

Report

Date	November 2, 2017	File:
To	Council	
From	Tammy Isaachsen, Community Liaison	Endorsed:
Subject	Budget 2018 Town Hall Meetings: Summary of public engagement	

Purpose

This report presents feedback received from the public on the draft 2018 budget through both PlaceSpeak and three recent town hall meetings.

Background

The Municipality has been hosting Fall Town Hall meetings since 2015 to provide Council with public input on draft annual budgets. In 2017, Town Hall meetings were held in three locations: Chemainus, Crofton, and the South End.

Discussion

Promotion

In order to generate interest, raise awareness, and advertise the budget meetings, staff promoted the meetings through:

- Newspaper ads (4 in the Cowichan Valley Citizen and 2 in the Chemainus Courier)
- News release to local media (newspaper story on October 20 and radio story on October 19)
- Email invitations to community associations and Chambers of Commerce
- North Cowichan e-Newsletter
- Social media
- Municipal website
- Highway sign at Fuller Lake Arena

2018 Budget – Public Engagement Goals

Meeting formats were designed to best meet Council’s engagement objectives, which were to:

- Provide information on the 2018-19 budget and key spending areas;
- Obtain input on priorities and projects;
- Continue to show the community that the Municipality is listening;
- Provide residents with access to elected officials and senior staff; and
- Refine the format and tools learning from previous years.

Design/Format

Three meetings were planned this year, combining the two previous “south end” meeting locations into a single meeting in a more central venue in the south end (Island Savings Centre). The meetings took place from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. on the following dates:

- October 23, 2017 – Island Savings Centre
- October 25, 2017 – Crofton Community Centre
- October 26, 2017 – Chemainus Seniors’ Centre

The format of the meetings was refined this year to incorporate more interactive engagement activities and eliminate the formal PowerPoint presentation from previous years. Rather than the presentation, preliminary budget information was displayed on storyboards with staff available to address inquiries and questions. The engagement questions sought to learn participant’s top priority spending areas, as well as elicit feedback on what North Cowichan is doing well and where we could improve. A question about community values was also asked in an effort to learn about how North Cowichan residents feel about their community. The second hour of the meetings was dedicated to a question and answer session with participants posing questions to the mayor (and staff). Feedback received is summarized below.

Attendance

In total, approximately 179 members of the public participated in attending the town hall meetings and the Budget 2018 topic on PlaceSpeak. These numbers breakdown as follows:

- 60 people – South End (Island Savings Centre)
- 38 people - Crofton
- 24 people - Chemainus
- 57 people - connected on PlaceSpeak

