

**2024 Budget Information Meeting (in-person)**  
**Tuesday, January 16, 2024, 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**  
**Cedar Room, West Vancouver Community Centre (3rd floor)**  
**29 members of the public in attendance**  
**6 District of West Vancouver staff in attendance**

**Q:** Regarding the cut-off date, January 19 which is three days hence and only one day after the online session. Is this sufficient time for the public to come up with comments that are informed and useful?

**A:** The budget engagement session started on January 3, 2024 and was broadcast through social media and other methods with detailed budget information posted on the District's website. The feedback period is from January 3, 2024 to January 19, 2024. We heard from Council that they would like to shorten the overall budget process, hence the adjustment in the schedule including the engagement period length.

**Q:** Follow-up question. The slide says, "public consultation," but this is just an information session. Under the Community Charter public consultation has to be done on the full five-year financial plan and not just on the general fund.

**A:** Public consultation is not defined in the Community Charter. The consultation method that the District has chosen is to inform and gather feedback from in-person meetings and submitted online. Engagement for the utility funds was conducted when the proposed 2024 rates were presented to the Finance and Audit Committee, and to Council at a regular council meeting, both of which were open to the public.

**Q:** Regarding the expenditure slide on the operating budget, is it possible to have the hand-out?

**A:** We will post the presentation on the budget website after the meeting so you will have access to it.

**Q:** What is the breakdown of the general government expenses for \$24M?

**A:** Regarding the general government expenses, 40% is related to the transferring of revenue to reserves for future use. We have special self-insurance reserves for different items like weather-related events, wage contingencies, and for legal costs, so there is money put aside into these reserves. Other items in General Government include insurance costs, and the community grants program.

Once Council adopts the five-year financial plan, we will create the approximately 200-page budget book which will have details of the specific expenses. This book provides a dedicated page for general government expenses. As expenses are very similar from year to year, the 2023 budget that is available online provides exactly this kind of breakdown. The 2023 number was \$31.2M and the 2024 number is \$24M. That decrease is due to a provincial, one-time Growing Communities Fund of \$8M in 2023. The District was required to set this money aside in a special reserve until it is used, and that is why it does not appear in 2024.

We have since posted a breakdown of the general government expenses in the 2024 budget on the budget website under Frequently Asked Questions - General Questions.

**Q:** Parks, Culture & Community Services has a large percentage of 16%, what makes up this amount of \$23.47M? Can we receive this breakdown in detail?

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**A:** This will be available in the 200-page budget book. In the meantime, you can send your questions to the [budget@westvancouver.ca](mailto:budget@westvancouver.ca) email. We take last year's base budget, and then add on incremental changes, those are all published on the budget webpage.

We will upload the breakdown of the 2024 Parks, Culture & Community Services expenses to the budget webpage. This has since been posted on the budget webpage under Frequently Asked Questions – Parks, Culture & Community Services.

**Comment:** I support the 9.88% overall increase in the budget. The second thing is, these three options, there is not sufficient information for the public as to what those numbers mean in terms of our lifestyle, quality of life, and security. Thus, it is inappropriate to submit three options and expect the public to analyze this without sufficient information.

A. The three options are based on the Minimum Budget with incremental additions for service level choices to create the Preferred and Best Practice Budget options. Council needs to indicate how many of the proposed programs and services they support enhancing, and that will determine which level of tax increase is supported.

**Q:** Under capital expenses, I noticed a line item “contributions towards capital assets” planned for 2024. There is one line item of \$1M for community amenity contributions, what is that earmarked for?

**A:** The \$1M is for the District's contribution to the Navy Jack restoration project. In regard to community amenity contributions (CACs), there are various projects that are suitable to be funded from the community amenity contributions (CAC) fund for neighbourhood-specific projects or overall, for the District.

**Q:** When you are talking about 2023 budget, \$800K in the Parks, Culture & Community Services budget was slated for the pickleball courts. Has that money been given to other people? There are rumours that the money has been spent.

