

Transcript of Telephone Town Hall for Proposed 2019 Budget Recorded Thursday, Feb. 7, 2019

Eric: Hello, everyone, and welcome to the City of Burlington pre-budget, consultation virtual Town Hall meeting. We are live tonight with the Mayor of Burlington, Marianne Meed Ward. In addition, we are joined by thousands of residents from throughout the city listening in. To ask a question live tonight, simply press 3 on your phone's keypad ... a question at any time. My name is Eric and I'll be the moderator of the Town Hall this evening.

Eric: Now, during this live virtual Town Hall, we encourage you to get involved and to ask some questions and give your opinion by voting on a few survey questions that we have for you. Mayor Meed Ward chose this format as this is an interactive Town Hall with you, which means we want to hear from you this evening. Mayor Meed Ward and the City of Burlington have made it a priority to engage and connect with you, and fellow residents, to get your input on the upcoming budget. This Town Hall is a way for the Mayor to personally and directly hear your feedback and opinion. It's also an opportunity to share some information about the budget process. Tonight, our intention is to get as many questions as possible. Now, you can ask a live question at any time by pressing 3 on your phone's keypad. Once again, if you have a live question you would like to ask, simply press 3 on your phone's keypad. And at that time, someone will take your name and place you in the question queue.

Eric: Now, for everyone just joining us, hello and welcome to the City of Burlington's pre-budget consultation virtual Town Hall meeting. We are live tonight with the Mayor of Burlington, Marianne Meed Ward. In addition, we are joined by thousands of residents from throughout the city listening in. We want to remind everyone joining us that you can ask a live question at any time by pressing 3 on your phone's keypad. Also, we'll be doing a few survey questions over the course of the evening. You'll have a chance to vote on those using your phone's keypad as well.

Eric: Now, at this time, I'm going to introduce the Mayor so we can open up the Town Hall. Mayor Meed Ward, welcome tonight. It is a very important virtual Town Hall for the City of Burlington. Hearing recommendations at

council, the city has decided to use this Town Hall as a means of engaging and connecting with residents to hear their feedback and priorities for the upcoming 2019 budget. I know there's a number of members of the executive team with you, and we have a lot of people joining us, so Mayor, please go ahead.

Marianne Meed W: Well, thank you very much and good evening everyone who's joining us. We thought that we would come to you in your home tonight instead of making you come out on a ice storm evening to give us your input on the budget. And tonight's not the only opportunity. There would be lots of chances and I'll go over some of those throughout the course of the evening and of course towards the end, so that you know exactly how you can continue to provide feedback to us.

Marianne Meed W: So, I just want to first introduce some of the staff who are with me tonight to answer the tough questions. Just kidding. But there are a number of folks here if you have any specific questions I can't answer. So, we have Mary Lou Tanner, our Deputy City Manager, Sue Connor, our Director of Transit, Andrew Moss in Capital Works, Vito Tolone our director of Transportation, Joan Ford, our Director of Finance and Treasurer, Chris Glenn, our Director of Parks and Recreation, Marie Cameron and Mark Adam are with Roads, Parks and Forestry, Nick Anastasopoulos is with our Department of City Building. And we also have Kwab Ako-Adjei who is our Senior Manager of Government Relations and Strategic Communications.

Marianne Meed W: So, just a couple of introductory remarks before we turn it over to you to ask questions. For last year's budget, we had more than 800 people participate in our first Town Hall and we really do hope that this provides a convenient option for learning about what's happening in the city with your budget and with your tax dollars, and most importantly, to hear from you and get your feedback. So, please let us know after this evening if this is a format that works for you.

Marianne Meed W: So, even though our budget preparation only comes around once a year, I would like to reiterate that this is not the only time that we take feedback and have the opportunity to make changes. So, pretty much as soon as we're done one year's budget, our staff and council are into planning for the next year's budget, and looking at what the priorities we've heard

from the community are, as well as how we can find savings for you and find efficiencies.

Marianne Meed W: And so, just to give you an example of how your feedback really does make a difference based on what we heard from the community last year, we added Burlington Transit service on Christmas and New Year's Day, as well as increased funding for the maintenance for our baseball diamonds and our soccer fields. So, those are just two examples of how your input really helps us to make a difference and to invest in those initiatives.

Marianne Meed W: The conversation we're going to have tonight is going to be around the services we offer, such as parks and recreation, roads, snow clearing, public transit, floodwater protection, fire services, bylaw enforcement, planning and building permits. It is important to note that we won't be talking about those services that are provided at the regional level. As you probably know, the seven of us on council sit on regional council. The services that they deliver are garbage, recycling and green bin collections, drinking water, waste water, public health education, paramedics and police services. That budget has already been approved by Halton Regional Council and we can certainly take questions offline if you have any about those. But tonight's focus is on the city's budget.

Marianne Meed W: So, our budget is made up of two parts: a capital and an operating budget. We do have a strategic plan that the council at last term of council focused on four areas: a city that grows, a city that moves, a healthy and greener city, and an engaging city. And that plan does help direct our focus, but one of the statements I've heard recently is that the most important indicator of what's important isn't so much what's in your strategic plan, but what's in your budget. The strategic plan provides a direction, but you've got to fund it. So, this is what we're talking about this evening.

Marianne Meed W: You will also see that the capital budget for infrastructure throughout the city, such as developing new parks, renewing existing roadways and storm water drainage, revitalizing recreation facilities, all of those services come out from the capital budget. For the operating budget, that's the city's day to day cost for delivering services, such as fire protection, maintenance of

parks, and providing recreational programming.

