

Janzen, Heather

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Email - Communication - Jason Aebig - Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce - 2024-2025Budget Deliberations - CK 1700-1
Attachments: 20242025 Budget Deliberations - Chamber Response .pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 1:48 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Communication - Jason Aebig - Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce - 2024-2025Budget Deliberations - CK 1700-1

--- Replies to this email will go to margot@saskatoonchamber.com ---

Submitted on Friday, November 24, 2023 - 13:47

Submitted by user: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Friday, November 24, 2023

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Jason

Last Name: Aebig

Phone Number : [3066640700](tel:3066640700)

Email: margot@saskatoonchamber.com

Address: 260-536 2nd Ave North

City: Saskatoon

Province: Saskatchewan

Postal Code: S7K2C5

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: November 28,29 & 30 - 2024/2025 Budget Deliberations

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 4

Comments:

Please find the attached letter to be included as part of the budget deliberations meeting package. Thank you.

Attachments:

- [2024:2025 Budget Deliberations - Chamber Response .pdf](#)369.07 KB

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No

November 23, 2023

Saskatoon City Council
222 3rd Ave North
Saskatoon, SK S7K 0J5

2024/2025 City of Saskatoon Budget Deliberations

Dear Mayor Clark and Councillors,
Thank you for leading efforts to address the City's significant budget shortfall early and initiating a new approach to developing the City's 2024-2025 Business Plan and Budget. Faced with an unprecedented budget shortfall of over \$70 million, you wisely initiated a process of reviewing administrative and program budgets much earlier than normal. In addition to taking action early we want to thank you for releasing the budget documents well in advance of deliberations, this act of transparency does not go unnoticed.

According to marathon runners, it's not how you start. It's how you finish. It's a good reminder as you enter the final stretch of the budget marathon that started in May.

Progress has been made through a series of budget meetings over the summer, where you have increased revenues in areas like pet licenses, cemetery plots, parking violations and tax searches. You have reduced operating hours at places like the Landfill and Material Recovery Centre. and closed the East Compost Depot, eliminated skunk inspections and relocations for residential properties. Funding has been frozen for community organizations and deferred transfers to reserves, spending, and hires to help close the gap.

"Deferrals" have been the tool of choice. Increases for roadway maintenance training positions, for paved roadways and sidewalk maintenance positions, for snow and ice management positions, for new street sweeping positions, and for transportation services positions were all deferred – all to be considered another day, by another Council. None of these positions were important enough to support by cutting existing roles.

Therein lies the challenge before you during this three-day marathon meeting. Instead of a direct challenge to departments to reduce the size of the City's workforce – a difficult exercise done by hundreds of businesses across the city – civic managers were given a pass. The extra time you allotted yourselves to do the analysis, force tough conversations and make hard choices came and went.

City Administration's preliminary business plan and budget has been labelled a "starting point" for those discussions. If nothing is done, it will mean a minimum property tax increase of 7.14% in 2024 and 5.7% in 2025.

City Council could still mandate a universal budget cut across all city-funded departments and agencies to set a tax rate that is competitive, affordable and keeps us growing. A clear

and manageable target for cost reductions, mandated by Council, would give city administrators the direction they need to adjust staffing levels, find savings, and propose different ways of delivering programs and services.

In some cases, hitting this target might involve reductions in staffing. In others, it might involve renegotiating the terms of contracts, identifying different suppliers, deferring new capital and equipment purchases, or eliminating professional development and travel expenses.

What is clear: any serious discussion will need to focus on the size and cost of the City's workforce. Nearly 60% of the City's operating budget is personnel related. There has been no net decrease in the size of the City's workforce over the last five years, including the pandemic period. There are more, not fewer, positions proposed for 2024-2025.

Businesses and households have already taken steps to manage their budgets, runaway inflation and rising costs. They expect no less from their municipal leaders. Unless you take action, ratepayers will face their largest property tax increase in 10 years.

This year's budget marathon has taken its toll and there have been a few stumbles. However, the finish line is in sight and finishing strong is what matters now. We implore you to push through the pain, and make tough choices, we will all win: a growing city that continues to attract new residents, more jobs and investment.

Sincerely,



Jason Aebig, CEO
Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce