

**In-person 2023 Budget Information Meeting**  
**Tuesday, January 24, 2022, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (in-person)**  
**Seniors' Activity Centre, Marine Room**  
**11 members of the public in attendance**  
**9 District of West Vancouver staff in attendance**  
**3 Councillors in attendance**

Q: One of the most important services in our West Van Community is our Policing and Fire & Safety. In terms of this budget, have we met all their requests in terms of funding their capital and operations to make sure that the community is well looked after?

A: There are some proposals from the Fire & Safety Department for additional staff so that they can staff both the Fire Tower Truck and rescue truck in order to be able to send both out for calls. This has been incorporated into the budget but that is up to Council for approval. On the Police side, the budget has incorporated all of the escalations from external agencies which we do need such as E-Comm, dispatch services and the radio system.

Q: How much does the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) training cost?

A: It is \$22,000 per recruit. The District is hiring on average nine to ten new recruits each year.

Q: Regarding trail development, would you choose an FTE for that or farm it out to an external body?

A: The request is for two permanent full-time staff to create a new trail crew. They will be repairing and improving our existing network of trails.

Q: Just to clarify, it is not for new trails?

A: It is for a new team, not for new trails.

Q: For the New Program Requests, \$1.19M, does that include all benefits, pensions, CPP, EI and so on?

A: Yes, the amount requested includes all of those items mentioned.

Q: I spent most of my career in IT and looking at the Business Systems Analyst at \$130K and a Business Analyst at \$130K including benefits seems high from my 45-50 years of experience. Those are very rich numbers.

A: The fringe benefits include pension, extended medical and dental, all of the required payments such as CPP and EI (Federal); WCB (Workers Compensation Insurance) which is Provincial, and all of these costs range from around 25 to 35% on top of these salaries. We also must pay a provincial health tax (1.95% of total payroll). When the premiums for the medical plan were eliminated by the province, they were replaced by this provincial health tax.

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Q: So, this would be about \$100K in salary and \$30K in benefits?

A: We also include training costs and any professional dues so that is all-inclusive. The District benchmarks our costs to the market. Most staff at the District are not living on the North Shore. We need to pay a competitive market rate.

Q: Will relations improve by having someone with a title of Indigenous Relations Manager?

A: The title has been approved by the five local First Nations. The proposal will be put forth for Council consideration. West Vancouver is trying to improve those relations and we share the land with the Squamish Nation at Park Royal, this is an opportunity to work on those relationships, and to achieve the goals of UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

Q: Are you also looking at the Chinese and Persian relations? Those numbers are in excess of indigenous numbers. We are getting around 400,000 new immigrants next year and that will outnumber the indigenous numbers here.

A: The District's Foreign Languages Social Media Advertising Program is specifically targeted at the Chinese speaking and Farsi speaking residents of West Vancouver. These are the two most spoken languages in the home after English. In 2022, we developed a pilot program to send out the same information in Chinese and Farsi as we send out in English. It was challenging because these groups have their own platforms.

Q: But the Indigenous Relations Manager position is ten times the cost of the languages program.

A: The Foreign Languages Program is not an FTE request, it's a request for funds for translation and to place information in foreign language news source platforms in Chinese and Farsi, the two major non-English languages in use in the District. It has been a pilot project so far, and been very successful so far, so the request is to support it as part of the basic budget.

Q: Look at the 2023 Asset Maintenance Cost Projection slide. It shows a shortfall of \$11M. On the Capital Investment slide, it shows a shortfall of \$3.2M. My overall comment is that West Vancouver has been falling badly behind in our asset maintenance. Just adding a 1.00% Asset Levy for 2023 is inappropriate. To meet our needs of \$3.2M we need to add 4.00%.

A: The \$11.0M number is a measure of the overall cumulative deferred maintenance. This shows, based on the current state and condition of the assets, how much it would take the District to "catch up" on the maintenance of what we currently have to maintain. In other words, it's the total shortfall amount to bring this deficit down.

The \$3.2M is the difference between the number that we calculate that we should be investing every year versus the amount that we have available, so it is an annual number. For each year that we don't meet this target, we add to the overall deficit, above. Every year we do this analysis; it shows that we are gradually catching up, but

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have a ways to go. If we could make the optimal annual investment then the overall deferred maintenance number would come down and gradually disappear.

