

**2024 Budget Information Meeting (virtual)**  
**Thursday, January 18, 2024, 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.**  
**9 members of the public in attendance**  
**12 District of West Vancouver staff in attendance**

**Q:** Why is the middle budget option, as featured in the presentation, referred to as the “Preferred Budget”? Wouldn’t staff “prefer” the “Best Practice Budget” – a budget that addresses more of the District’s plans and needs, short-term and long-term? Shouldn’t this budget be termed, “The Preferred Budget”? Likewise, it would seem that Council would also “prefer” the “Best Practice Budget” as it would allow them to accomplish more of the actions in their Strategic Plan. (I note, as well, that “Best Practice” refers to proven methods and techniques, based on experience and research, that are used to produce optimal results, increase efficiency and develop structured processes.) Thank you.

**A:** Thanks for the question. Yes, possibly staff would prefer the “Best Practice Budget.” But looking at the level of increases across three different options, we thought that the preferred option is probably the more acceptable one for the public in terms of an increase given the dollar amount.

Budgeting at the municipal level is about trying to balance off the desired services with what would be a reasonable tax rate increase. And in some cases, which we are seeing around the province, that balancing has gone so far in the direction of not raising the taxes, then now suddenly there are huge tax increases being proposed. The District wants to take a moderate approach. This is why we have developed these three options, which are really the same budget, with various incremental service level choices added into them. The nomenclature could have called them A, B and C. The “Preferred Budget” is the District’s staff recommendation for what we feel is the most reasonable balance between adding additional services and increasing the taxes.

**Q:** I was reading about the Osoyoos tax increase – 39% due apparently mostly issues that were not addresses for a long time. In the past, there were marginal tax increases while infrastructure was ignored and continued to break down. I seem some similarities to the Districts issues and now in addition the District has to counter the effects of climate change which is real. of course I am not advocating this huge tax increase but we have to build up our reserves. wonder if District staff could comment on my observation and tell me which budget will BEST accomplish this.

**A:** Thank you for your observation. If we do not invest in our assets, or in countering climate change, then it will result in higher costs in the future. We have seen that in our assets with the District. The best budget to address this would probably be the “Best Practice budget” which includes a 6% asset increase. This would reach the calculated optimal amount of investment that we determined over the next 20 years to bring us to that level. The Best Practice Budget also includes an increase to the Environmental Levy so that we can continue reserving funds for programs to tackle address the impacts of climate change.

**Q:** Who on staff negotiates the District’s contract(s) with the West Vancouver Police Department? Thank you.

**A:** Thanks for the question. There are three parties involved who negotiate the collective agreement: the West Vancouver Police Association, the Human Resources Department of the West Vancouver Police Department, and Metro Vancouver “RES 360” plays a pivotal role. RES 360 helps all Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) municipalities with labour relations and collective agreements. Once an agreement has been tentatively set, it gets ratified by the West Vancouver Police Association and ultimately approved by the West Vancouver Police Board.

**Q:** This is a bit of a clarification question. It is regarding the capital budget items where you have the shortfall here and you have gone back to 2015 and if I add up all of the

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shortfalls I have \$33M in the shortfall. I am not sure about the cumulative amount. Can you explain how you calculate the shortfalls on these. Are these cumulative? If you did a full assessment of optimum capital status compared to what it should be would we be \$33M short or would it be \$50M because you go only go back to 2015.

**A:** Our asset managers recalculate that shortfall each year. Every year we get a report on the state of each and every asset. We have a complete list of our assets. And then we get an estimate of what kind of investment would be required to get this asset into optimal service levels. We also have road condition studies from consultants, as well as for bridges and piers. Each different type of asset has a distinct set of requirements. That is a non-cumulative number that is recalculated each and every year. It does fluctuate not only because we are unable to invest the amount each year that we should, and therefore the deferred maintenance for one year is carried into the next year, but also because assets continue to deteriorate. As the asset deteriorates, the service levels that can be expected from it are less. The gap can get wider even if we are making investments. The other problem we have are the impacts of climate change and changing public use, such as the parks which are being heavily used since the pandemic. The intensity of use has gone up with the trails, parks, and so forth which amounts to increased wear and tear. Thus, we re-calculate every year and try to stay ahead of this deficit problem.

**Q:** Where we have new development, and they are going to have to put in sewer lines and expanded water lines, and so on, where would that show up in the budget? Let's say there is a new project which is going to cost \$5M project, where would you put that?

**A:** With each new development, there are development cost charges (DCCs) that we collect from the developer, those funds get transferred into DCC-specific reserves. Those funds would then be used to pay for the capital works to expand the underground infrastructure required to service the new development. There are also public works that are constructed by developers, and these show up as Third-Party Works on the District's financial statements. We do not budget for these, as they are paid for by others. They do get added to our asset base, however, as once completed by the developer, they become the District's responsibility to maintain.

