

January 20, 2023

Both Zorra and Oxford have passed their 2023 budgets.

Oxford County's tax levy increase is a 6.3% increase over 2022, which means that after growth is considered the average residential property will pay a 3.5% increase over 2022. Compared to a CPI over 2022 of about 6.9% this is a responsible budget that balances cost pressures and community goals to continue to deliver the services Oxford residents depend on. Key projects include construction upgrades to Wastewater Treatment Plants, water/wastewater servicing of employment lands in the County, various bridge and culvert rehabilitation and replacements, and various renewable energy projects to reach our commitment to 100% renewable energy.

0.3% of the increase is due to Bill 23 – “More Homes Built Faster Act”. 0.4% is due to an increased commitment of \$1.25M in 2023 taking Oxford up to an ongoing commitment of \$3 million per year in future budgets for new affordable housing development in Oxford. This is a strong recognition of “putting our money where our mouth is” on the housing crisis.

Zorra's tax levy increase is a 8.15% over 2022, which means that after growth is considered the average residential property will pay a 6.72% increase over 2022. Again, compared to a 2022 CPI of 6.9% this is a responsible budget. Included the 2023 tax rate increase, over the past 6 years this is an average increase of 2.46%.

Some of the key projects delivered by this budget are new fire apparatus, the Township's first electric pickup truck to understand feasibility and continue our commitment to 100% renewable energy, various roads projects (full list available on the Public Works site), a sidewalk extension for Middleton St (walkable communities), improvements to ice making equipment at both arenas, an 80' x 40' pavilion at the Embro Community Centre, construction of a new municipal office and 88 space childcare, various improvements in all parks, including a commitment to larger more varied play structures.

In my opinion the most important feature of this budget is that Zorra Council has decided to be more deliberate in funding reserves to ensure that the money to look after assets like roads, bridges, and buildings is there in the future without large property tax increases.

Next, Zorra is revising its Strategic Plan! The Strategic Plan sets broad priorities for Council and Staff based on the communities' needs and wants. Please check the website and talk to your Councillor about the goals you have for your community and all of Zorra. We've achieved big things, and this is how it's done: by identifying those things (no matter how big or difficult) and developing a strategy to get them done.

As always, feel free to contact me on any issue:

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