

Report from Financial Management Services, Director

Date of Report: October 30, 2019

Date of Meeting: November 13, 2019

Report Number: CAO-B040-2019

File: 10.57.12

Subject: 2020 Operating Budget, Telephone Town Hall – Public Engagement Results

Recommendation

That Report CAO-B040-2019, regarding 2020 Operating Budget, Telephone Town Hall – Public Engagement Results, be received for information.

Summary

Hosting an annual Telephone Town Hall is an effective way to reach thousands of residents, keep them engaged in municipal matters and for the City to reiterate that resident's ideas and concerns are valued.

The purpose of this report is to share the results of the annual Telephone Town Hall with Council and staff to guide them during the budget process.

Background

Annually during budget deliberations, Budget Standing Committee (BSC), City staff and Council are faced with the challenge of finding balance between maintaining City services and programs at an effective level and a tax increase that is reasonable to residents. Public input into the budget deliberation process can be invaluable for residents, members of the BSC and Council as a whole to support that balance.

While the City hosts budget open houses as part of the public engagement process, past Telephone Town Hall events arranged by the City have proven to be an effective tool to reach up to thousands of residents at a time, keep them engaged and reiterate that the City values resident's thoughts and concerns. A Telephone Town Hall event is a live event whereby a vendor, selected through the City's procurement process, calls-out to residents by phone to involve them in the budget process.

Similar to the 2016 - 2019 Telephone Town Hall events, the 2020 budget process included a call-out to 30,000 residents. The 2015 Telephone Town Hall included a call-out to 15,000 residents.

Report

On Tuesday, October 22, 2019, the City held their sixth annual, one-hour Telephone Town Hall from 7 – 8 p.m. The event was held by provider Front Porch Strategies with a call-out of up to 30,000 random households in St. Catharines to participate. The event

was hosted by Budget Standing Committee Chair Mat Siscoe and Mayor Walter Sendzik with local broadcaster Tom McConnell as moderator and City staff for support.

By phone, participants were provided an opportunity to listen to information about the budget, answer four polling questions, ask live questions, as well as leave a voicemail message at the end of the Telephone Town Hall.

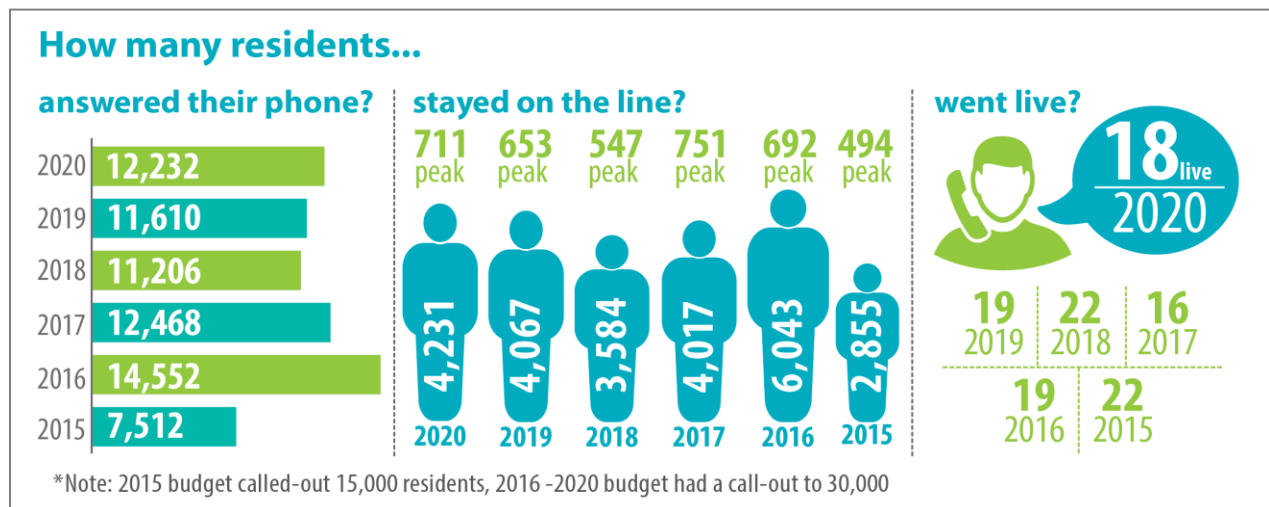
Residents could also participate online with the opportunity to audio stream the event, submit questions and answer polling questions.

Council members were invited to participate in this year's Telephone Town Hall by listening to the live event and have a screen project the questions residents asked and polling results in separate meeting room from the event.

Telephone Town Hall Response and Feedback

A total of 29,883 households were contacted for the Telephone Town Hall this year. Results show that 41% (12,232 households) live answered, 4,231 residents remained on the line and at peak 711 households participated.

During the Telephone Town Hall, 82 individuals entered the queue with questions, however, the allotted time only allowed for 18 to go live. The below graphic illustrates these results with prior budget year figures.