**Q:** It is suggested under the "Minimum" and "Preferred" Budgets, that the Environmental Levy should not be increased "until the Climate Action Strategy and workplan developed in coordination with Environment Committee is in place." However, the Environment Committee appears to be hard at work on Climate Action Strategy priorities now, and presumably, these will be ready shortly. It should also be noted that the Environment Reserve funds other environmental initiatives in the District (i.e. initial UFMP actions, Coastal Marine Management Plan strategizing and converting the District's service vehicles to electric). Is it also important to build up the Environment Reserve so that it is ready and sufficient when needed?

**A:** The Environmental Levy was approved under the 2022 budget (Five-Year Financial Plan Bylaw No. 5185, 2022) adopted on April 11, 2022. Staff then created the Environmental Reserve Fund Bylaw to specify how the levy would be used. This bylaw was adopted on July 25, 2022. We are talking about whether or not it needs to be incremented. It currently brings in \$1.2M annually. In the first year that it was in place, not much was spent of the \$1.2M, so it was carried into the second year, and then this year another \$1.2M was added. Right now, we do not have the plans in place or the capacity in place to spend those funds. The newly formed Environmental Committee is currently working on a strategy. We then would have to have a clear justification to increase the levy and go ahead with work. We have a great deal of feedback through this budget process from people saying that they feel there is no time to waste in going forward with putting adaptation and mitigation measures in place. People are beginning to feel that action is required. That feedback will be taken back to Council. Council may decide that continuing to build up the Environmental Levy is a priority. That was why it was put into the "Best Practice Budget." If Council wanted to increase the Environmental Levy, they could direct that be done without adopting the entire Best Practice Budget if they considered that to be the number one priority.

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**Comment from Chat:** absolutely no time to waste Thx

**Q:** The main thing that I have is the number one priority is the lack of varied market housing. That has been a problem for 50 years. West Vancouver has had only 1/6 of the building of average in Metro in the last 50 years. Housing prices have gone up 500% since 2001. If you graduated from high school here in 1995 you are 46 years old most of those people cannot afford to live here because the prices have gone up so high and we haven't built the market housing, and our average residential house price is \$3.6M. The huge issue is we have driven away all of our kids, our grandkids, and we have driven away our workers so 80% of our workers don't live here. So, there are huge costs involved and lack of services here because we can't hire part-time health workers for older people and our population is getting older. This to me is a crisis. So, what I'm trying to understand is where is the plan in here for increase spending for the development that's going to occur to bring all of these new projects. I understand there are a number of new initiatives by the provincial government, but I don't see anything in here regarding potential development and that produces the biggest revenue increases for any municipality and increased annuity for more people, more taxes. Take a property with three people on it you basically get two times or three times more depending on the units. I don't see any increase here in planned revenue from development and the associated costs of that development for which these developers will pay.

**A:** The province has mandated that certain housing targets be met. They have a list of municipalities and West Vancouver is on that list to provide housing at certain levels of additional housing be provided. There are a number of plans in the works, none are public at this time, but they will be coming forward shortly to do exactly that. We do not have a budget for housing as it is not a municipal responsibility. The planning department is working on the Ambleside Local Area Plan and the Taylor Way Local Area Plan, which will result in opportunities for housing to be created. Over the past 10 years staff have seen quite a few development proposals come through that have proposed additional densification and they were not supported by the Council. But the province has mandated that this be changed. There will have to be additional density provided in the future. Once that density is created, then the municipality would build in the additional tax revenues. This year we have \$610K in estimated additional tax revenues built into our budget. That is actually a minimal amount. In the City of North Vancouver (CNV) there was millions of dollars in additional tax revenue because they are still densifying in the CNV. That hasn't happened yet in West Vancouver, but current trends suggest that it will.

The province recently provided some grant funding for those plans mentioned and for additional housing plans. They have provided to all of the municipalities in BC funding for hiring, for example extra staff to make those housing plans come to fruition. There is a lot of action and planning going on in this area.

**Q:** Could the Environment Reserve be used to fund a new Parks Master Plan (which is overdue)? Thank you.

**A:** The Environment Reserve is established by a bylaw with specific uses for how it can be spent such as adaptation and mitigation in relation to climate change.  
<https://westvancouver.ca/government-administration/bylaws-licensing/find-bylaw/environmental-reserve-fund-bylaw>.

If the Parks Master Plan update focused on environmental issues, it could be funded from this source, but this might be seen as a lower priority than some other actions for the environment and climate change response. However, there are other sources of funds that could be used for a Parks Master Plan update. The comment that establishing a new Parks Master Plan is needed is one that we will convey back to Council and staff to see if something can be done in that area.