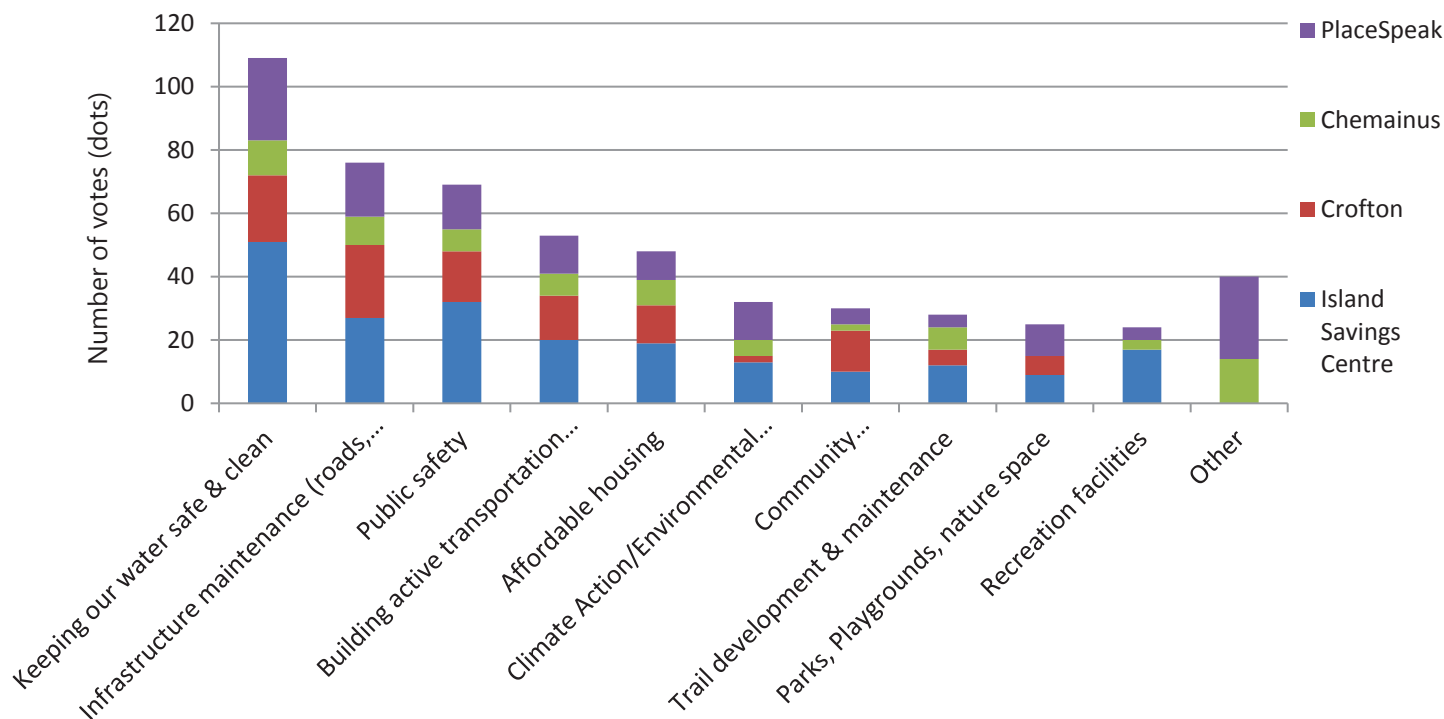
These participation numbers demonstrate positive continuity and momentum from the last two years (approximately 170 people participated in 2015 and 135 participated in 2016).

Summary of Participant Feedback

This section provides a summary of feedback received from the three engagement questions.

QUESTION 1:

Developing the municipal budget always comes with competing priorities. Use your “dots” to vote for the area(s) that are most important to you. Note – you can put all your dots in one area, or spread them amongst different areas.



A note on the "other" category in the above graph – at the Chemainus meeting, participants felt strongly that an "Economic Development/Job Creation" category should be added to the above options, which received 14 votes. As Chemainus was the final meeting, this category was not an option at the previous two meetings. On the PlaceSpeak survey, voters had the option of suggesting an item that was not on the list; for those that did this, the most common answer was "Community engagement and consultation about municipal initiatives."

QUESTION 2:

The Municipality serves its citizens by providing local services, facilities, safety and infrastructure for the community. What do you think North Cowichan is doing well? In what areas could we improve?

Question	Summary of themes/most common answers
What do you think North Cowichan is doing well?	Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads Dike project Trails Cycling network Community improvements
	Community consultation and Communication
	Parks and recreation services

	A focus on affordable housing
In what areas could we improve?	Water management and education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the weir [<i>note: this is outside the Municipality's jurisdiction</i>] • Education on not buying bottled water • "Over consumption" of the aquifer
	Affordable housing
	Comments opposing specific projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sherman Road affordable housing project • Vancouver Island Motorsport Circuit – don't allow them to create more noise • York Road pedestrian bridge • Chemainus "stink"
	Policing and security
	Environmental concerns regarding climate change
	Comments requesting investment into specific projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boardwalk in Crofton • Boat launch area in Crofton • Community Centre in Chemainus
	Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed up the process, less "red tape"
	Communication / Listen to North Cowichan citizens: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More citizen involvement early on • Don't ask for input if a decision is final or close to final

QUESTION 3:

What makes you most proud of your community? What do you enjoy most about your community? What is most important to you about your community?

8 themes emerged from participant responses on these questions:

1. An engaged, supportive community
2. The natural beauty/environment that surrounds us

3. Local agriculture and food
4. The people (multiculturalism, diversity)
5. Recreational opportunities
6. Rural lifestyle
7. Environmentally conscious
8. Safe environment/sense of safety



Word map of common participant responses to question 3.