Marianne Meed W: So, for this year, and I'm almost done, the proposed 2019 budget plans to invest \$97 million on the capital budget and \$260 million in the operating budget. At the moment, the proposed tax increase is 3.99% for the city portion. Your tax bill is made up of three different sources: city, region, and education. And once you blend all of those three together, if the 3.99% does not change, then it becomes 2.45% overall tax increase to homeowners. I can tell you we will change that number and staff and council are working on ways that we can trim that. You will see those suggestions in coming weeks as we on council go through the budget and start looking at ways to invest in services that may not be included in that 3.99 or cut other areas. So, this is really the beginning of the discussion, not the end. And that's why your input tonight is so important.

Marianne Meed W: So, I'm going to hand you back to the moderator and we're going to start with questions. And thank you again so much for being with us.

Eric: Thank you very much, Mayor, for your opening comments. And of course, I do want to remind everyone joining us on the line that if you have a live question that you would like to ask on this evening's Town Hall, we want to hear you from you. At any time you can press 3 on your phone's keypad. Over the course of the Town Hall, someone will take your name and place you in the question queue. So, again, if you have a live question, just press 3 on your phone's keypad.

Eric: We're going to go to our first live question coming from Betty. Betty, welcome to the Town Hall. You're joining us live. Please go ahead with your question for the Mayor.

Betty: Well, the question is: why are the rents going up all the time? More than what I can afford, or anybody that I know that rents can afford. I'm 90 years old. I'm on a pension and I have to borrow every month to pay my rent, but I can't afford a retirement residence, which is five times what I make. There must be something going wrong. Sometimes we get a credit and sometimes we don't. Sometimes the tenant board suggests to the management of our apartment to give a credit, but they're sneaky. They give you a credit for four months, not for a year. And then, they up

[inaudible 00:09:30] the next year. It's just not ... And I don't know how to fight it at 90 years old. I just haven't got it.

Marianne Meed W: Well, Betty, I really want to thank you for joining us and giving us your time. You are fighting it. You're showing up tonight online to ask a question and thank you for that.

Marianne Meed W: People like you are who we have in mind when we think about how we can keep our tax rate increases low because we know that there are folks like yourself on a fixed pension that are struggling to make ends meet. That is why we have to not only care for every single penny that we spend, account for every single penny that we spend, but make sure that we do not raise your taxes in a manner that is unaffordable for you. So, thank you for that.

Marianne Meed W: There's a couple of things I can talk to you about. One of the things that's not funded at the moment, but we could consider on council, is a housing strategy review. One of the things that we have heard about in our community is how unaffordable housing is to buy for new-time purchasers, how we have very little rent supply in Burlington, and there's a pressure to convert rental to condo. We have condos being built that don't provide the same protections. They're sold to investors, but it doesn't provide you the same protection if the homeowner wishes to reclaim that condo. So, we're having a really tough time and this isn't just a Burlington problem, but we're having a hard time across the region in providing appropriate affordable rental housing units to our communities. So, it's something that we are aware of and we need to look at. So, one of the things that we can consider in this budget is looking at that housing strategy where we would start to look at the needs and see how we could solve that.

Marianne Meed W: We also know that we can't do it alone here in Burlington. We need the help of our Federal and Provincial partners because Burlington isn't going to solve a national housing crisis. And that really is what it is. Housing is unaffordable for people across our country. The rent control is at the Provincial level, so Betty, I'm hoping that you will reach out to my office and I'll just give you my email. For those listening, feel free to jot this down if you have questions. It's mayor, M-A-Y-O-R, @burlington.ca. What

I'm going to do, Betty, is connect you with our local member of provincial parliament because they know how to navigate that rental system. I'm also going to connect you with Karina Gould who is our Member of Parliament at the Federal level. The Federal government has been talking about a housing strategy and we need to get on with that.

Marianne Meed W: The final thing that I'll talk to you about is the Region of Halton does have rent supplement programs. They have a variety of housing programs available for folks through our health and social services department, so the easiest way to find out more information about the housing supports that are available at the regional level is to call 311. That's their main number and you can certainly talk to the folks on the phone and they will direct you to the right person.

Marianne Meed W: So, you're not alone, Betty. There are supports out there and we're going to make sure that you get all the information you need and for the city and for this year's budget we do need to look at how we're going to move forward in figuring out what our housing needs are and how we can help homeowners and renters like yourself.

Eric: Betty, thank you again for that question. We're going to go to our next live question, but quickly, we're actually going to do a survey question. So, using your ... you can indicate your response on the following question and we want to hear from you.

Eric: Overall, are you satisfied with the services provided by the City of Burlington? If yes, please press 1. If not, press 2. And if you're unsure or you don't know, press 3. So, again, overall, are you satisfied with the services provided by the City of Burlington? If yes, please press 1. If ... 2. And if you're unsure or don't know, press 3.

Eric: Now, we have our next live question ready to go. This one's going to be from Jackie. Jackie, welcome to the Town Hall. You're joining us live.

Jackie: Thank you. Hi. So, I live between Cleaver Road and Headon Road. There was a big project that was supposed to go on to eliminate ... or to, I guess, suppress the erosion going on with the houses backing onto the ravine. And it was supposed to go on last year and I didn't see anything happen

behind my house, and I'm a little concerned. So, I just wanted to address that and see if there's any update on that project. Thank you. Thanks very much for this. I appreciate it.

Marianne Meed W: Okay. Thank you so much, Jackie. I'm just going to ask you a question or two to make sure we can zero in on exactly where you are. Was this related to ravine or creek rehabilitation because of the flooding? And if so, which creek was it?

Jackie: It wasn't a flooding issue. It was an erosion issue between Pearson High School and Cleaver Road. There's quite a bit of erosion going on between the ravine there. There was a big project that they sent me emails about ... or sorry not emails, but they sent me actual mail about that they were going to reinforce, I guess, the banks of the creek between. And nothing really happened this year. It was supposed to go on last year, so.

Marianne Meed W: Okay. So, I'm going to see if our staff member for Capital Works, Andrew Moss, can shed any light on that. If we can't get that answer for you tonight, Jackie, please email my office tomorrow. Mayor@burlington.ca. And we'll make sure that we get the details for you.

Marianne Meed W: It sounds like some of the creek rehabilitation work that we've been doing, and that often is a partnership with our regional staff as well, but I'm going to see if Andrew can shed any light on that.

Andrew Moss: Sure. Thank you for the question. Just to follow up on that, I would have to check with our storm water management group to confirm the timing of the project. However, we do have quite a long list of erosion control projects throughout the city. There may be an issue in terms of permitting or something like that that may cause a delay in the delivery of a project. So, that is something that we'll follow up on and update with the timing.

Marianne Meed W: How's that sound? If you still have your notice, Jackie, one of the things that they usually include are these staff leads or staff contacts. And they certainly welcome that input and questions from the community. So, if you don't have it, you can certainly get in touch with my office and we'll make sure that you get the answer that you need, but if you do have it, there would be some information there. Typically, for large projects, the

city, and if it's a regional project or partnership, we create a webpage for the project itself. That address should be on the notice that you got. Folks can go there to check for regular updates on the status of the project. So, there may be some information out there, but we'll make sure you get what you need.

Eric: Jackie, thank you again for that question. We have our next live question ready to go. Quickly, just before we get to our next live question, I want to remind everyone that we're taking your questions this evening. We're looking to get questions about the budget and pre-budget consult. If you have any questions, please press 3 on your phone's keypad at any time and you'll have a chance to ask that live question.

Eric: We're going to go now to Andrew. Andrew, welcome to the Town Hall.

Andrew: Hello.

Marianne Meed W: Hi there.

Andrew: How are you?

Marianne Meed W: I'm very good. What's your question, Andrew?

Andrew: My question is when are we going to have bus service along Lakeshore Road and South Burlington? There's no public transport, at least on this street. And it's a heck of a lot of kids around here, special needs kids in particular, that depend on public transport and have to walk more than a kilometer just get to a bus stop. It's high time that [inaudible 00:18:35]. At least, have buses along Lakeshore Road, like Go buses and city buses. There's no transportation around Lakeshore at all, from Guelph Line down to Skyway Plaza. When is something going to get done about that?

Marianne Meed W: Thank you very much for the question, Andrew. Transit service and investing in our transit service is near and dear to my heart. I do have our Director of Transit here, Sue Connor, who I know would like to weigh in. But just before she talks about the service and the specific routes along Lakeshore Road. In this budget there is a proposal to add three new conventional buses, and six new drivers. As well as another handy van and

two drivers for that. So, we recognize that at the city and our staff recognize. And I think this council is very transit-friendly. We recognize that we need to see this as a service to our community, invest appropriately, and make sure that the service gets you to where you need to go in a timely manner.

Marianne Meed W: So, thank you for raising that and certainly agree with you that we need to ensure that bus service is there where we have potential riders, especially young folks. I really like to see students and young folks on the bus. I'm going to turn it over to Sue to speak to the specifics of the routing.

Sue Connor: Okay. Well, thank you for your question. We are, for 2019, depending on what gets approved in budget, looking at some significant service changes, looking at some route rationalization, and putting our routes on a better grid system so that we move people more frequently.

Sue Connor: I will pass on your comments to our planning analyst staff, but I'd also encourage you to watch the city's website, the transit website, because we are looking to hold some public information sessions in March and April once budget's approved. So, we'd be happy to have you come out. There will be a number of them at different times and we're just finalizing those dates, so within the next week or two you should be able to see the dates and times and locations on the website.

Marianne Meed W: Thanks for that question, Andrew. I'll also mention that there's a local residents group of folks who care a lot about transit are BFAST, Burlington For Accessible and Sustainable Transit group, and they host an annual transit forum every year. Our Director of Transit and a number of our staff attend that, and that is to hear directly from our community members about what's working, what's not working, and to talk about transit. And so, it's May 4th. It's still a ways off, but circle that date in your calendar. It's a Saturday morning and that will be at the Burlington Senior Center. So, we'll invite you or other transit users, or potential users. We also want to hear from folks why they don't take the bus, and what it would take for people to actually choose to take the bus. So, thanks for that question, Andrew.

Eric: Andrew, thank you again for that question. We're going to go directly to our next live question. This one's coming up from Don. Don, welcome to the Town Hall. You're joining us live. Please go ahead with your question for the Mayor.

Don: My question for the Mayor and also for the Recreation Director is our senior center this year is celebrating its 40th anniversary. That's great. I hope there'll be some kind of a little celebration because I vividly recall the opening of that 40 years ago, and was one of the people that helped raise the money to build it in the first place. But I've been talking to people at the City Hall now for several years about building another one because the seniors population has grown dramatically over the last 40 years, and I would really love to see in the capital budget some money set aside for the building of a second senior center. I think it's long overdue. Thank you.

Marianne Meed W: Thank you so much, Don. I really do appreciate that question. I visit the senior center regularly and the breakfast at the bistro every month, and I certainly know the growing community that is at the senior center, and the need for additional programming services. So, I'll just give you a couple of thoughts from my desk, but then turn it over to Chris around his thoughts in terms of how we service our growing seniors population.

Marianne Meed W: I think we do need to look at additional programming or facilities. One of the options that is available to us, as you are probably aware, the Halton District School Board did close two high schools. One has already closed, one is intended to close in 2020. Should the Board decide that that property is surplus to their needs and decide to sell it, after the other school boards get an opportunity to potentially buy that ... If they pass, then the city has an opportunity to purchase that site. The one site in particular, of course, Pearson in the north end of Burlington. The other one is Robert Bateman High School on New Street. There's a city pool there already. There's track and field. There's some great facilities in that building. So, that would be an opportunity for us should that arrive.

Marianne Meed W: That's still away off in terms of the school board making a decision about whether they still need that site for their own needs, but that is on our radar and I know a number of council members have expressed their support should that opportunity arrive, we need to look at that. We do

have a strategic land acquisition fund in the city and a variety of ways to finance should we choose to purchase something like that.

Marianne Meed W: In the meantime, I know our staff are looking at ways to have programming throughout the city at various facilities, so seniors don't all have to come to Central. So, I'm going to turn it over to Chris Glenn to speak to that as well.

Chris Glenn: Thank you for the question, Don, and thanks for the opening, Mayor. Certainly, the Burlington Active Aging Plan is something that we put in place a couple of years ago with council support, and it's intended to try to do more to encourage our seniors to get out and get active and get engaged in the community.

Chris Glenn: To answer your question about a specific capital item for a future senior center, that's not currently in the budget. But what we are doing to leverage the Mayor's comments, we are looking to expand use of our existing facilities to provide programming for our seniors in multiple areas across the city. We realize it's not the same as the dedicated center, but it's certainly something that we're seeing good success with, with people coming out to use locations like Tansley Woods or Brant Hills as a couple of examples.

Chris Glenn: We do want to continue to expand our programming, and you'll see that we would have put a business case for consideration and for council that talks about that. Although, it's not currently one that's being contemplated at this point, but we do have an interest in doing more for our seniors in the future, and we'd love to talk to you further about this. And you can certainly get engaged through Burlington Seniors Advisory Committee. And I know there are other opportunities at the senior center we're looking to get input as well. So, hope to see you out and about.

Eric: Don, thank you very much for that question. We're going to go to our next live question in just a second. Before we do, I want to let everyone know we have another survey question. Using our touch tone phone, you can indicate your response on ...

Eric: Infrastructure renewal is a priority in the city's budget. Roads, bridges, and facilities like arenas and community centers need repairs and updates to maintain existing service levels. Over the last number of years, significant investments have been made to support growing renewal needs like the revitalization of Nelson pool, repaving of our roads, and the renewal of our parks. Have you seen a positive difference in the infrastructure such as road maintenance, recreational facilities, and other things? If yes, please press 1. If not, press 2. And if you're unsure or don't know, please press 3. So, again, infrastructure renewal is a priority in the city's budget. Have you seen a positive difference in the infrastructure such as road maintenance, recreational facilities, et cetera.? If yes, please press 1. If not, press 2. And if you're unsure or don't know, please press 3.

Eric: We have our next live question coming up from Mrs. [Negi 00:26:49]. Mrs. Negi, welcome. You're joining us live. Please go ahead.

Negi: Hello there. Are you there?

Eric: Hello, Ms. Negi, you're joining us live. Please go ahead with your question.

Negi: So, along Prospect and some of the streets that are concerning around our territory. The speed limit is very, very high. The cars are going 80, 90, 100 kilometers an hour. They have put in a speed bump, but it doesn't make any difference whatsoever. So, I don't know if this is concerning tonight's questions, but this area obviously is not really controlled by police at the moment.

Marianne Meed W: Thank you so much for that question. And yes, it is extremely relevant to our budget and this budget in particular. So, I'm just going to talk to a little bit about what the city does with respect to traffic calming to try to get people to drive the speed limit.

Marianne Meed W: So, you mentioned speed bumps. So, the city does have an annual budget every year in our capital program to install speed bumps on various roadways. We also go back out and test whether those speed bumps actually made any difference at all before we put additional speed bumps on the same roadway or area roadways. But we don't just put them out without some sort of assessment. So, there is a process once we hear

complaints and concerns from folks about speeding on their streets. We ask our staff to measure the volume of vehicles, how fast they're going, how fast above the speed limit, and there's a set of criteria that have to be met before the city will go out and put in speed bumps. When you see speed bumps, they've all gone through that process.

Marianne Meed W: The other thing that residents can do, and we really encourage you to contact the Halton Regional Police when you see speeding on your street. You can do it by phone or you can fill out a form online, if that's easier for you. And our friends at the Halton Regional Police do track all of the complaints and calls they get on specific streets. That helps them to decide where they're going to send their patrols. So, if they have a high call volume on a particular street, they will do some special spot enforcement.

Marianne Meed W: That's not perfect though. We know that speed bumps aren't perfect. And that folks who are inclined to speed will continue to do so. So, one of the things where technology can help us is photo radar. That would take a picture of a license plate of a vehicle and send them a ticket. Much like our red light cameras at various intersections at Burlington. And I can tell you, it's extremely effective to where the red light cameras have been installed to send a message. And then, we don't have to have our police out handing out traffic tickets rather than catching the bad guys. So, those are some of the things and I know that our staff are looking at that. And there's some suggested measures in the budget this year for this. But I'll turn it over to Vito Tolone, our Director of Transportation, to ask if he has anything to add on this.

Vito Tolone: Well, Mayor Meed, you've covered it very well, so I don't have a lot to add to that other than to say if there's a specific street that you're concerned about and you're not satisfied with the results of the traffic calming that we've installed, by all means, contact us. As the Mayor indicated, we are part of the provincial group that are looking into photo radar. There's a lot of red tape to get through that process, but we are at the table discussing it, so we're hopeful that we can come to council very soon with the results of that work that we're doing.

Eric: Ms. Negi, thank you very much for that question. We're going to go to our next live question. This one's going to be coming up from Fran. Fran, welcome to the Town Hall. You're joining us live. Please go ahead with your question.

Fran: Thank you. Good evening. My question is regarding the tax rate. What is the process for deciding the annual rates used for each code, whether or not it's industrial, residential? Who is involved in the decision process? And when and how are the rates approved?

Marianne Meed W: That is an excellent question. Thank you, Fran. So, the tax rate that gets applied to different classes of properties is actually set at Halton Regional Council through our tax policy process that we do review every year. So, there's a residential class. Then there's also the industrial, commercial, institutional class, which is at least two times ... I'm looking to Joan, our Director of Finance ... two times more than that. So, when we bring jobs and businesses to Burlington, that really helps because we get an extra tax benefit, but they don't use the same amount of services as your growing population does.

Marianne Meed W: There's a separate rate for multi-residential or condo type housing. There's a separate rate for rental because it's considered an income property. And then, there's a smaller rate from the residential for farming. There's some other classes as well, but I'm going to turn it over to Joan to speak to that. And every year, the regional council would look at the tax rates applied to each class, and we have the opportunity to make those changes. There's 24 of us at Halton Region. Seven of us are from the Burlington council. And then, of course we've got Milton, Halton Hills, and Oakville. But that's where those decisions are made.

Joan Ford: Thank you, Mayor. So, thank you for the question. The decision on tax policy, as the Mayor indicated, is done at Halton Region. That is normally done in April of each year. And the requirement is that residential property tax class factor is always one. And all of the other property tax classes are a factor of that one. So, as the Mayor indicated, industrial is about 2.3 times the residential rate. Commercial is about 1.45-1.65 times the residential rate. And another example would be the farm tax class, which is at 0.2. So, it is lower than the residential tax rate. Multi res, which

is rental unit, is at two times the residential rate. So, that decision is made at regional council. And important to know that any change to any of those ratios we call them does then shift taxes onto other property classes because it's a zero sum game in terms of the overall property tax. So, the ratios are used to determine how each tax rate compares to the residential class.

Eric: Fran, thank you very much for that question. We have our next live question ready to go. Just before we get to it, I want to remind everyone that if you have a question about the budget, we want to hear from you. Press 3 on your phone's keypad at any time and someone will take your name and place them in the question queue. So, again, press 3 on your phone's keypad if you have a question about the budget you would like to ask live on the Town Hall this evening.

Eric: The next live question from Jane. Jane, welcome. You're joining us live.

Jane: Thank you very much, Don, and good evening, Marianne. I'm here to ask a couple of questions on behalf of Burlington Green Environmental Association. I know, Marianne, you're very familiar with us. And thanks again for this opportunity tonight.

Jane: Our main concern of course right now is climate change, and what Burlington can do within its budget to step up and fill in what we see is a bit of a gap that's happening on a provincial front. And I guess what we'd like to find out from you tonight is how you intend to prioritize the environment and climate change in the budget, how you are obviously directing funds to climate action initiatives such as tree canopy development, sustainable transportation initiatives, and the advancement of smart communities. And how you might grapple with that when you're facing things like budget cuts and tax hikes and those sorts of things. And how you might plan to try to keep a focus on these key environmental and climate change issues, which we believe are top of mind and probably one of the biggest challenges that all levels of government are facing at the moment.

Marianne Meed W: Thank you, Jane, so much for that question. And yes, I was actually a founding member of Burlington Green many moons ago. So, I'm very

committed to what you're all about, which is making sure that we have clean air, clean water, clean environment, and a sustainable future for everybody. So, we could talk the rest of the night about that question and I would love to. I'm just going to touch on a couple of things.

Marianne Meed W: I'm first going to talk about what you mentioned with respect to if the budget is structured for environmental issues and climate change. One of the things you mentioned is tree canopy. That is one of the single most important things that we can do in our community is to increase our tree canopy. A healthy tree canopy is roughly 40-50%. At the last time we measured it, we're about 17% a few years ago, and sliding backwards because of the devastating effect of disease, emerald ash borer being the current threat, but there are other infestations that are potentially coming our way. And also, due to the development and the age of some of our tree canopies. So, we're sliding backwards.

Marianne Meed W: We have the opportunity in this budget to look at an investment of \$627,000 into the emerald ash borer program to make sure that we can replace and remove some of the dying trees in our wood lots throughout the city. We need at least another \$400,000 for tree planting, which is not in this budget, but I've talked to several of my council colleagues. This is a very real and present concern of theirs. So, I expect that we will see some investment in that as well in this budget. There's an opportunity to put some money aside for our tree canopy study. So, that's just one item.

Marianne Meed W: I think what I'd like to do, and I'm going to work with our staff after too, to look at some of the initiatives in our budget that do directly speak to how we mitigate climate change and you'll be, I think, pleasantly surprised at the amount of money that is in there. We just don't necessarily call it that. We call it tree canopy or we call it storm water management. For example, we have millions of dollars that we've invested at Burlington as well as at the Halton regional level. We can get that for you. We need to do better on development and make sure that we have low impact development, sustainable building practices. We need to make sure that we don't build lot line to lot line on our developments and that we have green space around our trees. That provides storm water management in a natural way. It's not just pretty to look at, it is critical green infrastructure and we

have to see it that way.

Marianne Meed W: You mentioned sustainable transportation, and we talked earlier in response to one of the questioners, around our investment this year in Burlington Transit. There are lots of people who would take the bus by choice if it got them where they needed to go in a timely manner. And we need to provide that option. Transit should not just be for folks who have no other option. We want people to be able to choose it and have the option to get out of their cars.

Marianne Meed W: We are also at the city trying to green our own fleet. So, we at the city know that we need to lead by example, and so, we are looking at electric vehicles, hybrids, plug-ins. We also have installed a number ... And I don't know if Vito has it off the top of his head ... but quite a few electric vehicle charging stations for the community downtown and elsewhere.

Marianne Meed W: So, those are just a handful of initiatives. That is not a complete picture of the things that we are doing, which speak directly to how we are trying to reduce our impact on the community, prepare for climate change, prepare for severe weather, flooding. We know that's the single biggest threat to our communities going forward and we have to be ready, we have to be resilient. We have to put the money in our budget. As I said earlier, what we value isn't just in our plan. It's in our budget and what we fund.

Marianne Meed W: So, I'm just going to look around the table and see if there's another staff member that want to comment on some of the initiatives that we're taking with respect to any of those topics or others as they relate to being ready for a changing climate. No? Okay. Good.

Marianne Meed W: Well, we're moving on. But I will say just with respect to the budget cuts. I think my philosophy for folks and I know this council of the folks that I've talked to, and I've spoken to every single one of my council of colleagues about the budget. We are focused on ensuring that the cuts are not to front line services or essential services. So, that's not where you're going to see it when we try to trim our budget and look out for folks like Betty that we heard earlier, and make sure the tax increases aren't too steep.

We're not going to take it out of things that are community needs.

Eric: Jane, thank you very much for that question. We're going to go to another live question, but just before we get to that, we have another survey question. So, using your touch tone phone, you can indicate on the following question.

Eric: A few years ago, city council approved a special tax levy to raise \$60 million for the expansion of the Joseph Brant Hospital. Beginning in 2019, the city plans to gradually redirect the hospital levy to support the renewal of city infrastructure. If the city doesn't do this, then it will not meet the infrastructural renewal needs and conditions of roads, and parks and recreation centers, and storm water management maybe impacted. Do you support redirecting the Joseph Brant Hospital tax levy towards the renewal of city infrastructure? If yes, please press 1. If not, press 2. And if you're unsure or you don't know, please press 3. So, again, a few years ago city council approved a special tax levy to raise \$60 million for the expansion of the Joseph Brant Hospital. Beginning in 2019, the city plans to gradually redirect the hospital levy to support the renewal of city infrastructure. If the city doesn't do this, then it will not meet the infrastructural needs and the condition of roads, parks, recreation centers, and storm water management maybe impacted. Do you support redirecting the Joseph Brant Hospital tax levy towards the renewal of city infrastructure? If yes, please press 1. If not, press 2. And if you're unsure or don't know, please press 3.

Eric: Now, we have our next live question coming up from Jerry. Jerry, welcome to the Town Hall. You're joining us live with the Mayor. Please go ahead.

Jerry: Thank you. My concern is the way that we run our transit system. We have a very good opportunity in this city to run on a grid system. For example, if you're on Appleby line at Lakeshore and you want to go, let's say, to Brant Hill, if you run buses north and south on the main routes ... That's Burloak, Appleby, following across the city, Walker's Line, et cetera, you go to from Lakeshore to Upper Middle, transfer on an east-west bus on Upper Middle, to go to over to where you want to go. And this is been discussed in the past and there's never been a proper explanation as to why this can't be done. It would make it much easier. You have one fare, a

transfer system, to get to where you want to go very easily. Thank you.

Marianne Meed W: Thank you so much, Jerry, for the question. I'm going to make a few comments and I'm going to turn it over to Sue Connor, our Director of Transit. We hear you and we recognize that for transit to be efficient, effective and fast, we need to look at that grid system. We need to look at increasing the frequency along high frequency routes. So, 15 minutes service or better. We know Go Transit, for example, is going to be increasing their service to 15 minutes. We need the buses to meet those trains.

Marianne Meed W: But more importantly, we need our residents to be able to get around within the city in a timely manner because if it takes too long to get across town nobody is going to choose transit unless they have to. I think there's some good news coming and I'm going to turn it over to Sue to talk about what she's got in mind with respect to the grid system.

Sue Connor: Well, thank you for your question. We are actually working on just that very thing this year, in advance of budget approval, which we hope the council will approve some additional service hours for us. We're working on a plan to rationalize our routing system and start to move it on a grid system. So, depending on some work that's being done right now, we're coming up with a preliminary plan. We're engaging our operators because they are on the street and they know where the service gaps are. And then, we will be coming, once budget's approved, out to the public with a number of sessions to get feedback on a proposed plan. So, I'd encourage you to watch on the city's website, the transit page, for dates and times of those public engagement sessions. There's probably going to be about three or four of them, and in addition, there's a transit users forum on May the 4th at the seniors center in the morning, I believe, that we will also be presenting some ideas and getting feedback. We'll be working on finalizing that information and we're hoping to put those service changes out in the fall of this year.

Marianne Meed W: Thanks for that question, Jerry.

Eric: Jerry, thank you again for that question. We're going to go directly to another. This one is going to be coming up from Pamela. Pamela, welcome

to the Town Hall. You're joining us live. Please go ahead.

Pamela: Thank you very much for the opportunity to express the concern in a question. My question is regarding the sustainability of Centennial pool. It's been mentioned earlier about Robert Bateman High School that is being closed as of next year, 2020. It's the only indoor facility in the southeast end of the city and my concern is what will happen to the pool itself if it is perhaps ... the building is sold to the Catholic Board or if the city purchases it. Will the pool be there regardless of who takes ownership of the property of where Robert Bateman School is. We're seniors and we use the pool regularly. But not only for seniors, but for the community as a whole, the southeast end would be really a shame if that pool were to close.

Marianne Meed W: Thank you, Pamela, for that question. I completely agree with you. I believe that the city has to do whatever we can to make sure that that pool stays in community hands. For folks who maybe just joining the Town Hall meeting now, I spoke earlier about my interest. And I know that there are other council members interested that should that property come up for sale if the school board decides to declare that surplus to their needs and put it out for sale. And the city gets an opportunity to bid on that. That's the best way for us to control what happens there, but we would certainly be working with the school board if they kept that property or anyone else to make sure that that pool stays in operation. We know how well used that is. I'd like to see that whole site as a future community center in the southeast of Burlington, but I'm going to turn it over to Chris Glenn, our Director of parks and recreation to talk about who owns it right now and what our opportunities might be.

Chris Glenn: Certainly. Thank you for the question and thank you for the opportunity. The school board owns the facility and the pool. The city has invested extensively into renovating that facility in the last number of years to ensure it's maintained as an asset. It's a very valued asset certainly within the aquatics operation, but also certainly as you mentioned in our southeast quadrant. And as you know, it's probably one of our premier facilities that we use for the swim meets that we have and we host in the city on a regular basis.

Chris Glenn: So, we stay in contact with folks of the secular school board, as the Mayor has indicated. We're waiting to see what the school board does with respect to [inaudible 00:49:17] going forward. And when we start to get more information on that, we'll look to be partnering with whoever is there to maintain that asset within our inventory if at all possible.

Eric: Pamela, thank you very much for that question. We have another question ready to go. This one is going to be coming up from Doreen. Doreen, welcome. You're joining us live. Please go ahead with your question.

Doreen: Thank you so much. And thank you to the Mayor for taking such an interest in the congestion on Lakeshore Road due to the high rise developments. I wonder if there is anything in the budget to alleviate all the upcoming developments that are currently proposed. And I wonder if the Mayor ... I'm sure that they will have something in mind to curtail these developments. I'm a low-vision senior, but I'm very aware of the frustration of the people to whom I depend on to drive me. Thank you so much.

Marianne Meed W: Thank you so much, Doreen, and maybe once we get our transit system going, that'll be an option for you. That's also one of the best ways to relieve traffic congestion is to have a good alternative for people to their car. So, you asked about development and the ability that we have, and any plans that I have with respect to controlling development downtown. Particularly along that Lakeshore stretch, which we know is already quite congested.

Marianne Meed W: So, just today actually, city council unanimously approved a motion related to the official plan. You will recall that the previous council adopted a new official plan, which would have added extra density and height to various parts of the downtown. So, council has pushed pause on that, decided that they need and we need and the community wants us to reevaluate that. And so, we're going to do that. So, that motion passed unanimously today to kick off what will be probably another year of consultation on the official plan.

Marianne Meed W: It won't be limited just to the downtown. There are other areas that we and this council have an interest in looking at our mobility hubs, which is

development around the Go station, Appleby, Burlington, and Aldershot. Those plans were not ready when the council adopted it last April, so we have an opportunity to complete that work and send it back as part of a complete package with the plan. In this budget, we are being asked to fund integrated transportation study. And this will be, I think, the first time that we're looking at a comprehensive transportation plan rather than silos of "Let's do a cycling plan" "Let's do a transit plan" "Let's look at traffic". We're going to, should this be approved in the budget, look at all of our transportation needs. That too can then inform our new official plan and development applications. They really do work hand in hand as you mentioned, Doreen, that where you put more people on the road, if there aren't alternatives to driving, then you simply add additional traffic congestion. We want to make sure that we keep Burlington a livable community for all of our residents.

Marianne Meed W: The other thing I'll mention since you did touch on traffic congestion. After development, this is the number two issue that I hear about a lot and certainly heard about during the election campaign. Can we have synchronized traffic lights throughout Burlington? We do have some digital synchronization, but there is a pilot project being looked at. I won't tell you where it is and hopefully once it gets up and running, you'll know where it is because the lights will be synchronized and it'll help your traffic flow. But there is a lot of new digital technology to sense traffic patterns, traffic flows, and to move large volumes of vehicles through our streets in a timely manner. So, that is something that we are working on and hope to have more to say later this year for you.

Eric: Thank you very much, Doreen, for that question. We're going to go to another live question, but first we're going to get to another survey question. So, using your touch tone phone, you can indicate your response.

Eric: A clear focus and priority in this year's budget is providing enhanced Burlington Transit infrastructure. The 2019 budget proposes adding three new buses and one new handy van to provide more frequent and reliable service. Do you support an increased investment in Burlington Transit. If yes, please press 1. If not, press 2. And if you're unsure or don't know, press 3. So, again, a clear focus and priority in this year's budget is

providing investments to enhance Burlington Transit infrastructure. Do you support an increased investment in Burlington Transit? If yes, please press 1. If not, press 2. And if you're unsure or don't know, please press 3. We have our next live question coming up. It will be from Andrea. Andrea, welcome, you're joining us live.

Andrea: Hi. Thanks for taking my call. I just wanted to ask about programming in the Live and the Play, the community programming that is offered to the city. A lot of it is focused on our senior population, which I realize there's a lot of senior population in Burlington. But there's very little for younger age groups, and even for adults that is not programmed during the day. I'm just wondering if anybody's thinking about taking a look at increasing the programming for young kids, like 8-18.

Marianne Meed W: Thank you so much for that question, Andrea. I'll make a few comments, and then, I'm going to turn it back over to Chris Glenn, our Director of Parks and Recreation. So, the answer is yes. This is definitely on our radar. I heard about this during the election that there are pockets of programming in the city, but there are also gaps. We had a group of students from Rolling Meadows come and visit city hall earlier this week, and I had an opportunity to talk to them. And they said, "What are you going to do for youth programming?" And I said, "What would you like?" So, I really need ... I'm not 18 anymore. I really need to hear from the young folks in the community about what you like. One of the suggestions was a playdium type of complex for youth. That's just one example.

Marianne Meed W: But Andrea, I'd like you to reach out to me via my email, mayor@burlington.ca, and talk to your friends and people in the community. And let me know where do you think the gaps in programming are, what would you like to see. This has to be done with you and for you rather than us trying to divine what we think you should have or need or want. And then, gift you that. So, we need to hear from you.