If residents did not get the opportunity to go live during the event, a voicemail option was available to residents to leave their comments. A total of 55 voicemails were left during the event and can be found in Appendix 1.

Before and after public engagement sessions, a small amount of questions were emailed to budget@stcatharines.ca and asked on the Engage STC website www.engagestc.ca/2020budget. Voicemails, emails and questions were transcribed and forwarded to appropriate departments and/or BSC members.

Many voicemails transcribed on Appendix 1 reveal residents are pleased to be involved in the Telephone Town Hall event and felt it was beneficial.

Web Streaming

The opportunity to audio stream through the web was utilized by 12 individuals with a total of 390 audio streamed minutes. One question was asked via the web and is addressed in Appendix 1 as the same individual left a voicemail.

Polls

Four polling questions were provided to participants by phone and on-line for their input. Residents were asked the level of tax increase they would accept, which types of revenue generating options they would support, what is most important to them and/or their family, and if the City was to reduced services, which services would they support being reduced.

Polling results show that between 323 - 394 participants voted. Polling results can be found on Appendix 2 of this report with the most preferred option in bold.

Financial Implications

There are no financial considerations associated with the preparation of this report.

Relationship to Strategic Plan

Social Sustainability is enriched by providing the Telephone Town Hall event to residents as an opportunity to involve them in the City's budget process, connecting residents with each other's thoughts, keeping open means of communication with residents, applying feedback throughout decision making and providing residents with superior customer service.

Economic Sustainability is also a factor is ensuring St. Catharines remains an affordable City for all demographics.

Conclusion

Telephone Town Hall is an effective way to reach thousands of residents at a time, keep them engaged in municipal matters and for the City to reiterate that resident's ideas and concerns are important.

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Attachments

Appendix 1 – Voicemail transcripts

Appendix 2 – Polling question results

#	Message
1	I didn't get a response to the question I had earlier about was there any concern about illegal garbage dumping once they change to garbage pick up every other week? Because, as I said, I'm already experiencing it in the area that I'm in. I was just curious if they thought there would be more or not.
2	Thanks. This was really interesting for me. I learned a lot. It's interesting hearing the diverse ideas coming out of our community. Just love this inclusiveness attitude of the Mayor and the whole city council. Thank you so much and I look forward to more of these. Thank you.
3	I'm calling as to regard to the downtown or rejuvenating the downtown, and I find that I have no use for it. I don't go downtown. The only time I go downtown is to go to the library, so all that fixing up with the restaurants and the bars, I never go and use them. Thank you.
4	I had a question for the budget committee concerning inclusions in the budget for comfort facilities. Would there be any consideration for comfort facilities, either permanent or temporary, along walking trails, such as those found in Walker's Creek or up by the lake? It would certainly be useful. I would appreciate hearing a comment on that. Also, I think the idea of a telephone town hall is really great. I stayed for the whole thing and I appreciate the inclusion.
5	I just want to say, Walter, you are doing a fabulous job. You and your team trying to balance everything, you know, it's very difficult to answer some of those questions because there's so much involved, and many times I found myself saying, "Oh, I want all those things." And of course we always do want all those things, but we just don't want to pay for it. It's kind of like insurance. Anyway, I just want to congratulate you and your team, what a fabulous job you are doing, and I just want to thank you. So you're a great leader and appreciate everything you do.
6	I think it was very interesting, Mr. Mayor, Walter, and the other gentleman. I've never participated in this, but it's interesting to know that you're working and I think you're doing a great job. Thank you very much, Bye
7	I'd like to know if you have any plans in place to stop the beach at Port Dalhousie from flooding, like plans like making a cement breaker wall, something like that. If you've got anything at all so that we can still have a beach there, let me know. Thank you.