Additional Feedback – key ideas expressed during the Question & Answer sessions

1. Island Savings Centre
 - Lane Road and Sherman Road traffic circle – many residents requested that this project be expedited in the capital works plan. They feel it is currently dangerous and will get worse as the proposed additional housing is built in the neighbourhood.
 - Concerns were raised about traffic in the area of Mt. Prevost School.
 - It was suggested that the Municipality consider more referendums on proposed large-scale capital projects. It was acknowledged that what constitutes “large-scale” is subjective and that referendums themselves can be quite costly.
 - Policing costs – attendees asked about the municipality’s budget requirements for policing. It was asked whether North Cowichan has ever considered a private police force.
 - Water – “the biggest issue”
 - Chlorination
 - Some residents think there isn’t “enough” water in the South End because of annual water restrictions and low flows in the Cowichan River
 - Affordable housing – concerns about the proposed affordable housing project on Sherman Road and who that might bring to the neighbourhood.
2. Crofton
 - Policing/RCMP – concerns over increasing costs, new detachment.

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- Osborne Bay Road watermain extension: discussion and clarification that this will be a secure backup water system for Crofton.
 - There were questions about the plans and development status of the Heggund property off Peterson Street
 - Residents expressed gratitude for the recently completed revitalization work.
 - Residents requested lights and a crosswalk on Chaplin Street to the skate park. The Mayor suggested that residents submit a formal request via email.
 - Residents expressed that the boat launch area and parking lot is highly used and has not received enough attention.
 - Residents would like to see a trail for walking and cycling along Osborne Bay Road.

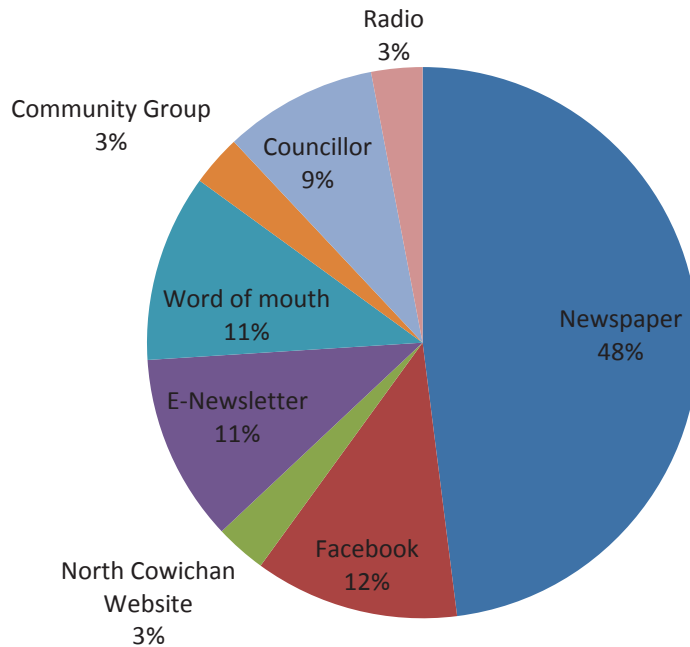
3. Chemainus

- Sewer service for Fuller Lake area – the golf course should be off septic out of concern for pollution into Fuller Lake.
- Affordable housing
 - Asked for an update on the Willow Street project
 - Expressed support for “tiny homes”
- Library – asked for an update.
- Old Elementary School Site – asked for an update.
- Policing – residents want police to be “seen” in Chemainus, discussion around the Community Policing Office that has closed down in Chemainus.
- Chemainus water supply – asked for an update.
- Odour from the highway (industrial area) –asked for info/update.

