



SUBJECT: 2019 Budget Engagement

TO: Committee of the Whole - Budget

FROM: Finance Department

Report Number: F-07-19

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 435-03

Date to Committee: February 21, 2019

Date to Council: March 25, 2019

Recommendation:

Receive and file finance department report F-07-19 regarding 2019 budget engagement.

Purpose:

- An Engaging City
- Good Governance

Background and Discussion:

Open and transparent government remains a priority for the city. Staff have continued to enhance the public engagement process for the 2019 proposed budget. The following report outlines the efforts and results of the budget engagement process used this year as well as provides an outline of the feedback received from the public to date.

City of Burlington Website and Social Media

Staff continue to use the city's website as a communication tool to share videos, webcasts, online surveys and information.

The City is continuously looking for ways to improve and increase transparency for the public. A new "Budget Basics" video was launched in January 2019, outlining how the City develops its budgets and where taxpayer dollars are spent. Since posting the video to the City's budget webpage and on www.getinvolvedburlington.ca, it has been viewed

120 times through the Vimeo player, and 1,743 views on Facebook (since January 17th). In total the video has reached 2,003 Facebook users, received 45 engagements (comments) and has been shared 15 times. On Twitter the video was posted (via a YouTube link) a total of four times since January 17th. The posts have garnered 6,295 impressions with 9 retweets, 8 likes and 62 video views through YouTube.

The dedicated Budget webpage with a friendly URL, www.burlington.ca/budget, has received 1,303 unique page views since January 1st, 2019. This is an increase of 110.84% over 2018. The average time spent on the page is 4 minutes and 30 seconds, an increase of 49.91% from 2018. The top search terms related to the budget are “budget” (60), “Committee of the Whole – Budget” (23), “budget 2019” (21) and “2019 budget” (20).

On this webpage, a link is provided to Burlington Open Budget which is a data visualization tool, allowing residents to view the City’s 2019 proposed budget data in an intuitive and illustrative form. The City has provided a similar tool for the past three years, with the most recent version providing enhanced project mapping and graphing capabilities. Since it launched in January 2019, there have been a 372 unique sessions with a total of 5,463 page views of budget information.

A communications campaign to raise awareness about the proposed 2019 budget and to encourage the public to share their input on the proposed spending priorities began in January 2019.

To date, on social media, the city has posted 12 posts to Twitter and 3 posts to Facebook related to the proposed 2019 budget. The posts on Twitter have received 19,215 impressions, 23 retweets and 25 likes. On Facebook, the three budget posts have reached 7,111 Facebook users and received 10,011 impressions, 31 reactions, 6 comments and 18 shares.

As part of the communications outreach, two media releases have been shared with an average click through rate of 32%. Budget information was also shared in a Burlington Post ad on Jan. 24, 2019 and in the January issue of City Talk online.

Get Involved Burlington Website

The Get Involved Burlington website is the City's new online engagement site that allows residents and business owners to contribute their ideas and feedback related to the City of Burlington.

On this website, with respect to the 2019 proposed budget, residents can:

- Take a “Quick Poll”
- Post a question and receive an answer related the 2019 proposed budget
- Provide their feedback

- View the 2019 budget timeline
- View the “Budget Basics” video
- Access Burlington Open Budget

For more information on the results of the Get Involved Burlington engagement please reference Appendix A.

Mayor’s 2019 Budget – Telephone Town Hall

On Thursday February 7, 2019, the City of Burlington hosted a Telephone Town Hall on the 2019 proposed budget. Participants learned about and discussed the 2019 proposed budget priorities with Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and senior staff.

Burlington residential phone numbers were randomly selected to be part of the telephone town hall. In this live call-in session, participants asked questions about the 2019 proposed budget and responded to polling questions. These were the same polling questions that were posted on the Get Involved Burlington website. There was an emphasis placed on resident satisfaction with value for service, increased funding for transit, support for city infrastructure renewal funding, and repurposing of the hospital levy to infrastructure

For more information on the Telephone Town Hall please reference Appendix B.

2019 Budget – Emailed Feedback

Following the Telephone Town Hall the Mayor’s Office received feedback from citizens via email. This feedback can be found in Appendix C.

Mayor’s 2019 Budget – In-person Town Hall

On Monday February 11, 2019, the City of Burlington hosted an in-person Town Hall meeting on the 2019 proposed budget in the auditorium at Central Arena. The format of this meeting included an overview presentation from Finance staff followed by an opportunity for the public to ask questions and respond to the same polling questions.

For more information on the in-person Town Hall please reference Appendix D.

Ward Meetings

In addition to the In-person Town Hall meeting, finance staff attended the following ward meetings to provide a budget presentation and answer questions:

Date	Ward	Location
Thursday January 31, 2019 5:30pm – 7:30pm	Ward 3	Brant Hills Community Centre
Thursday February 7, 2019 6:30pm – 8:30pm	Ward 3/6	Conservation Halton
Wednesday February 13, 2019 7:00pm – 9:00pm	Ward 1	NUVO Network
Wednesday February 13, 2019 7:00pm – 8:30pm	Ward 6	Haber Community Centre

Financial Matters:

The cost of the new “Budget Basics” video was approximately \$2,400. The telephone town hall was facilitated by an external company at a cost of \$4,600. Advertising costs were comparable to previous years (approximately \$400 for an ad in the Burlington Post).

Public Engagement Matters:

Utilizing the website and online mechanisms appear to be a good communication medium to inform the public and staff will continue to use this platform for 2019 and future budgets.

The city’s website is used as a communication medium through videos, webcast and online surveys and different forms of social media to promote the upcoming committee meetings for the review of the proposed 2019 capital and operating budgets.

In addition, 4 ward meetings and the Mayor’s Telephone Town Hall and In-person Town Hall allowed residents to ask 2019 proposed budget related questions and receive feedback.

Conclusion:

Staff continue to look for ways to engage the public in the budget process using various communication approaches. Responses from the recent online budget engagement surveys are consolidated and attached in the appendices of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

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Appendices:

- A. Get Involved Burlington Website Results
- B. Telephone Town Hall Results
- C. Emailed Feedback
- D. In-person Town Hall Results

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, Director of Finance and Director of Legal. Final approval is by the City Manager.