8	I'd like the Mayor to consider issue of street parking. I live close to Brock and we have students with cars. There's not enough parking area in the houses that they park on the streets and it's becoming dangerous, especially with the speeders. I think they should look at what they do in Toronto and demand that if you're going to park on the street that you need to get a permit. It would raise money and also help solve the problem.
9	Is there anything in the 2020 budget implementing anything in the fire master plan? And two weeks ago I got involved with your EngageSTC, wrote that same question in, and I've never got a response up until yesterday. And I also called about why it's taken so long and still haven't heard back. Thanks very much.
10	I thank you very, very much for the privilege of listening in to the town hall meeting. I enjoy every minute of it and I appreciate Mayor Sendzik and the council. And I think our city is a very, very good city. Thank you.
11	My question is whether there is some sort of a requirement on the part of people who are holding events in the park such as RibFest and the wine festival to have the region's water truck. We did come and find when we were attending RibFest that the only water that was available onsite was in plastic single use bottles. With the current concerns with garbage collection and also with sustainability, I think that is a policy that should be required that anybody who is having events is required to have some sort of water available that people can use their own reusable containers. We went to the drinking fountain at the washrooms and found that there was a little bit of a trickle, but that was the only way that we were able to have actual drinking water other than buying something in a plastic container. So hopefully that's something that the budget committee and the council can consider and have that as a requirement for future events. Thank you.
12	I'm really concerned about the number of noisy motorbikes that rattle up and down Glendale Avenue. I was wondering, are there any bylaws in place to limit this, and is any action being taken to try to stop these motorbikes that, seem to me, have illegal mufflers on them? Thanks
13	I'm appreciative of the fact that any new street construction includes bicycle lanes. There's one glaring omission, Lake Street north of the QEW. Bicycles there, or really cyclists are taking their lives into their hands. I would like to see that whole street being reconfigured to make cycling safe.
14	I'm calling regarding the major problems I feel we are having in St. Catharines. Most of my life I have spent here. I love St. Catharines. I just find that it's not a great place to raise children anymore. Downtown, Montebello Park, the library down St. Paul Street, you can see needles, people using drugs, on Queenston Street, ladies of the night. I just don't feel that City Hall is doing anything regarding this. I hope I'm wrong. Maybe sometime you can discuss it at one of your meetings.
15	I have a concern with all the developers be giving access to the... letting them build such high, high structures in neighborhoods where there are just private homes and lots... They're mostly for students. I know that, but they are building them on small, small lots with no parking. And they go up three stories, which are... They're looking down on all the other homes. The other issue is homelessness. And I do work with homelessness and I don't believe that the downtown core will ever be very good, unless we can get these people in homes or in with help with their mental illness. And because they are very rude often and very distractive when they're downtown and they're all wanting money. And it's a real turnoff for people that would like to walk downtown. Thank you.
16	Thank you so much for all answers which you give to people today. And my question is, new nursing home will be on Ontario Street. So when would it be, and would it be from hospice side or from an other side of Linhaven? Thank you so much
17	I have a question about Welland Canal Trail, when it's going to be fixed for rollerblading to be more safe. Thank you.
18	I appreciate being invited in to this meeting. I always find them very interesting to be involved with. I was a little disappointed that my call didn't come in until about 40 minutes into the meeting, so I missed most of it, however I did catch the bottom end of it and I appreciate that. I guess if there's any questions, I would like to know if there's any coordination of all the construction that goes on all at the same time. It seems that quite a few streets are all snagged up with various construction projects, and it make it very difficult for getting around. I wonder if the city is involved with coordinating their projects with, I guess, the MTO as well too because some of these construction projects are involving the 406, which would be provincial of course. I look forward to being involved in the next town hall meeting. Thank you.