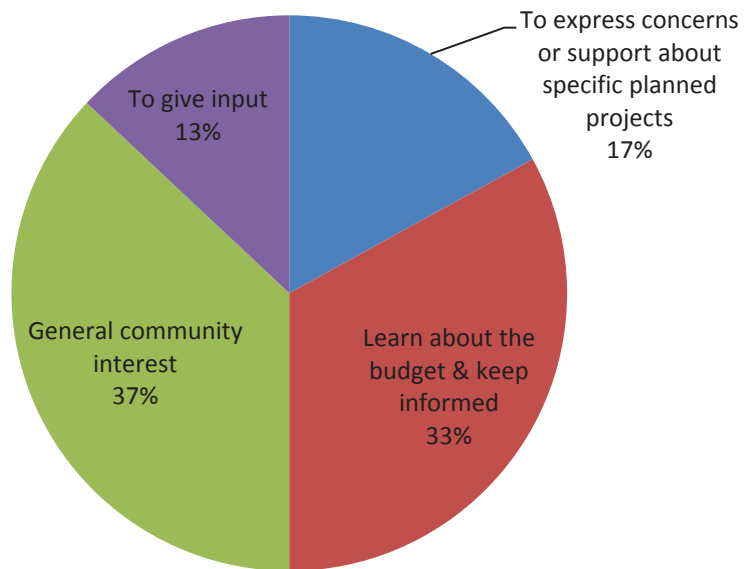
Evaluation Form Results

Attendees were asked to complete an evaluation form to provide feedback on the value of the meetings. Attendee feedback is always very helpful and will be considered in the planning and design of future budget town hall and other community meetings. A summary of the responses is provided below.

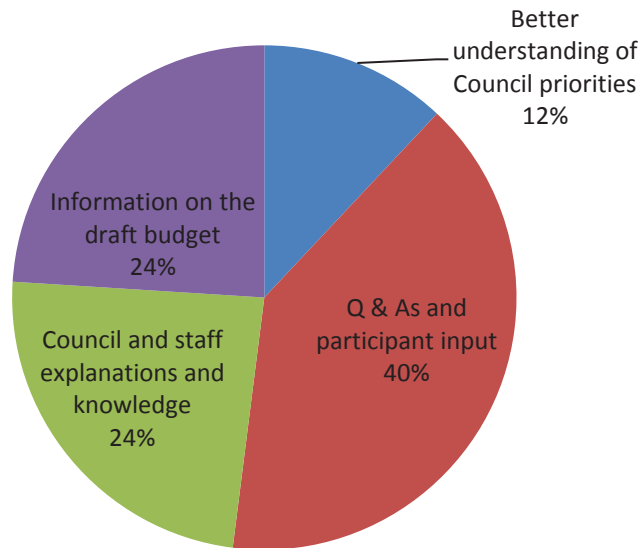
How did you hear about today's meeting?



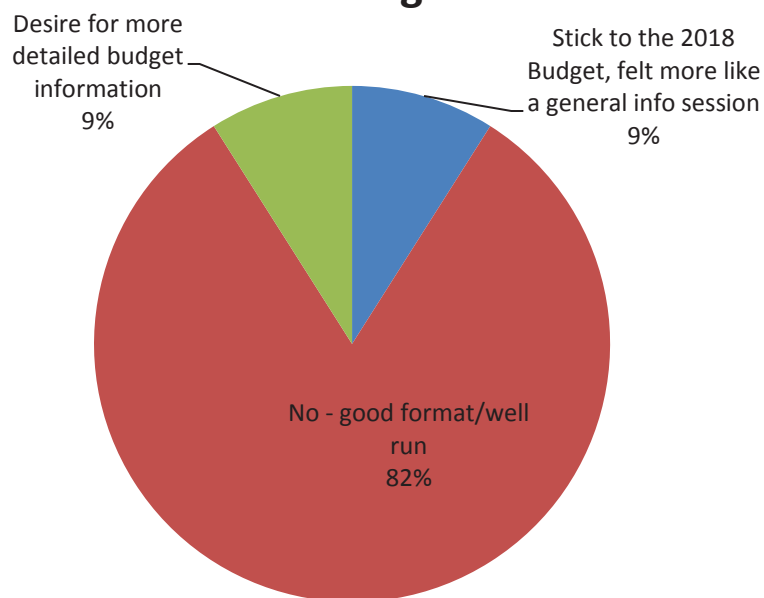
Why did you attend today's meeting?



What did you find most interesting or most helpful?



Is there anything you would change about the meeting?



Resources

The staff time required to plan, deliver, and report back on the Budget 2018 meetings is estimated at 210 hours.

In addition to the staff time required to plan and deliver the meetings, the follow expenses were incurred:

- \$1175 – six newspaper ads (4 in the Cowichan Valley Citizen, 2 in the Chemainus Courier)
- \$10 – one advertised Facebook post
- \$135 – sound system rental from Duncan Music
- \$48 – refreshments
- \$118 - miscellaneous supplies (plates, cups, linen rental, cards, dot stickers)
- \$150 – Chemainus Seniors’ Centre room rental fee
- \$259 – Island Savings Centre room rental fee

Total expenses: \$1,895

What We Learned: Reflecting on the Budget 2018 meetings

These town hall meetings align with the *Council Communications Plan* (2012) and demonstrate Council’s commitment to make decisions informed by the interests of the citizens, balanced with the needs of the community as a whole. This is the Municipality’s third consecutive year of doing intensive public engagement during budget development. Residents appear to be getting into a routine and becoming comfortable with the format and content of these meetings.

