

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 1
Budget Committee
February 28, 2019

TO: Chair and Members of Budget Committee (Standing Committee of the Whole on Budget)

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

Jane Fraser, Director of Finance, Asset Management and ICT/CFO

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 21, 2019

SUBJECT: Shape Your City, Shape Your Budget 2019 – Public Consultation Results

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

The 2019-20 Multi-year Budget Process and Consultation Plan was outlined in Information Report No 5 on November 27, 2018.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Charter, section 35 (1) The Chief Administrative Officer shall (b) ensure that an annual budget is prepared and submitted to the Council.

BACKGROUND

For the last several years Council has provided an on-line budget tool to the public, which allows the public to better understand the municipal budget process and provides an opportunity to provide input for Council consideration in the budget process. As Council is working on multiyear budgeting, the results of the allocator will be useful not only for 2019-20 but also 2020-21.

DISCUSSION

This is the sixth year for the public consultation on the Budget, where residents of HRM were invited to contribute to the 2019 Budget consultation by sharing their thoughts on service priorities and how they would like to see their municipal tax dollars allocated.

In order to engage as many people as possible, the consultation was promoted in electronic ads through social media and Halifax.ca. The consultation cost approximately \$6,000 in advertising. Staff were able to utilize the current software contract without any additional expense.

The consultation process began on January 18, 2019 and continued during the Budget presentations to Committee of the Whole.

The public engagement strategy included the following elements:

- Utilizing the Budget Allocator, an on-line Budget Tool
- Public participation at Committee of the Whole

The on-line information included services that the public encounters or utilizes on a day to day basis, as well as the Administrative costs of Governance and Support Services. These services cost \$517.1 million in 2018-19, which included:

1. Protective Services
 - a. Police
 - b. RCMP
 - c. Fire
2. Community & Recreation Services
 - a. Libraries Services
 - b. Culture/Heritage/Events
 - c. Halifax Transit
3. Infrastructure, Planning & Development
 - a. Planning & Development
 - b. Transportation & Public Works (Solid Waste, Snow Removal, Traffic Management & Construction)
4. Governance and Support Services
 - a. Corporate & Customer Service (311 Service, Fleet & Facilities)
 - b. Chief Administrative Officer & Council
 - c. Support Services (Finance, Human Resources, Legal & Auditor General)

The Budget Allocator provides the opportunity to re-balance the budget, based on an individual's priorities. Each service showed the Budget allocated for the 2018-19 year, with the choice and impact for the following options:

1. to maintain the current budget
2. to increase the budget by 5%
3. to increase the budget by 10%
4. to decrease the budget by 5%
5. to decrease the budget by 10%

The percent amounts used were limited by the consultation software. The 5% or 10% options should be interpreted as adding or removing funding, thus indicating spending reductions.

Consultation Findings

This was an open invitation to all citizens of HRM. Current analysis of the Budget Allocation Tool shows that participation to date is the highest from the past three years. The 2019 Budget Allocator was put on line January 18, 2019. As of February 6, 2019, 695 participants have completed the Budget Allocation Tool compared to 522 between January 11th and March 5th 2018.

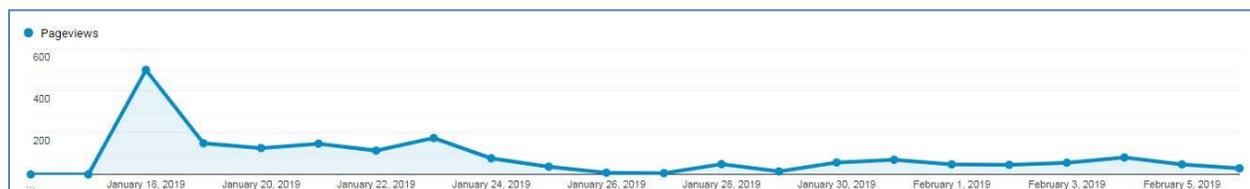
For the 2020-21 and future budgets, staff intends to review options for a wider consultative process. The Budget Allocator is likely to remain an important part of that process but needs to be strengthened through the addition of new tools and means of attracting additional input.

