



District of Maple Ridge News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 13, 2012 #12-36

For further information, contact:

Laura Benson, Manager of Sustainability and Corporate Planning
lbenson@mapleridge.ca
Tel: 604-467-4338

Maple Ridge Council Gives Three Readings to the 2013-2017 Financial Plan

Maple Ridge, BC: In a unanimous vote on December 11 Maple Ridge Council gave approval in principle to the 2013-2017 Financial Plan. Consideration of the bylaw followed a detailed two-day budget review that included a special 'live streamed' question and answer period on Monday, December 10.

"My understanding is that we are among the first municipalities in BC to do a live streaming of the public question and answer period that historically has been part of our Financial Plan presentations. It was an opportunity for Council to sit back and listen to the issues that are important to citizens," said Mayor Ernie Daykin. "Council members set the stage for this Financial Plan in the spring of 2012 when we provided specific direction to staff to guide their work in the development of the final document. Everyone at the table is mindful of the fragile economic climate and we also have a greater understanding of the long term consequences of financial decisions that we make today and how they impact citizens in the future. We need to preserve the core services that folks expect while stimulating progress for the future. Council members expressed their belief that this plan has found a balance between the competing pressures that we face in our roles," he added.

"In Spring of 2012 Council gave specific instructions to reduce the general property tax increase to 2.75%, to reduce the infrastructure replacement levy from 1% annually to 0.5% annually and to lower the Parks & Recreation levy from a half-percent to one-eighth of a percent," said Paul Gill, Chief Financial Officer for the District of Maple Ridge. "We also got the clear message from Council that we should also look for additional decreases. The Financial Plan that Council approved includes

a general property tax increase of 2.25% which is half a percent lower than what Council was expecting.”

Mayor Daykin congratulated staff and his fellow Council members on this very significant achievement. After utilities are factored in, the bottom line increase to the average home will be 3.91%, an improvement from the 2012 increase of 5.58%.

”As I look around the Lower Mainland and other parts of BC I see that some communities separate their utility charges in order to report lower increases in the cost of supplying services to citizens. Council has had a policy of reporting the ‘all in’ number. We think that it’s very important to be up front and transparent about the cost of running our local government,” said Mayor Daykin. He continued, ”I want to make sure that the public is aware that every department reviews every program as part of the financial planning framework. As was noted as part of the two-day discussions, our budget is not a giant ‘wish list,’ this is a business plan based on very specific input from Council that started in the spring, a process that is open to public scrutiny at all times.”

The final reading of the 2013-2017 Financial Plan will occur in January. The complete Financial Plan has been posted on the District website at mapleridge.ca. In addition, you can watch a replay of the live stream Q&A session and find more detailed answers to the questions posed as part of that webcast. Citizens are reminded that the budget@mapleridge.ca email address is available year round to deal with questions or comments on the Financial Plan or the business planning process.