This year’s shift to move from 4 meetings to 3 by combining the two “South End” meetings at a more central location was considered successful by staff. In addition, taking into consideration the feedback and time constraints from previous budget town hall meetings, the change in format also worked well, keeping the meetings interesting and interactive for participants.

Staff would like feedback from Council about how useful these meetings are for them, and how they might be improved on. A short evaluation form will be provided to Council members soon to seek feedback.

Looking forward to budget 2019, it is important to be aware that a municipal election is scheduled for mid-October 2018. Accordingly, staff will anticipate a discussion early on with the new Council about objectives for public engagement on the 2019 budget.

Recommendation

That Council receives this report for information.

Attachment(s):



Municipality of North Cowichan

2018 – 2022 Budget Review

November 6, 2017



Guiding Principles

- Align and support Council's goals and objectives
- Align and support Council's *Revenue, Tax, and Budget Policy*
- Maintain existing service levels
- Create a proactive infrastructure renewal plan
- Maintain community development initiatives

Five Year Increases – Updated

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Gross tax increase	3.64%	5.44%	4.68%	3.95%	3.34%
Less: Growth	(1.00%)	(1.00%)	(1.00%)	(1.00%)	(1.00%)
Net Tax Increase	2.64%	4.44%	3.68%	2.95%	2.34%

Additional Budget Items included in 2.64%

	Cost
Inflation	1.3%
Wages	2%
RCMP Contract	\$328,000
Increased Capital Contribution	260,000
HR Health and Safety Position	91,000
RCMP Debt	89,125
Fire Truck Reserve	60,000
Annual Election (net of SD contribution)	42,000
Fire Call Pay	20,000

Additional Items not included in 2.64% (costs known)

Additional Budget Item	Cost	% tax increase
IS – Technical Services Specialist – Jan 1	82,000	.29%
DS – Community Planner – Jan 1	93,200	.36%
		.65%

Additional Items not included in 2.64% (costs unknown)

Quamichan Lake water quality improvements

Somenos Creek/Lake water quality improvements

Five year staffing needs – 5 year plan for discussion at next meeting

Asset Management - Infrastructure Replacement Reserve

Automated Garbage Trucks

Operating Budgets - Departments

	2017 Budget	2018 Budget	Increase (Decrease)	% Change	% of 2017 Operating Budget
General Government	3,814,001	4,271,063	457,062	12.0%	11.2%
Protective Services	8,368,669	8,857,306	488,637	5.8%	24.7%
Transportation Serv.	5,817,341	5,971,338	153,997	2.6%	17.1%
Garbage, Forestry, Cemetery	3,051,162	3,221,866	170,704	5.6%	9.0%
Development Serv.	2,185,785	2,049,834	(135,951)	(6.2%)	6.4%
Recreation Parks and Culture	8,662,085	8,765,712	103,627	1.2%	25.5%
Debt Servicing	<u>2,044,906</u>	<u>2,135,203</u>	<u>90,297</u>	4.4%	6.0%
Total	33,943,949	35,272,322	1,328,373	3.9%	100.00%

General Government

	2017 Budget	2018 Budget	Budget Increase	Budget % Increase
Legislative Services	251,960	261,240	7,220	2.9%
General Administration	3,459,190	3,515,473	56,283	1.6%
Common Services	497,291	777,700	280,409	56.4%
Other General Gov't	132,880	258,220	125,340	94.3%
Admin Recoveries	<u>(527,320)</u>	<u>(539,510)</u>	<u>(12,190)</u>	<u>2.3%</u>
General Government	3,814,001	4,271,063	457,062	12.0%

General Administration includes Information Services increase of

Protective Services

	2017 Budget	2018 Budget	Budget Increase	Budget % Increase
Police Protection	6,506,086	6,898,140	392,054	6.0%
Fire Protection	1,679,320	1,772,298	92,978	5.5%
Other Protection	<u>183,263</u>	<u>186,868</u>	<u>3,605</u>	2.0%
Protective Services	8,368,669	8,857,306	488,637	5.8%