#	Message
19	I do not have the internet and retired since 2001. We've lived in this Survey since 1997 and we have noticed that our access from Coal Farm Boulevard over to Main Street or Lakeshore Road, whatever you want to call, at the cemetery has been getting worse and worse and worse for safety. We have to get our noses of our vehicles almost right out onto Lakeshore Road to see visibility of oncoming traffic. And we in the neighborhood here have noticed that the traffic is increasing more and more and more on this street. And with all the construction going on in Port Dalhousie, we all anticipate that when time comes it is going to be absolutely near impossible for us to have access to Lakeshore Road from Coal Farm. We were wondering if there was any way at all that we could have a traffic control installed at that intersection. If you come down into our Survey and try to drive out, you will understand the situation. And again, we thank you and thank you very much for what you are doing.
20	This has been most enlightening, certainly a different kind of experience for me. I've never really telephone conferenced, but I was a little discouraged in that I had absolutely no feedback, to the point that I couldn't even tell that I was being heard. None of my concerns were even responded to, so I'm a little bit discouraged. Whether I was off the mark, I'm not sure, but I just did not get an answer to that enforcement officer position that was being discussed in regards to the tree cutting. That is a budget cost, of course, that would be. Of course, there was an additional concern that I had, too, and it was in to do with planning, and planning the look of St. Catharines. Well, I've enjoyed living here very, very much the past 20 years. I don't want to see neighborhoods become mixed, as in tall buildings in a residential, bungalow-type neighborhood. Very, very hard to get my head around that look, so let's keep in character. Tall buildings, to me, are always a downtown kind of thing. But to [inaudible 00:01:29] mix is just making it difficult for already established neighborhoods that people may have aspired to move into it, and then all of a sudden they see things being torn down and odd looking structures going up. It's just like a complete mix misfit. So yeah, in terms of planning, that is a long-term concern of mine, as well. Thank you very much again, and most interesting. Good night.
21	On the topic of speeding. Just on Wilson Street, especially in the mornings and for people going to work, I know that there's a lot of short-cutting comes down our street and it's a real problem, especially with people walking and school children walking up the street too now. So just wondering if we could get that addressed. Thank you.
22	I thought the town hall was done very well, answered a lot of good questions. So any additional question I have is about municipal amalgamation. I'd heard that the Province wants to amalgamate various municipalities in Niagara. Just wondering what the status of that is and how that may or may not affect the budget this year or future years. Thank you very much. Bye.
23	I took note of the person talking about calming the traffic. We have a tremendous problem here along Geneva Street by the QEW bridge with people speeding and honking. It's just unbelievable. And I do not believe that this pilot project, in Port Dalhousie about lowering the speed limit is going to do anything at all. I think what we need is more police presence, especially here along Geneva Street. We get the same young people who just gun the gas pedal and they're going 90 or 100 kilometers an hour along here. And they don't care what the speed limit is. They're going to do exactly what they want to do. The only way to stop this is by having police presence. And I would really like to see that along here. So that's my main suggestion in regards to that.
24	I tried to pose a question, but it was never, I was never consulted. I, the new West End has increased in population and the East, West or West East roadways, Fourth Avenue and St. Paul are terribly congested. I'm wondering if the city has a plan to extend Carlton Street through to at least Martindale Road. I'm sure that they could negotiate properties from the General Motors on the end of Carlton there. It seems to me that they have an artery already in there going through the plant of properties. But anyway, I would like to see an East-West continuance of Carlton Street through to Martindale Road. Thank you.
25	My concern is the homeless and the opioid problem. You're almost afraid to walk the street. I would never dare to go down St. Paul Street at night or the Montebello Park. My second question is to cut taxes to get some money into the city, why can't all cars be tagged or towed who are parked in the streets who have big homes and driveways? I think it would help the winter snow plows. It would help a lot of people driving even. Thank you, and have a nice evening.
26	The wastewater bill that comes with your water bill is just ridiculous. Say my water bill was about \$85, so about \$300 or \$400 for the wastewater part. I don't know who's making this decision. I think that whether it's region or city, people can't afford this and I think you have to look into it. This is really ridiculous. Thank you very much, and I enjoyed my hour.
27	I want to make a comment about the pool situation in St. Catharines, that we live on a peninsula, we're surrounded by water, and I think it's quite appalling that rinks are the thing that we're talking about when in fact, water is something that's more accessible by pools for people in lower income brackets. And we have to admit with all the talk of homelessness, a lot of people don't have jobs or have very low paying jobs, and therefore cannot access these rinks. Therefore, having public pools, especially in the summer where they may not have air conditioning, and they can have a picnic, and they can go to the pool as a family, as extended families, as friends, that is vital. Bringing back a pool to, the park in Burgoyne Woods is crucial. Beautiful park, under utilized, and it could be done better, because it was a great park with the pool.
28	I would like to see the panhandling and the vagrancy addressed. That the panhandling, it seems to be getting more team-oriented, where they are taking turns, doing shift work for the panhandling in different areas, coming up to the cars. Also, using dogs as basically pawns as sympathy. And when I see the people doing the vagrancy, sometimes parking their car, getting out, getting their Tim Horton's cup out there and panhandling, getting aggressive if you do not give them money. It's becoming such an issue for safety. You don't feel safe going into the stores, as well as in different areas. Just when they're coming up, like somebody addressed tonight, that they're getting more aggressive. I think we should have vagrancy bylaws put back enforced like they used to. That it's just, it's not socially acceptable. There's a place for everybody and panhandling's not the option. Have a good evening. Thank you Walter and city council. Have a good evening.
29	My concern is not so much with the budget for 2019 as a comment that you must, City of St. Catharines, you have to take care of the homeless this winter. I realize you said six to eight months, but there are people that are going to be freezing to death and having difficulties right now. The agencies, and my suggestion is use the agencies that are already out there that know what to do, that could be put in action very quickly. Offer incentives to some of these vacant buildings in St. Catharines that are commercially owned, that are just sitting vacant where people could be put into them. I realized this is a cost, but the cost to watch people suffer like this is even worse. And we need to do better. We have to do better. They're not a them situation. They're us. Five methadone clinics had been allowed to open up in St. Catharines. That's not right, and if we're going to allow that, then we have to have shelter for these people. Thank you.
30	This message is for Walter Sendzik. I just want to tell you thank you so much for doing a great job, especially in these challenging times, and especially with the opiate crisis. I don't really know what the answer is, but I know they all have a story to tell and I guess if you have to work with the ones that really want help to try to get off their drugs or to try to get a better life. I don't know. Maybe with more Christianity coming in and more counselors, I'm not really sure, but you sure have your hands full and challenges, but you've done a great job so far, you and your council, so thank you and thank you again. Sending positive vibes to make our city great. Thanks so much. Bye now.