A poll was added to Shape Your City to gather feedback on the Budget Allocator during the period it was open. There were 182 responses to the poll. Of all the responses to the poll, 72% felt that the tool was useful. However, 47.8% indicated that although it was helpful, they would like other options to give feedback on the budget.

Question: Do you find the Budget Allocator useful?

Answer	Result
Yes	44 (24.2%)
Yes but I would like other options to give feedback on the budget	87 (47.8%)
No	35 (19.2%)
Not sure / no opinion	16 (8.8%)
Total	182 (100%)

The information found below summarizes participation in the engagement process through Shape your City for 2019:



Summary of citizen participation in the Budget Consultation:

Citizen participation	Budget Consultation			Yr/Yr % Change
	2017	2018	2019	
Visitors to the Shape your City engagement site	635	677	1,480	119%
Number of citizens completing Budget Allocator	130	522	695	33%
Percent of visitors, who completed Budget Allocator	20%	77%	47%	

1. The citizens varied on decreasing and increasing the budget for current services.
 - a. 76.8% completed their budget priorities below the current spend vs 77.4% from prior year;
 - b. with none maintaining the current entire budget vs 1% from previous year.
 - c. 23.2% were willing to increase the budget vs 22.6% from previous year. This was voiced in many of the comments as well.

The priorities for the Budget Distribution are shown in Appendix 1.

Over 45% of the respondent's support an increase to Halifax Transit (47.1%) and over 40% of respondent's support an increase to Parks & Recreation (42.5%). In addition, Library Services (37.1%), Planning & Development (33.3%) and Transportation & Public Works (33.1%) had support for increased budgets.

Increase Budget by 10%

Category	Department	Budget Percentage	Response	%	Average
Protective Services	Fire & Emergency Services	Increase budget by 10%	27	3.95	
	Halifax Regional Police	Increase budget by 10%	38	5.49	
	RCMP	Increase budget by 10%	17	2.47	3.97
Community & Recreation Services	Halifax Transit	Increase budget by 10%	129	18.7	
	Library Services	Increase budget by 10%	115	16.67	
	Parks & Recreation	Increase budget by 10%	92	13.43	16.27
Infrastructure, Planning & Development	Planning & Development	Increase budget by 10%	83	12.01	
	TPW	Increase budget by 10%	63	9.12	10.57
Government & Support Services	Chief Administrative Officer & Council	Increase budget by 10%	8	1.17	
	Corporate & Customer Service	Increase budget by 10%	7	1.01	
	Support Services	Increase budget by 10%	12	1.74	1.31

*Note – Support Services is made up of Finance & ICT, Human Resources, Legal and the Auditor General

Increase Budget by 5%

Category	Department	Budget Percentage	Response	%	Average
Protective Services	Fire & Emergency Services	Increase budget by 5%	112	16.37	
	Halifax Regional Police	Increase budget by 5%	104	15.03	
	RCMP	Increase budget by 5%	53	7.71	13.04
Community & Recreation Services	Halifax Transit	Increase budget by 5%	196	28.41	
	Library Services	Increase budget by 5%	141	20.43	
	Parks & Recreation	Increase budget by 5%	199	29.05	25.96
Infrastructure, Planning & Development	Planning & Development	Increase budget by 5%	147	21.27	
	TPW	Increase budget by 5%	166	24.02	22.65
Government & Support Services	Chief Administrative Officer & Council	Increase budget by 5%	7	1.02	
	Corporate & Customer Service	Increase budget by 5%	28	4.05	
	Support Services	Increase budget by 5%	24	3.48	2.85

*Note – Support Services is made up of Finance & ICT, Human Resources, Legal and the Auditor General