Q: I would like to suggest a 4.00% tax increase for asset maintenance in 2023. That would be 6.00% tax plus 4.00% which would be a 10.00% tax increase and the West Vancouver citizens won't accept that. I would like to suggest review the budget again and adjust costs elsewhere so that we can have a 4.00% asset maintenance increase.

A: This is council's decision to decide how much of a tax rate increase is supportable and how it should be allocated. What you are seeing in this presentation is staff's best recommendation to meet the operations and capital needs identified. As far as asset management goes, raising the Asset Levy is not the only asset management strategy. For instance, we have lists of high-use, poor condition assets, and low-use, poor condition assets. Do we keep the low-use assets? If we were able to let them go, then maybe we could focus more on assets like the Seniors' Centre and the library, very popular assets that many District residents are using. We are constantly trying to improve our asset management strategy. In 2015, there was little investment in the assets and no complete list. We now have a very complete list and we are working on the biggest challenges which are the natural assets. We are striving to pay for the assets from the Asset Levy. During COVID-19, the contribution to capital from the operating fund had to be adjusted. The Asset Levy is a protected fund and can only pay for assets.

Q: The piers, harbour maintenance, and the January 2022 storm. Could you comment on that and whether they are addressed by the Asset Levy.

A: They are included in the list. They are insured assets. The District is currently waiting for the insurance assessment to be completed. We are not the only municipality with damage to piers. We have some costly and complicated assets, piers being one of them.

Q: During COVID-19, funds were coming in from provincial and federal sources. Were those used for asset maintenance at all?

A: The Province instructed the District that funds could only be used in very restricted cases for capital, and also could not be used to lower the tax levy. They were to be used to pay COVID-19 restart costs. The complete list of how those funds have been used is published in the Annual Report each year. This year most of those funds will have been used.

Q: Are roads and sidewalks included in the assets?

A: The District has a system called Maintenance Connection (MC) which is used by the road crews. Every time they do work on the roads, it is recorded. MC is linked to our asset management system so that we have the latest information on the roads. Sidewalks are included in this as well. We are also working on the park assets to end up with one system.

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Q: It would be interesting to see some of this mapped geographically if that is an opportunity in the budget. It would help to see where the assets are in relation to the budget. On the issues of the wharves, something could happen again, what is the level of investment required?

A: MC connects to the graphic information system. As long as we have the information, we could most likely produce maps, and then we could upload them to the website.

Q: There are funds still available from 2022. West Vancouver doesn't have a climate strategy which includes metrics on spending this money. It might be worthwhile considering that this 0.5% be deferred until we have a proper climate strategy approved by council. Then we could use this 0.5% in asset management.

A: Council can consider this. We are working on the climate strategy and we expect a report back around mid-July with metrics, and the beginnings of a carbon budget to tell us where emissions are coming from, and what we need to do in order to reduce them to our share of available emissions. It will be an expensive exercise. There is work being done on the foreshore, urban forest, watershed, and in every area, there are fairly costly proposals. In order to protect, adapt, and mitigate, there are big shifts to do. We hope to continue to fund the environmental levy.

Q: For the heat map which is for residential, what about business and commercial property assessments? Is it the same system?

A: For the details of class 6, business property tax assessment, we can provide this information after the meeting.

Q: In general, the real estate market has fallen, and my assessment has gone up 16%. My 1940 house has an assessed value of \$7M.

A: The assessment is done each year on July 1. After July 1, 2022, we saw the housing market level off and flatten, so that change won't be seen until next year's assessment rate. While your value increased by 16%, most of West Vancouver also saw an increase as well. When your tax assessment value goes up, it does not mean that your property taxes also go up. It depends on how your property is compared to other properties. The average change is 5.2% for class 1, so your individual property being assessed at 16% higher means that most likely taxes will shift onto your property.

Q: Does it include the sales history in your area as part of the assessment?

A: The assessment is market driven, so depending on your neighbourhood, and what is being sold, and at what price, this will drive the assessment value. A large part of the assessment is based on land value, so sometimes if older homes are being replaced by newer homes in a neighbourhood, even the remaining older homes will see assessment increases due to the land potential.

Q: When we look at the map, it only represents a small part of West Vancouver. What about the other lands, BPP (British Pacific Properties) and others? Are they taxed?

