



**The Corporation of the Town of LaSalle**

**Minutes of the Budget Meeting of the Town of LaSalle Council held on**

December 4, 2024

9:00 a.m.

Council Chambers, LaSalle Civic Centre, 5950 Malden Road

Members of Council Present: Mayor Crystal Meloche, Deputy Mayor Michael Akpata, Councillor Terry Burns, Councillor Mark Carrick, Councillor Jeff Renaud, Councillor Anita Riccio-Spagnuolo

Members of Council Absent: Councillor Sue Desjarlais

Administration Present: J. Milicia, Chief Administrative Officer, P. Marra, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, J. Astrologo, Director of Council Services/Clerk, G. Beggs, Director of Planning and Development, P. Funaro, Director of Culture & Recreation, D. Hadre, Director of Strategy and Engagement, R. Hyra, Director of Human Resources, D. Langlois, Director of Finance and Treasurer, J. Osborne, Director of Public Works, E. Thiessen, Director of Fire Service/Fire Chief, M. Beggs, Manager of Roads & Parks, K. Brcic, Manager of Planning & Development, M. Cappucci, Manager of Engineering, A. Colucci, Manager of Building Services, CBO, D. Dadalt, Legal Counsel, N. DiGesù, Manager of IT, G. Ferraro, Manager of Finance & Deputy Treasurer, L. Jean, Deputy Clerk, I. Middleton, Supervisor of IT, L. Petros, Manager of Water/Wastewater, M. Seguin, Deputy Fire Chief, O. Stichhaller, Supervisor of Recreation, D. Strajnic, Manager of Human Resources, B. MacMillan, Drainage Superintendent, L. Uszynski, Records & Information Management Specialist, M. Pearce, Chief of Police, C. Bartlett, Supervisor of Engineering, S. Bisson, Manager of Culture and Recreation, R. Mamak, Human Resources Advisor, M. Masanovich, Manager of Fleet and Facilities, M. Abbruzzese, Supervisor of Revenue

**A. Opening Business**

1. Call to Order

Mayor Meloche called the Meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

2. Land Acknowledgement Statement

Mayor Meloche read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

3. Moment of Silent Reflection and Playing of National Anthem

4. Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

Deputy Mayor Akpata declared a conflict of interest on Item D, specifically related to the LaSalle Police Service Departmental 2025 Budget Review and the 2025 Capital Budget Review, citing a conflict arising due to the nature of his employment.

**B. 2025 Budget Summary & Corporate Overview**

1. CAO Introduction

Mr. Milicia provided introductory remarks and thanked the Finance Team for their efforts on preparing the budget document in a timely manner, allowing members of the public an opportunity to provide feedback to members of Council and Administration.

Mr. Milicia proceeded to review his presentation.

2. Strategic Plan Review

Mr. Marra provided an overview of the presentation on the Strategic Plan. He reviewed each pillar of the plan and offered a brief explanation of the projects currently being undertaken to support the pillars.

Mayor Meloche recessed the Meeting at 10:23 a.m.

The Meeting reconvened at 10:40 a.m.

3. Finance Summary and Overview

Mr. Langlois presented Report Item E.4, titled Historical Efficiencies Gained and Service Level Enhancements. (FIN-28-2024)

Mr. Ferraro delivered the Financial Summary and Overview presentation, explaining that the proposed 2025 draft budget includes a levy of \$50.4 million, representing a 1.1846% increase from the 2024 budget.

Councillor Burns requested that Administration prepare a report detailing the costs associated with provincial downloads and legislative changes.

**C. Delegations**

Mr. Calandra, resident, expressed opposition to the proposed property tax rate increase. He noted that LaSalle is proposing an increase of between 7% and 8%, which he described as unsustainable. He urged the Town to explore ways to reduce the tax rate.

Mayor Meloche recessed the Meeting for lunch at 12:20 p.m.

Mayor Meloche reconvened the meeting at 1:19 p.m.

**D. Departmental 2025 Budget Review & 2025 Capital Budget Review**

**Mayor and Council and CAO**

Mr. Langlois presented the Mayor & Council and CAO Budget.

Mr. Milicia stated that a report would be brought forward in the new year regarding the Council Grants Initiative budget item. This report will include an update on the unused amounts from 2024 and will propose a recommended framework for the use and allocation of those funds.

**Corporate Revenue**

Mr. Langlois presented the Corporate Revenue.

## **Finance & IT**

Mr. Langlois presented the Finance and IT Budget.

## **Council Services**

Ms. Astrologo, Ms. Jean, and Ms. Usyznski presented the Council Services Budget.