#	Message
31	One, I know that you had mentioned something about the garbage being regional, but I was just wondering, in the Secord Woods area, especially this year, we've had numerous weeks where garbage or recycle has not been picked up on the Wednesday. I was just wondering if there was anything or any news about that for what's going on, because you usually don't find out the day of. You just know that your garbage hasn't been picked up. And then my second question was, is there anything that we're specifically doing to try and keep housing prices within inflationary, because I know that Toronto had a lot of foreign investors, and from my understanding that these started to move down towards the St. Catharines and Niagara area, which is driving up housing prices, which is great for people who are selling. However, if you're in more of a starter home and you're looking to upgrade, it really is increasing or overvaluing the prices of the homes that people are looking to move into. And I just wonder if there's a strategy around that in order to help combat some of that. I really appreciated this. This was our first town hall this evening, and thank you so much. Have a great evening. Bye bye.
32	First, thank you for the work that you're doing to provide some livability to people who are homeless, near homeless, or impoverished, and standing out for resources in the opioid crisis. My query is more mundane, and I will contact my representative. It has to do with the walkability on Woodside Drive and West Hampton. Many many issues that need to be addressed. This neighborhood has changed a lot since I moved here in 1970. Some will cost money like sidewalks. My biggest concern is access to the buses on Glenridge Avenue, without being hit by a car. Even being able to make a right hand turn onto Glen Lakes and Woodside Drive at 9:30 in the morning some days. And at West Hampton, the parking on both sides of the road, leading to near accidents because it's one way traffic only and not visible until you come around the corner, and that's going to get worse when it gets icy, and when the new four-plex is fully occupied. Some crosswalks at the bus would really help.
33	Thank you for including me in this Town Hall. It was very enlightening. I am a new employee of a business downtown. We actually merged from near the Pen Centre to a new office downtown. There are three new staff members that are female who are all concerned about walking downtown past dark. Actually, even during the day, sometimes it's a little sketchy, but there are more people around. I'm happy to hear that there are going to be more patrols. Foot patrols are very important. We've talked about this at work and notice I've never seen a policeman walking downtown. I've lived here all my life, born and raised in Western Hill. I love St. Catharines. I love the downtown. I see through the eyes of my coworkers who aren't from St. Catharines, the fear. One of my coworkers had to leave last night at 7:00 and she did not want to walk alone. So, I think we definitely need to address this with downtown, more foot patrols by police, and we need to take care of the homeless. We need to find out why they're living in the pavilion. Our office is very close to the pavilion. I see them every morning. They've obviously been there all night and the city workers are kicking them out. Why isn't an agency finding out why those people are there? It's the same people every day. So, instead of kicking them out, somebody needs to find out how they can help them. So anyways, hopefully our new place is great. We love the downtown. It's just the safety issue we're concerned about. So, hopefully with the new budget, the new foot patrol, we can have a safer St. Catharines.
34	I'm very concerned because it's been made clear that the natural disaster, the war, disease and economic meltdown, these things are not a ifs or maybe or possibly. They're going to happen. I feel it is extremely important that our municipal leaders make an acknowledgement of this and start putting aside money for this. I know it's too late, but I really think that we should do this. St. Catharines can come out of this smelling like a rose if we prepare for it. Emergency preparedness. I was at the craft store on Fourth Avenue today with my granddaughter buying things and I noticed the emergency preparedness action plan hanging on the wall right behind the cashier. Preparedness for emergencies right there for all to see. Easy accessibility. And I think we should be doing the same thing. We need to put aside money, not just to act upon this and prepare for it, but when it hits to be able to have the funds in the bank ready. And I don't mean a reserve fund, I mean a specific fund just for emergencies that we can tap into that the mayor can have carte blanche so that if there's an emergency, he can access that and get things fixed right away. And without that we're going to be in the same boat as everybody else. And yes, we can dump that on all the other levels of governance, but let's not. Let's be forward thinking. Let's be positive and let's say, "Okay, we can prepare for this. Let's step aside money for this. We need to do this." And if you have to somehow do it in secret, God, forgive me, go ahead and do it because it's going to be big. It's going to happen and it would be best is St. Catharines was prepared for it and had things nailed down so that we could have emergency housing, emergency medical care, access to emergency funds. If there's a meltdown and things are closed up tight, financially, it's going to make things difficult. If there is a major war, let's get ready and hope it doesn't happen, but things are looking like it's going to happen. Is there a way we can get a contingency fund accepted or okayed by our counselors? And it can be administrated by two top level people as in a check and balance. But we definitely need to start putting money away. And I really mean big money and I know that we're going to have to say no to some other things, but I think in time we'll be glad we did because let's face it.. END
35	The Kiwanis senior building next to the Fairview Mall. My one concern is the speeding on Geneva Street, especially late at night. These guys with the loud cars, very loud mufflers and they race down Geneva Street. I think the stoplight down by the high rise apartments should be changing every once in a while so that they do get a red light. Would slow down the speeding. I know Geneva Street's a regional road, but the police department is city and I think they should be sitting in unmarked cars and they will catch a lot of them. My other concern was affordable housing. I have a friend, she works but also has a health condition. She can't afford any apartments, any bachelor, studio. They're all 900 plus. And this is something she can't afford. So actually after a week she's going to be homeless and, but she's got a job and which, I mean it doesn't pay thousands and thousands of dollars, but affordable housing, like 600, 500, 600, even 700 she can afford, but not these 900, 1,000, 1,200, 1,500. So that is a problem in the city. So I just wanted to express my views on these. And like I said, Geneva Street's really bad for speeding. Actually anytime of the day. And there's a lot of seniors walking around here. So, okay, that's it for now. Thank you.
36	I am very concerned at the council's decision of refusing the Lincoln Fabrics. The tax incentives were given to a neighboring project and recommended by staff. I feel that council should reconsider their decision and grant the tax incentives to Lincoln Fabrics. Secondly, I was pleased to hear the cities attitude now on building sidewalks and the importance of sidewalks in our community.
37	It's about snow plow. I live at a dead end and we never hardly get plowed out down here. If it wasn't for the good neighbors helping us to dig our way out, we would be there all day and all night, so I know you must be paying good money to these contractors, I think they should get a little shake up here. The other thing is the rats in the area. Since they've taken down the hospital; we are plagued with them and I know all of St Catharines is. What are they doing about this? And the other thing is we've had a park over the end of our street on Barley Drive, it's called Barley Drive Park. We've been promised and promised for years, I've been here for 64 years and we've been promised for years about getting a decent park for our children, our grandchildren, our great grandchildren and we get nothing. We find needles over there and everything. Can something be looked at in that? Thank you so much for listening to my call. I hope I didn't bore you in any way. Goodbye.