**A:** The \$800,000 from the Community Amenity Contributions for the Sports Court Replacement - Pickleball courts at Hugo Ray Park was approved through the 2023 budget process. The funds have not been spent yet and will still be allocated, reserved and committed for pickleball. Unless Council gives other direction for the use of those funds, that money is set aside for pickleball.

Staff are currently assessing the possibility of creating an indoor pickleball/tennis facility at Hugo Ray Park. Part of this assessment is preliminary geotechnical and environmental studies which have been conducted over the past few months and is funded by surplus funds from other capital projects that were completed under budget. Initial plans were to fund the feasibility work from the \$800,000 budget for pickleball courts, however it was decided that the savings from other capital projects would be best utilized for this work instead.

All of the capital projects and programs must go to Council for approval at the beginning of the year, in March, along with the financial plan as Phase 1 projects, then later in the year, Phase 2 projects go to Council for approval.

**Q:** Typically, when one budgets, you look at the actuals of the year, and then you make a new budget. But we are only comparing budget to budget. Does that mean that the District always comes in exactly on budget?

**A:** No, the District doesn't always come in exactly on budget. Staff start the budget process during the late summer and take into consideration the progress of the current year to develop the following year's budget. The mid-year and third quarter financial reports, includes a forecast to year end,

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support the analysis for the development of the budget. Waiting until the year completes, to create the budget will be too late.

**Q:** We would like to understand what is the actual. And how much is the increase or decrease is in the budget.

**A:** The comparison of budget to prior year's actual is included in each year's budget book, Five-Year Financial Plan. While the fiscal year 2023 has ended, staff are in the midst of the year-end closing process. As a result, we are unable to provide a comparison of 2024 Budget to 2023 Actuals. For the most recent financial report for 2023, the Third Quarter Financial Report is available on the District of West Vancouver website: <https://westvancouver.ca/government-administration/strategies-reports/reports/quarterly-financial-reports>.

**Q:** I am concerned about how this information is presented. The tax increase is presented not the operating expense increase. The actual expenses are going up faster than the tax increase shown to residents. It would be useful to give residents a better idea of how the operating expenses have gone up over time because my observation is that the expenses are well above the rate of inflation for many years. My second question is regarding what we were paying in property taxes five years ago compared to today and to understand the impact. Over five years our property taxes have increased by up to 40-50%. My third question is why \$105M is sitting in cash investments such as GICs versus being spent on modifying or reducing the impact on residents.

**A:** To answer the first question, the expenses do go up more than the tax rate because other revenues go up as well as expenses. The tax rate only goes up if expense increases cannot be covered by non-tax revenues. Expense comparisons are provided in the budget book and annual and quarterly reports. The table below gives the tax rates increases over the last twelve years. Increases to the asset levy are shown separately.

Year	Tax Increase	Asset Levy	Environmental Levy	Total
2023	2.14%	2.00%	-	4.14%
2022	1.79%	1.00%	1.50%	4.29%
2021	1.48%	2.50%	-	3.98%
2020	2.00%	-	-	2.00%
2019	2.19%	1.76%	-	3.95%
2018	2.09%	1.56%	-	3.65%
2017	2.00%	2.45%	-	4.45%
2016	1.62%	5.25%	-	6.87%
2015	1.62%	-	-	1.62%
2014	2.92%	-	-	2.92%
2013	0.00%	-	-	0.00%
2012	0.00%	-	-	0.00%

In terms of the invested cash, this includes all of the District's working capital, plus all of the reserve amounts. The cash on financial statements is a consolidation of all of our funds, including utility funds and trust funds. The reserves are dedicated funds with specific purposes.

The District also has an Endowment Fund set up in the 1990s, similar to university endowment funds. But to your point, there is the other point of view which is why the Municipality has an endowment fund versus taking that money and creating some kind of valuable asset for the community, particularly when that endowment fund cannot grow very much.

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You mentioned GICs. The District is quite restricted by the province as to the type of investments we can do. For example, the province does not allow a municipality to invest in equities but allows investments in government bonds. The point could be made to Council to look at the endowment fund money and think about alternatives for its use as well as looking at municipal land which really is to be used for public benefit.

**Q:** Where does the \$500K each year come from for the Ambleside Dundarave Business Improvement Association (ADBIA)? I have not seen anything positive about this other than problems. This is supposed to support businesses.

**A:** Council approved the ADBIA bylaw which established the authority for the District to collect a special additional levy from a well-defined area (Dundarave Ambleside business area). The bylaw defines this geographic area, and all properties classified as Business (Class 6) properties which are within the defined boundaries are required to pay the levy. That levy is then required to be turned over to the ADBIA.

**Q:** I was on Council in North Vancouver for 13 years. I now live in West Vancouver. I am appalled about the horrendous state of sidewalks and the number of people who fall. What amount of the budget historically has been spent on the inspection, repair and maintenance of sidewalks? The next question is what has been allocated in the 2024 for inspection, repair and maintenance of sidewalks?

**A:** To obtain the historical information will require some work to pull those numbers. The District recently has been reconsidering the sidewalk maintenance program. There is currently no program of regular inspection, but this is being reconsidered. There are many municipalities in BC that do not have sidewalk inspection programs, but we are aware, for instance, that the District of North Vancouver does do sidewalk inspections. So, there are different ways of handling this, and that is what is being looked at.

**Q:** You started off the presentation saying that is a zero-sum budget where money in equals money out. Where does the premise for that come from?

**A:** Unlike the senior levels of government (Provincial and Federal), municipalities are not allowed to budget for a deficit. It is a legal requirement of the Community Charter that the budget must balance. Taxes are the last resort to balance the budget, and if sufficient taxes to create balance cannot be raised, then expenditures have to be cut to make the budget balance.

**Q:** You started off the presentation with a sense of confusion because you presented three budgets. Where do these three budgets originate from? It is my understanding that there is a very professional team, but why do we need three budgets? This has added to confusion. I wish there would be an opportunity to examine what the difference would be and where you might apply the cost to other effective areas if you were doing one sensible plan and presenting it to Council.

**A:** The reason there are three plans is because staff are not in a position to tell Council what to do. Staff can give Council alternatives, made up of all those specific things discussed. Staff is trying to give some parameters for the public and Council to discuss. If staff came with a single option, that would be staffs' recommended option and it is not our position to tell Council what to do.

The budget is based on the "minimum budget" and then the preferred and best practice budgets are building upon the minimum budget. Essentially it is one budget. We put together the required amount into the budget to keep the service levels at the current level. Then there is a list of service level

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choices that Council might decide to add or not. Those are what the other two budgets include. There are also uncontrollable costs based on E-Comm rates, BC Hydro rates, and so on. We do not have control over these types of increases.

**Q:** I have a question regarding the \$12.5M deferred maintenance gap. My problem is after looking at the Third Quarter Financial Report under capital programs, the total amount budgeted for 2023 is \$66M. The actual for the first nine months of 2023 was \$12.5M expended, open purchase orders of \$10M, with a remaining budget of \$43M. The numbers don't match up to the numbers on your slides. How can the public understand the budget ask that you put up here relative to the adopted budget for 2023.

**A:** What we show on the capital slide is based upon requirements from asset management plans for 2024 capital works. The Third Quarter Financial Report includes projects which were funded in earlier years on which we are still working. Many of these projects are quite large and take multiple years to complete. It is quite routine to have projects funded over multiple years. We are still reporting on that progress. The \$66M is for all approved capital projects with approved sources of funds. The detailed budget book will show budgets which have been carried over and there will be a full list of all projects.

**Q:** Have the Council strategic priorities been set going forward and have they been published?

**A:** The Council strategic priorities were approved by Council during the January 15 Regular Council meeting and they are on the District website: <https://westvancouver.ca/mayor-council/councils-strategic-plan-2024-2025>.

**Comment:** Last year when the 2023 budget was adopted by Council it was approved with public comment in the Council meeting. Given some the feedback around the timing, is there any leeway to provide comments or extend the time period?