Support for combined decrease in the budget was strongest amongst Chief Administrative Officer & Council (70.6%), Support Services (60.8%), and Corporate & Customer Service (52.5%)

Decrease Budget by 10%

Category	Department	Budget Percentage	Response	%	Average
Protective Services	Fire & Emergency Services	Decrease budget by 10%	34	4.97	
	Halifax Regional Police	Decrease budget by 10%	98	14.16	
	RCMP	Decrease budget by 10%	107	15.57	11.57
Community & Recreation Services	Halifax Transit	Decrease budget by 10%	58	8.41	
	Library Services	Decrease budget by 10%	62	8.99	
	Parks & Recreation	Decrease budget by 10%	41	5.99	7.80
Infrastructure, Planning & Development	Planning & Development	Decrease budget by 10%	71	10.27	
	TPW	Decrease budget by 10%	38	5.5	7.89
Government & Support Services	Chief Administrative Officer & Council	Decrease budget by 10%	282	41.11	
	Corporate & Customer Service	Decrease budget by 10%	121	17.49	
	Support Services	Decrease budget by 10%	178	25.8	28.13

*Note – Support Services is made up of Finance & ICT, Human Resources, Legal and the Auditor General

Decrease Budget by 5%

Category	Department	Budget Percentage	Response	%	Average
Protective Services	Fire & Emergency Services	Decrease budget by 5%	67	9.8	
	Halifax Regional Police	Decrease budget by 5%	115	16.62	
	RCMP	Decrease budget by 5%	134	19.51	15.31
Community & Recreation Services	Halifax Transit	Decrease budget by 5%	71	10.29	
	Library Services	Decrease budget by 5%	93	13.48	
	Parks & Recreation	Decrease budget by 5%	72	10.51	11.43
Infrastructure, Planning & Development	Planning & Development	Decrease budget by 5%	114	16.5	
	TPW	Decrease budget by 5%	71	10.27	13.39
Government & Support Services	Chief Administrative Officer & Council	Decrease budget by 5%	202	29.45	
	Corporate & Customer Service	Decrease budget by 5%	242	34.97	
	Support Services	Decrease budget by 5%	212	30.72	31.71

*Note – Support Services is made up of Finance & ICT, Human Resources, Legal and the Auditor General

Generally, many respondents on average support maintaining the level of budget support.

Maintain Existing Budget

Category	Department	Budget Percentage	Response	%	Average
Protective Services	Fire & Emergency Services	Maintain existing budget	444	64.91	
	Halifax Regional Police	Maintain existing budget	337	48.7	
	RCMP	Maintain existing budget	376	54.73	56.11
Community & Recreation Services	Halifax Transit	Maintain existing budget	236	34.2	
	Library Services	Maintain existing budget	279	40.43	
	Parks & Recreation	Maintain existing budget	281	41.02	38.55
Infrastructure, Planning & Development	Planning & Development	Maintain existing budget	276	39.94	
	TPW	Maintain existing budget	353	51.09	45.52
Government & Support Services	Chief Administrative Officer & Council	Maintain existing budget	187	27.26	
	Corporate & Customer Service	Maintain existing budget	294	42.49	
	Support Services	Maintain existing budget	264	38.26	36.00

*Note – Support Services is made up of Finance & ICT, Human Resources, Legal and the Auditor General

Along with balancing the Budget, participants were invited to provide general comments on HRM's budget, as well as comment on why they made their choice. The 695 submissions yielded 264 comments. There was no consistent single theme to the comments. However, the comments generally reflected the results presented above.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications from this Report. The information in this report will inform Council in the development of a Proposed Multi Year Budget for 2019-20. The broader financial implications will be discussed and debated as the budget is developed in more detail.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As outlined in the Discussion section above, the budget consultation included several ways to engage citizens to provide insight and direction into the priorities for the 2019-20 Budget.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1 – Budget Allocator – Budget Distribution