#	Message
38	I work in a homeless shelter, and there is this large homeless problem. There doesn't seem to be enough beds available for people. Also, a lot of people have aggressive issues that we cannot handle, and I'm wondering somehow if mental health could be more involved. Also, some people can't afford medications that they need, say going to get an eye test done and going to that eye test, sometimes they cannot go, resulting in no health care at all. It's hard for certain people to be helped at all because they're in a wheelchair and there's no accessibility, things like that. And the homeless who do want to be housed, it's difficult to house them. So there's different issues there that need to be addressed that maybe more organizations like hostels, or maybe we can get PSWs in to help the homeless with eating disorders and so on. That'd be great. And mental health. Thanks for your time.
39	St. Catharines has always been known as the Garden City, but many places throughout the city doesn't really reflect that. An example is Brock University. The taxpayers like myself are left with the job of picking up after these students, not only in our subdivision, but on the side of the roads. That's one issue. And the second issue is the grass cutting is not being done. It's being done, takes longer to cut the grass. It should be cut more often because the grass is about 11 inches, a foot long. It doesn't look very pleasant. When it is being cut, it's now the dead grass has been cut, just sits on top. So it doesn't look aesthetically pretty for the city. And I believe we should have more landscaping to make our city look well. And my question is to you, is the city looking into something like this and can we as taxpayers call a number to inform the city so that it can be addressed when we see these types of problems? Thank you.
40	My comment is I'm involved in ladies softball, have been for years. I have visited every province in Canada at ball diamonds. I would like to comment that our premier diamond, Lancaster, was always asked for because the people like coming here. I appreciate the improvement they have made with the washrooms, but the seating in the diamond is completely covered in I'm thinking mildew ... I'm not sure ... which I think would be very dangerous. I would like to see something done about that. All you have to do is drive by the diamond, you see it. I'd like to thank the mayor, he's doing a super job and the Canada Games, I think it's great it's coming to St. Catharines, but I have a real problem with everything going up to Brock because once the games are over, I'm sure that people will have to pay a fortune to use the facilities at Brock, and I hope there's something in place that they keep the prices down for the kids that will be using those facilities. Thank you very much.
41	I just wanted to commend Walter on the job he's doing. I think he's being very forward with speaking for St. Catharines. And also I'm good with the 3% tax increase as well. I think we need to spend a little more money to make our city look like the gardens that it used to. I know everybody's working hard and doing what they can with the hours they have, and money is an issue. But I'd like to see our city look a little bit more like it did years ago, when money wasn't an issue and we could spend it on whatever we wanted to. But I must say the gardens did look better this year than they did last year. So I appreciate that. And the other thing is, I was wondering about the traffic situation as well because we live on Pierce Avenue, which was between Parnell and Beamer, off of Niagara. And it's just like a race zone down, here plus all these new cars with their heavy duty buffers and stuff going by 11 o'clock at night. It's very noisy. So I don't know if there's anything you can do about that. Not likely, but anyway, I just thought he mentioned it. So thank you again for the town hall tonight. It was very informative and I'll be listening next time. Thanks very much.
42	I would like to commend you on doing this sort of council meeting, open to everyone. Very informative and much appreciated to make everyone who is willing to be part of the community, being part. Let's all work together. Thank you very much, and keep up the good work. Bye. Bye.
43	Wanted to thank you. Didn't plan to be involved in the call, but decided to stay on and found it very interesting. One question or one comment I have is the property standards. I've noticed several homes within the area, complaints have been put in the property and property standards, decay, lack of the city enforcing property standards. I think we live in a good neighborhood, but there's certain homes that have been complained about and the lack of efficient response times and continued complaints in the same area not being addressed. So again, that's kind of for the budget committee to take a look at property standards and only wanting to make sure that my property and those neighbors around here also keep up in value. Thank you very much for allowing me to leave my comments.
44	I wanted to know what are you going to do about the mentally ill people who are homeless on the streets. My daughter was one from last year and she is in a place now of a rooming house and there's drugs in there, and she can't get away from the drugs because they're always there on her. And everywhere she goes she ends up finding other people who are homeless too and they're doing drugs. And what's going to happen with... What's going to happen? We need to find some way to save the kids who are homeless on the streets, who are doing drugs to get them away from that lifestyle. That's all they know now because a lot of kids got kicked out of their houses, didn't have their parents there for them and they are just lost. They need some kind of support, some kind of help and some somewhere to live that is more safe for them than being on the streets. And Montebello Park is not that safe. Because last year I was beat up over there and I ended up getting into Avondale and then the police found out who did it and everything and they got caught then on tape. But I had seven people that ran after me. So I just wanted to know, you say you guys made it safer in the last two years. No, you didn't. But anyways, we need to do something about the legal drugs and needles and safe injection places to get them. They need to be open longer and more days in the week and everything. Okay. Thank you.
45	My question is, is it within the budget without increasing it astronomically for more police presence, foot patrol? I love to see a policeman walking around and just being there. It makes me feel much more secure. And not just uptown, but say Port Dalhousie, Montebello Park like a citizen just asked a question about. In all the parks rather than... And maybe the police become more of a part of the community, not just somebody who's zooms by in a car when they're being called on. So that's my question. Is it within the budget to have more foot patrol, more police presence, visually seen and being part of the community? Okay. Thank you very much.
46	I have a comment about the proposed 3% increase in tax increase. I do not agree with it at all, and my reasons are basic services are not being met. At least in my area, my number one concern is snow removal, plowing the road is very, very infrequent. It's almost impossible sometimes to cross the road without falling down, and if we actually do get our road plowed, it ends up freezing and it's worse than a skating rink. It's a bumpy, bumpy... very, very bumpy surface, very difficult to walk across the street. And also another concern is garbage collection and the unreliability of the collection. So those are two very basic services that I don't think are being met, and so, no, I do not agree with the 3% tax increase. Thank you.
47	I'm directing my question to the Mayor. We have had it promised from the city about six or eight months ago regarding a problem on Manning Street. Our problem is that the street work was done about a year ago and the work that was done is beautiful and it's too good for some drivers that make the turn off of Niagara Street onto Manning. And then they push the gas to the floor, have a heavy foot there. And this is occurring so much. We live almost on the corner there and we see what's going on and we are concerned. There's been other complaints about it, but their promise to come and deal with the problem, they said they were going to put in a special warning, not just a sign as just a sign won't do it. And they make the turn and then they go and they don't even bother with the sign. So thank you so much for listening to that and I appreciate it very much.