**A:** Staff were asked by Council to shorten the Budget process. The public engagement campaign officially started on January 3, 2024, and ended on January 19, covering a two-and-a-half-week period. There was advertising in the North Shore News, social media posts, information on the District's website and emails to westvancouverITE subscribers.

**Q:** I would like expenses to do with climate change to be clearly defined in terms of what is meant by those expenses. I care about ecology, clean rivers and so on but I need specific details about what is meant. Climate change is a bit of a vague term. I am asking for specifics.

**A:** The Environmental Levy is a statutory reserve established by a bylaw and within that bylaw it dictates what those funds can be used for so that is what guides us. The fund may be used for external and District resources for: a) Programs that support the protection of the natural environment; b) Climate change response, mitigation, and adaptation; c) Sustainability and protection of the District's natural capital assets; and d) Reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions both by corporate operations and the community.

For details of the 2024 Capital Budget, including projects proposed to be funded from the Environmental Reserve, please refer to the General Fund 2024 Capital Project List (PDF) posted on the budget webpage.

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**Q:** Why can't we have some information on what is going on with the utilities? I pay more for this than municipal taxes.

**A:** Full reports on the Utilities are available here: <https://westvancouver.ca/mayor-council/regular-council-meeting/23nov27>. The "Proposed Solid Waste Utility Bylaw No. 4740, 2012, Amendment Bylaw No. 5246, 2023, "Proposed Sewerage and Drainage Regulation Bylaw No. 5263, 2023, Amendment Bylaw No. 5284, 2023, and the "Proposed Waterworks Regulation Bylaw No. 5260, 2023, Amendment Bylaw No. 5283, 2023, were given three readings on November 27, 2023, and adopted by Council on December 4, 2023.

**Q:** I am disappointed in the parks department and the lack of information given because had a great amount of damage to the piers/shoreline due to the lack of performance by the parks department. I think they deliberately sat there and left that stuff to be damaged so that they could get the money from the insurance. How much did you spend for redoing the piers and the Seawalk?

**A:** Parks, Culture & Community Services maintain an ongoing program for major repairs and replacements of District waterfront park pier structures and floats based on an engineering consultants report. Priority is given to major repairs and replacements that are required for safety and compliance with regulatory requirements. Annual capital budgets allocate dedicated funds for this program, with allocation of \$150K in 2021, \$165K in 2022, \$215K in 2023 (plus \$600K from insurance proceeds for the damages inflicted by the combined king tide and storm surge on the piers and Centennial Seawalk), and a further \$625K requested in 2024.

**Comment:** We cannot keep having tax increases and the utility increases which are a larger percentage of our total taxes paid. And what about the North Shore Waste Treatment Plant? When is that plan starting to operate? What will be the total cost?

**A:** Unfortunately, right now we do not have the answers to these questions. The North Shore Wastewater Treatment Plant (NSWWTP) is a new tertiary treatment facility being built by Metro Vancouver Regional District (MVRD). Any information which MVRD shares with us on this project is communicated to Council and the public as soon as is feasible.

**Comment:** The taxes in North Vancouver are much lower than they are in West Vancouver. For an average house, they pay \$300 to \$400 a year for water usage.

**A:** The water usage in West Vancouver is metered, and what you consume is what you pay for. There are also flat fees to cover for capital costs to pay for the infrastructure.

**Comment:** But the infrastructure is getting worse. When there have been water shortages. But what are they doing to build up the water reservoirs to increase the water supplies? We get rain all fall and winter, do we not need to change this?

**A:** The regional water supply is managed by MVRD. West Vancouver does supply some of its own water, through Eagle Lake, and management of this resource for the future is being carefully considered. MVRD is also looking at the reservoirs in the watershed to increase capacity. However, if climate change continues to create drought conditions, water management at the household level will need to become much more cautious. Because it has a fully metered system, West Vancouver is looked at as a leader in water use management, but there are still many improvements that can be made.

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