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Tyler Higgins, Senior Financial Consultant | Budget Coordinator, 902-220-9426

Original Signed

Report Approved by: _____
Bruce Fisher, Manager, Financial Policy & Planning, 902-490-4493

Budget Allocator-Budget Distribution

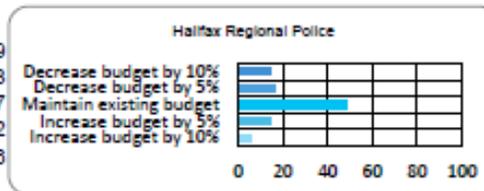
Budgets (includes data from unverified submissions)

Total Responses 695

Protective Services

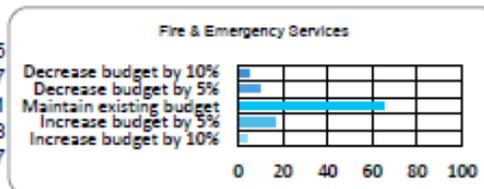
Halifax Regional Police

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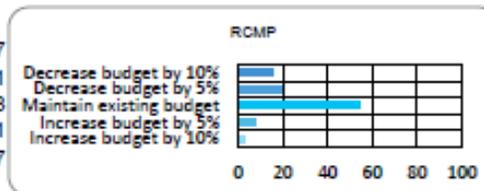
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RCMP

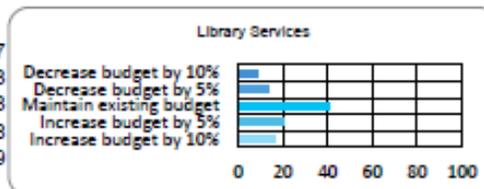
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COMMUNITY & RECREATION SERVICES

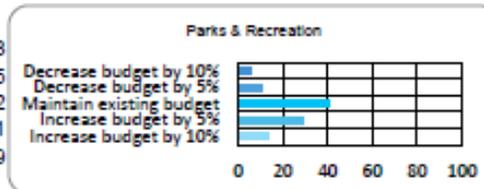
Library Services

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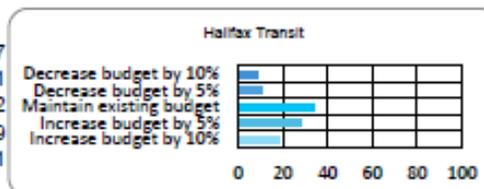
Parks & Recreation

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Halifax Transit

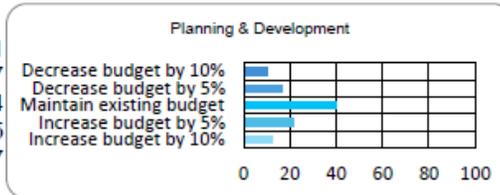
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Infrastructure, Planning & Development

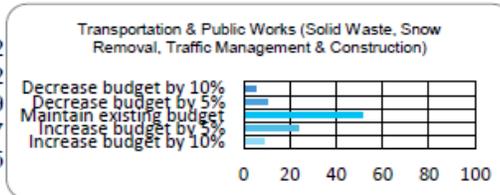
Planning & Development

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Transportation & Public Works

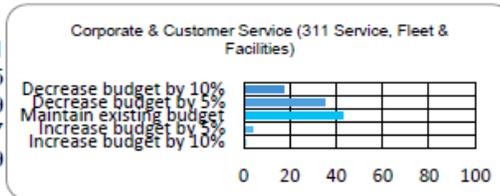
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Government & Support Services

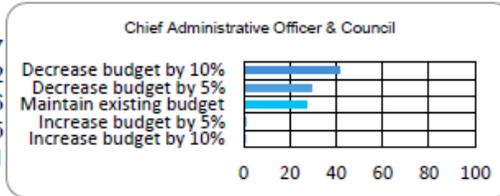
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Support Services (Finance, HR, Legal & AG)

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