

## Town council gives nod to 2017 operating budget

Orangeville home owners are looking at an average increase of \$126.44 on the town's portion of their annual property tax bill after Orangeville Council approved the first draft of its 2017 operating budget on Tuesday.

The budget called for an overall 4.6 percent tax hike.

The news may come as a shock to some residents following claims by Mayor Jeremy Williams via social media that taxes would not be going up. Speaking to the *Citizen* following Tuesday's budget meeting, Mayor Williams maintained his belief that residents would not be seeing a 'true' tax rise in 2017.

'Of course, it makes a better headline if you say that taxes are going up 4.6 percent, but that isn't really true,' Mayor Williams said. 'The truth is that it's very difficult to pinpoint exactly what sort of tax increase, if any, people are going to be seeing as a result of this

budget? A rise will essentially come down to inflation and the value of a resident's home. There are some that might go up, there are some that might go down, but we're using that average figure of \$126.44 as an increase, largely because of the phased in assessment growth.'

The phased-in property assessments were introduced by the Province to cushion sharp increases in property values instead of changing them once every four years when the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) does its new appraisals. Coun. Scott Wilson highlighted the misinformation that was floating around social media early on in Monday's (Oct. 24) budget kickoff meeting. He asked that Treasurer Marc Villeneuve provide some clarification on rumours surrounding a zero percent tax increase.

'I think we have to make it clear to the public that right now there is an increase (in taxes) proposed,' Coun. Wilson said.

Following the clarification, Mr. Villeneuve launched right into the Town's operating numbers for 2017 with the municipality anticipating a 2.3 percent increase in net operating costs, going from \$28,703,112 in 2016 to a proposed \$29,660,685 in 2017. A large chunk of that total is taken up by Police Services, which comes at a cost of \$8,516,956 in 2017. Public Works and Transportation (\$5,739,406), Fire Services (\$3,221,355) and Parks and Recreation (\$3,539,741) represent the next highest outlays in 2017

For the first time in municipal history the Council included a multi-year proposal in its operating budget covering 2018 to 2021, something Mayor Williams was especially happy with.

'Part of my platform when I was running for mayor was that I would try and adopt a five-year capital plan, so I'm extremely thrilled that council has seen the value in putting together a long-term plan,' Mayor Williams said. 'That's exactly the sort of thing that an organization of this size needs and we're there now. I'm super thrilled about it.'