

NEWS RELEASE

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Update on City's 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan

Council funded enhancements to public safety and Development Services

Summary

On Wednesday, April 14, 2021 a Finance and Audit Committee meeting was held to go over the updates to the City's 2021-2025 Financial Plan, which consists of an anticipated 2 per cent increase to cover operating costs and 1 per cent for the Asset Management Reserve for 2021. The City's budget continues to focus on Council's commitment to investing in building a healthy and connected community. During the meeting, the Committee approved the additional following items to help advance Council's strategic pillars and goals.

Enhancements to Public Safety (Governance Excellence, Livability, and Economic Health)

Nanaimo City Council is taking a multifaceted approach to addressing the complexities around some of the social issues impacting Nanaimo residents, businesses and the vulnerable street population. Responding to a need by downtown businesses, the Finance and Audit Committee has recommended approval of an additional \$400,000 in the 2021 budget to support implementation of expanded security to the entire downtown area. This added public safety measure will provide coverage and support during evening hours to help members of the public who live, work, and explore downtown feel more secure.

To help recover some of public safety enhancement costs, the City is in the process of submitting an application to the [Strengthening Communities' Services Program](#), which is a shared funding program provided by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia to support unsheltered homeless populations and address related community impacts.

The Finance and Audit Committee also expedited the development of a Public Safety Action Plan from 2022 to 2021 by approving \$50,000 for the creation of the Plan. Key stakeholders such as Nanaimo RCMP, the City's Bylaw Enforcement Division, and private securities companies currently under contract will meet in the coming weeks to identify how to strengthen public safety in the downtown area, identify security gap needs, and provide recommendations for Council's considerations.

Improvements to Development Services (Governance Excellence and Economic Health)

The City of Nanaimo has been experiencing strong development activity in recent years, which has placed a high and sustained demand on the services of the Building Inspection Section. In keeping with the City's commitment to service excellence and continuous improvement, the City recently completed a [Building Permit Function Review](#). The Finance and Audit Committee approved the following three recommendations, which came out of the Building Permit Function Review:

- That Council support the creation of two building permit fast track streams as recommended in the Building Permit Function Review, add an additional Building Supervisor and an additional Building Official.
- That Council support the investment in technology as recommended in the Building Permit Function Review to support implementation of improvements to the online application system including ability for cost recovery option for credit card fees.
- That Council the implementation of the recommendations in the Building Permit Function Review by allocating \$25,000 in 2021 for consulting services to assist with:
 - Developing a term of reference for Joint Building Permit Advisory Working Group
 - Developing eligible criteria for the proposed Fast Track Program & specific elements, requirements and terms for the proposed Approved Professionals Pilot Project

- Reviewing and updating the internal process guides and supporting the development of an internal service agreement

To help recover costs associated with these recommendations, the Finance and Audit Committee recommended that Council direct Staff to [submit an application](#) to the Local Government Development Approvals Program for the Development Approval Improvement project, and provide overall grant management.

The 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan will be going for three readings at the May 3, 2021 Council Meeting.

Strategic Link: The 2021-2025 Financial Plan supports Governance Excellence through a number of new initiatives and additions to staffing levels to ensure effective service delivery to residents.

Key Points

- Municipalities must set their tax rates for each property class, by bylaw, before May 15 of each year, and they must submit their tax bylaw to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, which reviews and publishes annual tax rate and tax revenue information.
- The City of Nanaimo's anticipated property tax increase for 2021 is set at 3 percent (2 per cent anticipated increase to cover operating costs and 1 per cent for the Asset Management Reserve for 2021).
- The City also collects fees and taxes on behalf of Regional District of Nanaimo (rdn.bc.ca), Vancouver Island Regional Library (virl.bc.ca), School District 68 (sd68.bc.ca) and BC assessment (bcassessment.ca), which is not reflected in the 3 percent tax rate as the City is waiting for the rates to be provided by the various authorities.
- The City owns and maintains over \$3 billion in infrastructure assets such as roads, water mains, facilities, drainage, parks and the sewer system.

Quotes

"As a Council, we have the daunting task of being stewards of the good citizens of Nanaimo's taxes, while simultaneously addressing social issues and being responsible for maintaining and adding to the \$3 billion plus in infrastructure, which includes assets such as roads, water mains, facilities, drainage, parks and the sewer system. In the end, we chose to balance community needs in the midst of the unique challenges we continue to face, together, as a community."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

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