Marianne Meed W: One thing that we did talk about today and I know the Ward 3 councilor, Rory Nisan has been talking to his community about increasing some of the amenities for families in his area. Specifically, a splash pad in Brant Hill. That's not a specific. We had an older teen, young adult, come and talk

very passionately about that and we also had a parent with kids. So, that is one of the things that we can do that's certainly seasonal.

Marianne Meed W: But I'm going to turn it over to Chris to talk about what kind of youth programming we have, and what they're looking at in terms of any expansion.

Chris Glenn: Thank you very much and certainly we like to get the youth active and moving away from those tablets, et cetera. So, we have a team, a youth team, that we have a number of staff that are involved with looking at what we do. So, we offer programs either directly, and you'll see us do things such as camps and preschool things, et cetera, and leadership type programs for folks to learn those types of skills and to assist them with employments, et cetera. We also work with other providers that provide programming within the facilities themselves.

Chris Glenn: So, our team, youth team, is constantly out looking for feedback, such as what you are providing us right now to see what we can do to develop programs and create new opportunities. A fun one that came up fairly recently was a program called No socks for Ivan, which is a drop-in program we have for teens, 13-18. There are a couple of different spots, [inaudible 00:58:02] mountainside to Aldershot, et cetera. That's an opportunity for our youth to get together, to network, but it's also an opportunity for us to connect with them and find out what else is of their interest so that we can adjust going forward. I can say that we're constantly looking to adjust the trends within the youth market, and we're very much looking forward to feedback, et cetera.

Chris Glenn: So, I can also through the Mayor's office, if you like, put you in touch with our folks who are involved with our youth team. And we can go out and connect with you directly and try and get some of your thoughts as well.

Marianne Meed W: Just to add a final thought on that. I know I've heard from a lot of our young folks how much they value the festivals and events, and of course Sound of Music festival. One young person told me that that's the one time that Burlington is not Bore-ington is during that festival. So, we do know and we are looking at can we have more festivals, can we have festivals not just in the summer months but in winter months, can we

move it around the city so it's not always in the downtown so folks can go right in their own neighborhood and community to access that type of fun programming event.

Marianne Meed W: We do have, and I may turn it back to Chris briefly, but we do have a neighborhood community funding program where we provide some pretty significant amounts of dollars to folks to come forward and say, "I'd like to host something in my neighborhood to bring people together to bring people out." It's not specifically focused on youth, but often, there could be a youth component. Or if young people have an idea of something they want to run in their neighborhood, we have money available. So, I'm just going to quickly pass it back to Chris, if you can talk about the deadlines for that and some of the money available.

Chris Glenn: Certainly. We have our [inaudible 00:59:43] programs, and I'll speak to that [inaudible 00:59:45] community matching fund is one. Wherein we look for the community to come forward with ideas that will support their local neighborhood. And that's a program where we can support up to \$10,000 for the community to get engaged. And that's actually out for people to make their submissions right now.

Chris Glenn: Another one that we have that was very popular was the Love My Hood program. And we saw a number of young folks, our youth come forward. And they would take the ownership of organizing an event of some sort in their community, which brought them together as well as their local neighborhood and all age groups within that. We found it very effective for them to get connected to the community. And that's something that you can apply for right now.

Chris Glenn: And it's year round. It's not just isolated to the summer. We encourage it in the winter months as well, and we do see some of those that are coming up in the not so distant future with March break, et cetera.

Eric: Andrea, thank you very much for that question. Now, Mayor Meed Ward, we are just about reaching the end of the event. We had a lot of great questions this evening. With the last few minutes remaining, are there some final thoughts and closing remarks you would like to share with

everyone listening in?

Marianne Meed W: Thank you. Well, a huge thanks to all the folks out there who joined us, who stayed on the line and listened. I really appreciate your questions and your feedback. I know the staff here do and I know that council members, and some of whom I'm sure are joining us on the line, we need to hear from you. So, I hope you found this time useful as well and got some answers to your questions.

Marianne Meed W: If any questions that were asked that were not addressed tonight, I know that there were probably more than we could get to this evening, please contact my office, mayor@burlington.ca, and we will endeavor to get you an answer.

Marianne Meed W: The ones that were answered, quite [inaudible 01:01:31] it's part of the Town Hall. Our staff have kept a record of those and we'll be providing those answers online at our Get Involved website. And that's getinvolvedburlington.ca in the coming days. So, you will see your question answered if you didn't get into the live queue tonight.

Marianne Meed W: There's also a lot of resources on Get Involved Burlington related to the budget. There is an interactive tool where you can go into detail about which item and department in the budget, how that money is being spent. The budget books, the capital and operating, are available there as well. And there's also an opportunity for you to make comments and leave questions right on that site. So, there's still lots of opportunities for people to get involved and give us your feedback.

Marianne Meed W: Just as a reminder: we are holding a second in-person Town Hall on February 11. That's this coming Monday at 2 pm at Central Arena in the auditorium. The proposed capital and operating budgets will be coming to committee and council in February and March for a decision, so again, there is still time for folks to let us know what you think our priorities should be for this budget.

Marianne Meed W: And again, thank you so much for joining us. I want to thank all of the staff here tonight that you can't see, but I can, that joined us and provided such great service all year to our residents, but also provided some great

answers to the questions this evening.

Eric:

Thank you again to everyone for joining us this evening on the Town Hall. If you still have any questions or any feedback on the 2019 budget that you would like to share, I want to remind you that you can do so by emailing them to the city at mayor@burlington.ca. Again, please email any questions or feedback to mayor@burlington.ca. Thank you again to everyone for joining us and have a great night.

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