

Budget deliberations: council preparing to finalize its 2016 spending

TREVOR NICHOLS
REGIONAL REPORTER
tnichols@aberdeenpublishing.com

Early budget deliberations continued on Feb. 9 as council considered its 2016 general fund operating budget.

This year's steeper taxes were reflected in the \$70,718 increase in revenue from parcel taxes projected over 2015, and the \$223,728 revenue increase projected from a two per cent general tax increase.

Major variances proposed in the finance and administration 2016 budget were an extra \$10,179 for information technology upgrades (including six new workstation replacements), \$30,000 for a rebranding project, \$15,000

less spent on legal costs and \$14,086 less spent on contract services.

Community services proposed spending \$25,957 less in 2016, thanks to less spending on the seniors housing project, arts council (which asked for less money than last year) and community events.

The proposed recreation budget showed \$81,916 of increased spending, largely thanks to the \$70,000 cost of updating the Recreation Master Plan.

Parks also showed \$82,449 of extra spending compared to last year, with increases coming thanks to a new seasonal position (\$58,190), improvements to the cemetery trail (\$25,250) and top dressing Cousins Park (\$9,000).

Proposed facilities spending crept higher in 2016 as well, with \$84,444 extra coming from \$7,000 of changes to the municipal hall, \$58,000 in asbestos mitigation and repairs to the fire hall roof and museum windows.

Protective Services asked for \$19,028 in extra spending (lessened by a \$24,790 grant), and the proposed planning and development services budget jumped by \$73,721 thanks to special projects in 2016.

Finally, the operations department budget showed an extra \$6,012 in spending in 2016.

The operating budget review was one of many that have, and will continue to, happen as council prepares to finalize its 2016 spending. Those final decisions will get underway within the next few months.

Federal funds flow to Okanagan to ensure future water sustainability

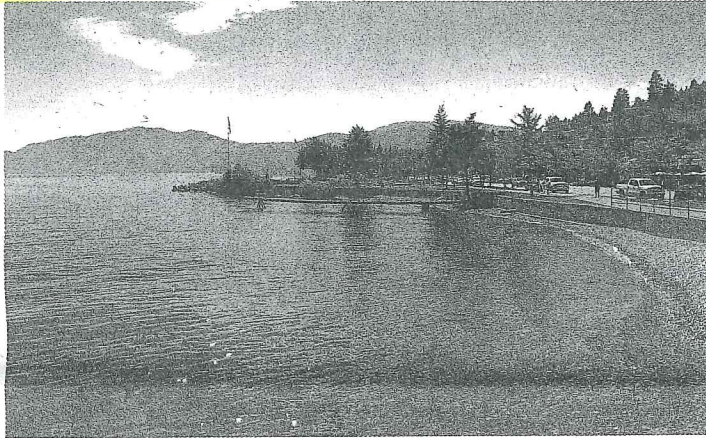
VIEW STAFF

A two-year study aimed at examining the Environmental Flow Needs (EFNs) – or the water needs of fish and aquatic ecosystems – in the Okanagan will soon get underway thanks to a federal Gas Tax Fund grant.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), announced the \$397,000 cash injection during a press conference held in Kelowna on Feb. 12.

According to OBWB chair Doug Findlater, the first phase of the project will include approximately 10 stream-by-stream studies, using flow monitoring equipment in streams identified as important for fish habitats throughout the valley.

The work, he added, will be a partnership between the OBWB and Okanagan Nation Alliance's (ONA) Fisheries Department and the B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and



FILE PHOTO

Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO).

"Water is precious in the Okanagan, where we have one of the lowest rates of water available per person than anywhere in Canada, but have one of the highest rates of use in the country," Findlater explained.

"This is an essential process needed to sustainably manage the

waters of this valley."

Through the federal Gas Tax Fund, Kelowna-Lake Country MP Stephen Fuhr added, the government of Canada allows communities in British Columbia, and all across Canada, to fund local infrastructure projects and strategic priorities that best meet their communities' needs.

The OBWB's Executive Director, Anna Warwick Sears, says the need for this project was identified back in 2010 when the agency completed Phase 2 of its Water Supply and Demand Study.

"Since then, concerns have continued to grow about the number of water licences on Okanagan

streams, so we started working with the province on how to make the best licensing decisions. But then we both realized there's a critical information gap – we need to know the needs of fish before allocating more licences. In fact, B.C.'s new Water Sustainability Act will require environmental needs be taken into

consideration," she explained.

"As we reflect on the drought of last summer and the competing needs for water, and as those needs continue to multiply with population growth, this project is aimed at helping make the best water use decisions possible," Sears added. It will help the province with water licence decisions, but it will also help local governments

make better informed development and infrastructure planning decisions. And, it can also help ONA and FLNRO in their fishery recovery efforts.

"Instead of waiting to see the fish gasping in the streams, this will allow us to know how much water they need," said Sears. "It's like an advanced warning system, letting us know when and where restrictions and regulations are needed."



IMPERIAL OPTICAL

Single Vision Lenses & Frames
\$109

Digital Progressive Lenses & Frames
\$269

250-768-6627

218-3645 Gosset, Westbank (By the Capital Theatre)



Sunnyside Market

BC LIQUOR AGENCY COLD BEER & WINE

GROCERIES/CONVENIENCE

BELOW BC LIQUOR STORES PRICING!

Unbeatable prices! If we don't have what you're looking for, let us know and we will bring it in

Your One Stop Shop For All Your Needs!

5854 Beach Ave., Peachland • 250-767-2361 • Open 9am-9pm 7 days a week

Comments, questions or concerns: feel free to email us directly at sunnysidemarket@shaw.ca

COME SEE OUR GREAT DEALS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY



BUD 6-PACK
\$9.99

taxes included + deposit