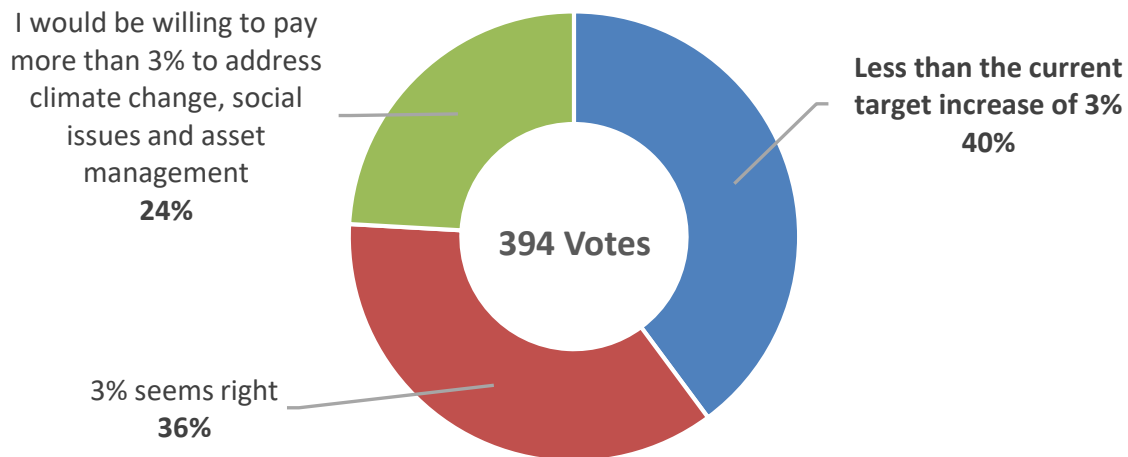
#	Message
48	I do have a question and a concern. I am handicapped. I use my scooter every day, sometimes hours at a time. I drive on the roads and a lot of the roads have the bicycle path built into the traffic lane. I'm in that lane, where I'm supposed to be, according to the police, but a lot of drivers beep me behind me and scared the living daylight out of me. And as they come past me, they yell at me and tell me to get off the road. Can you not inform them about this new bicycle path? That we use for bicycles and scooters and that. Can you not inform them that we have a right to use the road as well? I think it's ridiculous that we are not treated equally. Maybe what you should do is people that use the thing, the bicycle path frequently they should be ... Maybe there should be a way that we get a driver's license or something so we could do something ... I'm not even talking of a driver's license but drivers are allowed to drive on the road because they have a valid driver's license. I have a valid driver's license too, but they don't drive a car. I drive a scooter. I just don't know what to do because they scare the living daylight out of me and then I could be in an accident because they don't know the rules. The drivers don't know the rules. I stay well with the in the bicycle path. They could easily get around me without having to venture out and around me. I don't know what to do, but I would definitely like to hear from you. I agree with the potholes and that because where those grates and that are, they have sunk down and when you go through something with a six inch wheel and that thing is sunk in three inches, that's half a tire. That's like going over...
49	My question is regarding waste collections. So given that there's a big initiative for smarter ways of waste collections, one of the suggestions I have is for the city to offer compost bins at a discounted price for the organic waste for St. Catharines residents maybe once a year. Much like the rain water collection barrels. This would encourage people to use their organic waste in different ways, like for garden soil or what not. But the barrels are a bit too expensive for most people. To buy it, it's \$100 to \$150 a piece. And I guess my question would be, is there money in the budget for such things? And that would be it. Thank you again for taking my call. Have a good night.
50	I would like to submit that the affordable housing plan of the city is excellent. I believe we should only have a priority for affordable housing and for housing. The numerous homeless people that we are finding and also of course feeding and clothing them. I would like to submit that St. Catharines should not have any priority for luxury housing in the city of St. Catharines anymore. We have enough luxury housing. We do not have enough affordable housing and housing for the homeless. Thank you.
51	There is a big development going on at the end on east side of Lake street, past Pine Grove School. I was wondering, with that kind of development, if our city tax is not going to go up down the road? Please let us know. Number two, is there some more facilities for the senior citizens? Because now that winter is coming, we would like to have some exercises or swimming, if possible to arrange with Brock University. Please let us know, too. Thank you very much.
52	Why does the city not pull out of the Niagara Region? Why do we need four levels? We do not need, we do not need Niagara Region. And first of all, I would like to know what authority does our city have over the Niagara Region as to the work that they do or don't do within St. Catharines? I feel they're doing an awful lot of unnecessary work in St. Catharines and this is just all coming out of the tax payers' pockets.