## **Human Resources**

Mr. Hyra and Ms. Strajnic presented the Human Resources Budget.

## **Strategy & Engagement**

Ms. Hadre presented the Strategy & Engagement Budget.

Mayor Meloche recessed the meeting at 3:24 p.m. and advised the meeting will reconvene tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

Mayor Meloche reconvened the meeting on December 5, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

At 9:01 a.m. Deputy Mayor Akpata excused himself from the meeting for the duration of the presentation of the Police Budget.

## **Police Service**

Chief Pearce and Deputy Chief Woods presented the Police Budget.

Deputy Mayor Akpata returned to the Meeting at 9:28 a.m.

## **Planning & Development**

Ms. Beggs and Mr. Colucci presented the Planning & Development Budget.

## **Public Works**

Mr. Osborne presented the Public Works Budget.

275/24

Moved by: Councillor Renaud

Seconded by: Councillor Carrick

That the \$3 million funding allocation for the 12 pickleball courts at the Vollmer Complex remain in the budget, with Administration authorized to spend up to 10% of the allocation for detailed design work, and that Administration return to Council for further direction before proceeding with the project beyond this stage.

**Carried.**

Mayor Meloche recessed the Meeting at 11:19 a.m.

The Meeting reconvened at 11:30 a.m.

## **Culture and Recreation**

Ms. Furnaro and Mr. Bisson presented the Culture and Recreation Budget.

Mayor Meloche indicated that following the closed session Council will break for lunch and reconvene at 1:00 p.m.

276/24

Moved by: Councillor Renaud

Seconded by: Councillor Riccio-Spagnuolo

That Council moves into Closed Session pursuant to sections 239(2)(b) and (d) related to personal matters about identifiable individuals and labour relations or employee negotiations.

**Carried.**

Mayor Meloche reconvened the Meeting at 1:03 p.m.

### **Fire Service**

Chief Theissen reviewed the Fire Service Budget.

### **Non-Departmental**

Mr. Langlois presented the Non-Departmental Budget.

## **E. Report Out of Closed Session**

Mayor Meloche reported that Council met in Closed Session before the lunch break and received personal and employment-related information related to specific employees within the organization.

## **F. Reports**

### **1. 2025 Development Charge Indexing**

Mr. Langlois presented the report.

278/24

Moved by: Councillor Carrick

Seconded by: Councillor Riccio-Spagnuolo

That the report of the Director of Finance dated November 15, 2024 (FIN-33-2024) regarding the 2025 Development Charge Indexing be received.

**Carried.**

### **2. Application Based Funding and Grant Update**

Mr. Ferraro presented the report.

279/24

Moved by: Councillor Renaud

Seconded by: Councillor Burns

That the report of the Manager of Finance/Deputy Treasurer dated November 1, 2024 (FIN-29-2024) regarding Application Based Funding and Grant Update be received.

**Carried.**

### **3. Town of LaSalle 2025 Schedule of Fees**

Mr. Ferraro presented the report.

280/24

Moved by: Councillor Riccio-Spagnuolo

Seconded by: Councillor Carrick

That the report of the Manager of Finance/Deputy Treasurer dated November 14, 2024 (FIN-30-2024) regarding Town of LaSalle 2025 Schedule of Fees be received for information;

And that, Council endorses the new fee schedule and directs administration to bring forward the fees and charges bylaw at a future regular meeting for Council adoption.

**Carried.**

4. Historical Efficiencies Gained and Service Level Enhancements

Mr. Langlois presented this report during Day 1 of Budget Deliberations.

281/24

Moved by: Councillor Carrick

Seconded by: Deputy Mayor Akpata

That the report of the Director of Finance dated October 31, 2024 (FIN-28-2024) regarding Historical efficiencies gained and service level enhancements be received.

**Carried.**

**G. Comments and Direction of Council**

Councillor Carrick thanked and praised Administration for their work. He explained that as a Councillor he must find a balance between the pressures on the Town and the residents financial needs. Councillor Carrick requested that \$600K be removed from the Capital Budget, the amounts allocated to the facility build up account be removed, and suggested a staggering the hiring for the positions proposed in the budget.

Councillor Carrick also requested that reports now include reserve transfer information. He explained that when Council is being asked to use money held in reserve he would like Administration to indicate which reserve is being drawn from and the balance remaining in that reserve.

Councillor Riccio-Spagnuolo commented that she is happy to support the hiring of additional staff, but would like to see the proposed tax rate reduced, noting that the proposed increase will create financial difficulties for many residents. She indicated she was agreeable to reducing or eliminating reserve contributions.