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A: On the 2023 Heat Map, BPP land is in the yellow area which represents a 10 to 20% tax increase. They are taxed but the tax levied depends on the development potential. For example, above the 1200-foot level, where BPP owns land, there is no development potential. For some of the other areas, we are talking to the assessment authority because the way they are zoned right now, they could be developed, they have been assessing the land as if they could not be developed.

Q: What about the area IR 5 on the 2023 Heat Map? Are those assessed?

A: That is not part of West Vancouver, that belongs to the First Nations. A newer map probably would not include those lands. I've been told that they do receive an assessment roll, but we are not sure what they do with it.

Q: But West Vancouver supplies the utilities?

A: The District provides various services to the Squamish Nation including police; fire and rescue; garbage collection; business licensing; and permits and inspection services. These services are provided based on a service agreement. Each year the District receives payment from the Squamish Nation for the provision of services, amounting to \$2.6M in 2022.

Q: Cypress Village, is it assessed? But isn't it zoned as residential one acre lots?

A: Cypress Village is a proposal at this point. If Cypress Village proposal is approved, and the land has been rezoned, then we would anticipate that there would be property tax assessments based on the rezoned potential. But at the moment, it hasn't been treated this way by the assessors. If Cypress Village is approved, then possibly additional taxes could be collected.

Q: Just for clarification, if an area is zoned residential, but is not built, would it just be assessed on the land value?

A: Without structures, there would not be any building to be assessed, but land is usually assessed based on what can be built on it. Based on the single-family zoning, the assessment authority seems to think that the land value in the Cypress Village area is slightly lower than what the District thinks is reasonable, but there are no municipal services supplied to the lots, so that also affects the value.

Q: What about an empty lot that is residential?

A: The assessors would look at what they believe to be the market value.

Q: Do you know what the market value of the proposed Cypress Village lots are?

A: The District has potential figures but they are not public. The figures will be public once the proposal is approved.

Q: Does the additional school tax (AST) come back into the District?

A: No, this provincial tax goes to the Province. The tax is assessed on residential properties valued over \$3M which amounts to approximately 40% of the homes in West

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Vancouver. This year the tax collected was \$40 to 50 million. The money goes to the province into general revenue for school purposes.

Q: Of the 30% of homeowners who qualify for home owner grants, how many apply for it?

A: In 2022, for the regular Home Owner Grant, under 54 years of age, 2,007 owners applied. For the Senior Home Owner Grant, over 65 years of age, 1,011 owners applied.

Q: When you include utilities, was the total proposed increase \$150 more from the previous year?

A: The amount is \$350 for the proposed tax levy increases. Adding utilities, based upon typical consumption for a household, including water, sewer & drainage, and solid waste, would be an extra \$164, for a total of \$514.

Q: So, as I listen to this presentation, and observe what has happened to this community over the last five to ten years, the one thing that jumps out at me is that we are in a financial crisis. We are not raising enough money through taxation and other means, to maintain our assets and infrastructure, and to provide the services needed for the community. How can we change that? Our taxes are relatively low here, compared to Toronto and other cities in Canada and the United States. Perhaps we should adjust how much money we are collecting.

A: It is up to the Council of West Vancouver to review the proposed budget and decide what is best for the community.

Q: There was a time when there were no tax increases. There just isn't the money right now. When was that?

A: That was in 2012 and 2014.

Q: On the general fund summary, under revenue, note 2, "Investment" what does the \$18M represent?

A: That is a cumulation of numbers which includes interest revenue, penalties, rent, and other items.

Q: During 2020 when facilities were shut due to COVID-19 restrictions, were there savings? Was there a fund where money could be placed for future needs?

A: Unfortunately, the facilities shut down such as the Seniors' Activity Centre and the Aquatic Centre generate revenue through fees. During the shut-down, there were still maintenance expenses for the District. For example, we could not drain the pool, we had to keep filtering it, energy costs were still there, and those costs continued without any revenues. There were no permit fee revenues, there were very low revenues from the Community Centre, although we tried to offer services as much as we could. The library was open but with reduced hours. Although we did not have costs for the program instructors and life-guards for example, we still had costs for staff maintaining

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the buildings. The other municipalities were in the same position. The Province provided some funding so that we did not have to use all of our reserves. The Province restricted the use of the funding, it could not be used for most capital expenses or to reduce the tax rate increase, but we could fund some of the projects. The COVID-19 Restart Fund was just over \$5M.