Councillor Trombetta, and suggested that utilizing current staff to fulfill different roles as necessary across the Township, rather than cutting current staffing levels or hiring new staff, is the best way to reduce the tax levy increase in the upcoming budget proposals from staff.

In further response to the inquiry from the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, Councillor Chechalk explained that staff need to provide Council with budget options that meet the current situation, meaning that there should be options presented that protect essential municipal services, that do not expand services at an unsustainable rate, and that provide a blueprint for additional spending in the face of potential future windfalls.

Councillor Reilly inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about whether the budget could be delayed or not in order to ensure thorough research is



done regarding potential reductions in the tax levy increase through shared service agreements.

In response to Councillor Reilly's inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer Donna DeFilippis explained that delaying the budget to the end of March would impact planning of the Farmer's Market, as this would delay the potential hiring of the Community Engagement and Events Coordinator. Additionally, she explained that no shared service agreement could be properly researched, proposed, written and adopted within a month.

Councillor Trombetta inquired to the Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, about the necessity of the Murgatroyd Trail reconstruction project.

In response to Councillor Trombetta's inquiry, Director of Public Works & Recreation, Mike DiPaola, explained that the design is completed and that tendering is set to begin soon. The trail is a liability due to accessibility requirements and drainage issues. They are also applying for a funding opportunity to support the reconstruction project.

Councillor Trombetta further inquired to the Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, about removing the project from this years project, and only moving forward with it if the grant funding that staff is currently applied for is secured.

In response to Councillor Trombetta's further inquiry, Interim CAO/Treasurer, Donna DeFilippis, explained that because of the delays in finding out about the success of grant applications, projects like this must still be budgeted for, as delaying capital projects a year or two has virtually no impact on the tax levy increase due to the reserve funding process.

**Moved By** Councillor Jason Trombetta

**Seconded By** Councillor Joann Chechalk

That, Information Report T-03-2024, regarding the "2024 Draft Operating and Capital Budget" dated February 5, 2024, be received.

**Carried**

**Moved By** Councillor Jason Trombetta

**Seconded By** Councillor Joann Chechalk

That staff be directed to provide additional information on the following items at the Administration/Finance/Fire and Public Works/Recreation Committee meeting of February 20, 2024 where the 2024 Budget is being further reviewed:

- a) proposals to further reduce the tax increase by providing for 3 to 5 options from all departments recognizing impacts to the Township; and
- b) review opportunities for cost savings at the library.

**Carried**

**6. BY-LAWS**

**Moved By** Councillor Shelley Bradaric

**Seconded By** Councillor Mike Rehner

- 1. That, leave be granted to introduce By-law 2024-08, and that the same shall be considered to have been read a first, second, and third time with one reading, and is hereby adopted; and,
- 2. That, the Mayor and Clerk be and are hereby authorized to sign and affix the Corporate Seal thereto, any rule of this Council to the contrary notwithstanding.

**Carried**

**6.1 BY-LAW 2024-08**

A By-law to adopt, confirm and ratify matters dealt with by Council resolution.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

The Mayor to declare this meeting adjourned at the hour of 8:55 p.m.

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NANCY FIORENTINO, CLERK

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MAYOR CHERYL GANANN