Councillor Renaud acknowledged the challenges faced each year during budget deliberations. He acknowledged that there will always be members of the community that want to see a lower tax rate, but Council also needs to ensure that the Corporation has the tools and resources it needs to deliver services to the public. He indicated that he would entertain a list from Administration suggesting reductions to reduce the tax rate.

Councillor Burns acknowledged Administration and expressed gratitude for their efforts. He also noted that members of the community are struggling financially. He would like to see some reductions in the budget that show good faith efforts to lower the tax rate. He noted that LaSalle doesn't see the same funding levels and grants that other local municipalities receive despite the excellent service that it provides. He further explained that this inequity is one of the reasons why he wants to know the costs of the downloads by the province.

Deputy Mayor Akpata indicated that he would like Administration to consider seeking pre-approval for vehicles so that there is the opportunity to order vehicles ahead of time to realize some cost savings. He would also like to see

Administration track the overtime they are working. He suggested that the Town celebrate their successes and educate the public about what is done, similar to the Efficiencies Report presented by Mr. Langlois. Finally, he acknowledged the economic realities in the community and asked that the budget be responsibly reduced.

Mayor Meloche noted that the Town is growing and Council has been presented with a fair and responsible budget, giving staff the tools they need to deliver services. She agreed with the comments from Members of Council, and acknowledged that there are members of the public who are struggling and Council needs to be considerate of those people in the community. She explained that before adopting a budget Council needs to look out for the best interests of the residents of today and those in the future, and asked Administration to consider some of the reductions mentioned. She indicated that Council will consider the proposed reductions after the break. She reminded everyone that the draft budget proposes an increase of \$209.24 to the average home in LaSalle.

Mayor Meloche recessed the meeting at 2:03 p.m.

Mayor Meloche reconvened the meeting at 2:28 p.m.

Mr. Milicia presented options to reduce the proposed 2025 Budget: i) reductions that have limited future impact, ii) reductions which will defer contributions to a future budget, and iii) reductions that are not recommended by Administration.

He explained that insurance renewal has come in less than originally anticipated and those amounts can be removed from the budget. Administration can also defer the hiring of a few of the positions for the next few months. He further stated that Administration is comfortable with reducing contributions to the Strategic Plan, Asset Management Plan, Fire Master Plan, and Information Technology reserves by various amounts. These reductions will bring the municipal tax rate increase to 5.98%, resulting in an increase of \$178.89 for the average home in LaSalle.

He explained that Council could further reduce the tax rate by decreasing the Asset Management Plan contribution by \$400,000 and the LaSalle Landing contribution by \$50,000. This would lower the proposed municipal increase to \$149.52 for the average home in LaSalle; however, Administration does not recommend these additional reductions.

Mayor Meloche expressed sincere appreciation to members of Council, Administration and residents who provided valuable feedback. She also thanked each member of Council for their thoughtful deliberations, their commitment to fiscal responsibility and their continued dedication to ensuring the well-being of residents.

Mayor Meloche thanked all residents who provided input, engaged in the process and reminded residents that their voices are vital to shaping a budget that reflects the community's values and priorities.

Mayor Meloche highlighted that difficult choices were made but the Town has agreed on a budget that strikes a balance between managing fiscal realities and investing in service and infrastructure that the Town requires. She stated that with continued collaboration, the Town will be able to address the needs of residents during these challenging financial times.

Lastly, Mayor Meloche noted that the process may have not resolved all

concerns but with continued communication, we can ensure that the Town of LaSalle remains strong and vibrant and is prepared for the future.

282/24

Moved by: Councillor Burns

Seconded by: Councillor Renaud

That Council adopts the revised 2025 Municipal Budget, as presented by Administration, which includes reductions of \$465,000, and amounts to a municipal tax rate increase of 5.98%, and an overall tax rate increase (which includes the municipal, county and education levies) of 4.81%.

**Carried.**

283/24

Moved by: Councillor Carrick

Seconded by: Councillor Burns

That Administration bring forward a report in Q1 or Q2 of 2025 regarding the status of the reserves and funding levels for the LaSalle Landing.

**Carried.**

#### **H. Confirmatory By-law**

284/24

Moved by: Councillor Renaud

Seconded by: Councillor Carrick

That Confirmatory By-law 8945 for the Town's budget deliberations, held on December 4 and 5, 2024, be given a first, second, and third reading and finally passed.

**Carried.**

#### **I. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at the Call of the Chair 2:47 p.m.

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Mayor

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Clerk