

Here are the highlights from the regular Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, Jan. 30.

- **2019 Budget Approved:** Council has approved the 2019 Lanark County budget with a 2.2 per cent tax increase. Under the theme “focus on core services,” the overall budget increased by 3.8 per cent, but takes into account growth of 1.6 per cent. The county will collect \$34.6 million from property taxpayers this year, up from \$33.4 million last year. Estimated gross expenditures are \$91.1 million. At the special corporate services committee meeting held Jan. 18, CAO Kurt Greaves outlined competing interests, such as taxpayer expectations of service levels balanced with legislation and liability; the infrastructure deficit; fiscal imbalances, including downloaded services without adequate funding; and the need to maintain low tax rates because property taxation is regressive. He noted the need to invest \$12.1 million annually in capital, which is being maintained in 2019. He added the single largest threat to Ontario residents is the current provincial debt of \$321 billion and deficit of \$15 billion, which translates into \$23,000 per capita. Lanark County’s long-term debt is now just \$67 per capita. The 2019 budget sees an investment in additional front-line staff for Lanark Lodge, a 20-unit social housing apartment building and a full-time construction technologist position for public works. Other initiatives include work to increase cell coverage and capacity through the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) project, an upgrade to rescue services extraction equipment, an upgrade to the county website and council sound system, replacement of the Baird Trail boardwalk, and continued implementation of economic development strategic priorities. Council also approved a motion to support hospital capital funding for the first time in the 2019 budget at \$350,000, including \$100,000 each for the Almonte and Carleton Place hospitals, and \$150,000 for the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital (\$100,000 for the Perth site and \$50,000 for the Smiths Falls site). These funds will be placed in a reserve until council approves criteria before June 30. As well, community grants were approved in the amount of \$261,601, with allocations to more than a dozen different organizations for one- and four-year programs. The public works budget represents 39 per cent of the county levy again this year, followed by emergency services/health at 21 per cent and social services and housing at 18 per cent. With assessment growth estimated to be 1.6 per cent, residential ratepayers with a property assessed at \$300,000 can expect to see an increase of \$24 on the county portion of their tax bill. The bill also includes the local municipal and the education portions. Tax rates and ratios for 2019 will be set by county council this spring. There is no new debt this year, and there has been no new debt since 2010. The county will self-finance from reserves for social housing and the EORN project. “Financial sustainability remains the number one goal of county council and staff,” Mr. Greaves said. “The 2019 budget is a response to increased demand for service in social housing, long-term care and public works.” Warden Richard Kidd (Beckwith Reeve) congratulated staff for their hard work with council in the budget process. “I feel good about the decisions made and the work by the staff to put input into the budget, as well as Councillor John Fenik as Corporate Services Chair for keeping things on track.” For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.
- **Renovate Lanark Program Adjustments Made:** Council has approved amendments to the Renovate Lanark program, which is part of the provincial Investment in Affordable Housing and Social Infrastructure Fund. The county, as a service manager, can provide financial assistance to renovate or rehabilitate affordable ownership properties in order to improve living conditions, foster independent living, improve affordability through energy savings and encourage/support employment of apprentices. The amendments require that to be eligible for a loan the households must own a sole and principal residence with a value below \$305,372. As well, household income

must not exceed \$70,000 and assets must not exceed \$200,000. The changes take effect in the 2019/2020 funding year. Lanark County Social Services selects and approves eligible projects, and 10-year forgivable loans are issued, secured by a promissory note. Repayments are made to a reserve fund and reinvested into the program. The county has participated since 2012 and issued loans of almost \$1.7 million, which is 100 per cent federal/provincial funding. Last year, 51 home repair projects were completed at a cost of \$356,000. The county's allocation for 2019/2020 is reduced to \$246,590. Social Housing Manager Sandy Grey says the level of interest in the program far exceeds the available funding and indicated the amendments to the criteria will help restrict the financial assistance to those most in need. For more information, contact Sandy Grey, Housing Services Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2401.

- **CHPI Allocation Approved:** Council has allocated the annual Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) budget as recommended at the community services committee meeting earlier this month. CHPI aims to prevent, address and reduce homelessness by improving access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing linked to flexible support services based on peoples' needs. Lanark County, as the service manager, can use the funds to address local needs, but must outline the allocations to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing each year. The 2019/2020 allocation is \$1.3 million and is based on priorities identified in the Ten-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan and recommendations from the 2018 Housing Study. Under "emergency shelter solutions," \$25,000 will cover emergency hotel stays and a contract with Lanark County Victim Services for after-hours social services. Under "housing with related supports," \$520,000 will be used towards costs of domiciliary hostels (permanent accommodation for residents requiring assistance with daily living activities), as well as deposits for rent and utilities. Under "services and supports," \$245,000 is allocated to the cost of a full-time staff member and minor home repairs (up to \$5,000) to help people stay in their homes. There is also funding for a community/public awareness event, emergency supports for homeless people and pest and bug control expenses. Under the "homelessness prevention services" category, \$387,117 is allocated for eviction prevention services, such as rental or utility arrears. CHPI is fully funded by the province. For more information, contact Sandy Grey, Housing Services Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2401.
- **Lanark Lodge Earns Accreditation:** Council accepted a report highlighting the successful accreditation of Lanark Lodge to Dec. 31, 2022. The Accreditation Canada review took place from Nov. 19 to 21, 2018. Interim Lanark Lodge Director Jennie Bingley reported accreditation is a voluntary process that potential residents may use as a benchmark of a home's commitment to continued quality improvement. There are more than 300 "required organization practices" and 400 "quality dimensions" that must be met as part of the process. The process includes a comprehensive self-assessment and an on-site survey by external peer surveyors to assess leadership, governance, clinical programs and services against Accreditation Canada requirements for quality and safety. "It takes a significant amount of staff time to prepare for and maintain a successful accreditation," Ms. Bingley said. "Lanark Lodge staff are proud of this result. It involved the participation of county council, staff, residents, families and community partners." For more information, contact Jennie Bingley, Interim Lanark Lodge Director, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1320.
- **Upcoming Meetings: County Council, Wednesday, Feb. 6, 5 p.m.;** Community Services, Feb. 6 (following County Council); Corporate Services, Feb. 6 (following Community Services). **County Council, Wednesday, Feb. 20, 5 p.m.;** Public Works, Feb. 20 (following County Council);

Economic Development, Feb. 20 (following Public Works). All meetings are in Council Chambers unless otherwise noted. For more information, contact 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502. Like "LanarkCounty1" on Facebook and follow "@LanarkCounty1" on Twitter!

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