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## MEDIA RELEASE

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Wednesday, December 6, 2023

"For Immediate Release"

### Statement from The City of Humboldt on APPROVED 2024 BUDGET

**Humboldt, SK** – The City of Humboldt’s proposed 2024 City Budget was presented to City Council in a Special Meeting of Council held on Monday, December 4, 2023. Mayor Behiel led Council and Administration through all budget cost centres, as well as nine capital projects for 2024 and seven capital projects for 2025. Following discussion on each topic, Council endorsed the budget proposed by Administration, albeit opposing one request from Administration.

The 2024 proposed budget was prepared with a focus on the City’s ability to maintain both roadways and utility capital expenditures as the City has seen the costs to replace roadways and water mains increase by approximately 50% since 2020. In order to maintain the City’s current level of services, the proposed budget initially indicated a 5.5% increase in general municipal property tax and a 5.2% increase for water and sewer revenues. The final approved budget resulted in a 2024 property tax increase of 4.58% and an increase to water and sewer rates of 5.2%.

During deliberations, Council scrutinized each cost centre for cuts that could be made to decrease the proposed property tax increase. Ultimately, Council did not approve the request for a new Community Safety Officer Manager/EMO Coordinator position.

Mayor Behiel stated, “Although we wish we could have a lower number, we recognize that there’s not much more that can be trimmed, and we need to stay on course to ensure we do not have a repeat of what happened in the ‘80’s where we pulled everything from reserves to try to keep taxes down, almost bankrupting the City. The 4.58% is an acceptable number given the current inflationary increases we are experiencing in our operations and capital projects.”

“There is a lot of positive revenue coming in from unconditional grants such as the Provincial Revenue Sharing Grant, SaskEnergy, and SaskPower Surcharges increases. These have certainly helped in many areas of our budget so that we could contain our overall property tax increase to something manageable,” said Joe Day, City Manager.

Notable cost drivers in the 2024 budget include cost increases from policing, utility costs, property and liability insurance, and fleet expenses. Increases in revenue from unconditional grants, interest revenue, and other user fees all helped to offset the cost increases. The net effect of the increased costs and additional revenue is that property tax rates will need to increase by 4.58%.



The largest capital project that will proceed in 2024 is the Wastewater Treatment System Upgrade (lagoon project) which was approved previously by City Council. In 2021, the project was approved for the Investing in Canadian Infrastructure Program that will fund 73%, leaving the City to fund 27% of the approved cost. While the total cost of the project won't be known until the tender process closes in mid-December, the City has been planning for a future loan and will bring a report to Council in the future on how to proceed with funding the project.

Council approved six roadways projects and one stormwater project with a combined, estimated cost of nearly \$2.6 million. This will address the reconstruction of curbing, asphalt paving and sidewalks following the Water Main Replacement Program in 2023, which saw replacement of a number of the oldest underground infrastructure throughout the City, along with other roadways projects and a stormwater drainage bottleneck near 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

A proposal for a significant project to develop the park space north of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue was discussed by City Council and Administration with Council determining to not approve the project at this time. City Council has asked Administration to provide more information to Council in order for Council to make a decision on this project. The expenditures for this project were proposed to come from the Parks Reserve, which receives an annual contribution through the budget process, and therefore the decision on when to proceed has no immediate impact upon the budget.

The 2024 budget does not propose any new external loans. However, Administration is aware that the Wastewater Treatment (Lagoon) upgrade will likely require the City to take on new debt before the end of 2024.

Many capital projects planned for 2024 will be funded from reserves by the City in combination with grant revenue that the City anticipates from Provincial, Federal, and FCM programs.

To view the Approved 2024 Consolidated Budget, go to [humboldt.ca](http://humboldt.ca).

- 30 -

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