53	My concern is I'm a cyclist. I traded in my car for a bicycle, as I'm local and don't need to go out of the city very often. So everything I need is right here, which is great. However, and it's very convenient to get from one end of the city to the other within an hour on a bike. My issue is the roads. Like, when you're on a bicycle you have to ride to the far right of the road. Unfortunately, that's where a lot of the damage to the roads are. Potholes and seams that have sunk, for lack of a better term. Sewer grates that stick up with sharp corners, the square ones that can offset a bicycle tire or just make it for a very awkward ride when you're trying to avoid getting hit by a car, trying to stay close to the side as I possibly can. I'm finding that a big challenge. In the city, there's not a lot of places where you can ride a bicycle where you're not trying to avoid those obstacles and are veering into the lane of traffic more than you would want to. So, I was just wondering if that's going to be a big thing that's addressed this year in the city's budget. I appreciate any information that can be passed along. Thank you. Have a good night.
54	My main concern in this area is the traffic on Roehampton out into Winifred. The sidewalks in this area are not the best. I have called the city about it in the past. Was reassured that it was being looked at. Possibly something would have been done this year, but up to this date nothing has been done. There's a lot of patchwork. The white paint on the sidewalks present trip hazards. That is not safety. There is a lot of pedestrians, wheelchairs that use these sidewalks, and another thing that could be done to improve them is to widen them because of the apartment buildings and the condos that are here. Another issue on this street is, I don't know who you're talking about, affordable housing. The townhouses at the bend on Roehampton going to Winifred, I don't know who is responsible for looking after these buildings, but being that they are 30 years old, if not more, there is some issues there that need to be looked after for the sake of the people that live in them. I hope someone will do something about it in the near future, and also Winifred could use new sidewalks. You just said a little while ago that you're looking at sidewalks and roads as you do them. You did the road on Winifred, but you never looked at the sidewalks, and they are also widely used. I hope you take into consideration what I am saying, not just for myself because I do a lot of walking, but for other pedestrians, wheelchair, handicapped, whatever, who uses the sidewalks. Thank you, and have a good evening.
55	I'd like to thank whoever for letting me listen to this. It was very, very good. I've had it for the last couple of years, but I thought tonight with exceptional so many thanks to the Mayor, and Councillor Siscoe, and all the callers. It was very insightful. A question. We have a ditch on Duncald Avenue and I was wondering if someone could call me about it. Well, I just wondered if there was any chance that the ditches in St. Catharines would be going to be addressed? Someone from out of town arrived. Was shocked to see these ditches in our city and said that very few cities in Ontario still had them. And they are a nuisance. The one in front of my house is certainly a nuisance. And I just wondered if there were any plans, immediate plans, to have them filled in?

Results: Telephone Town Hall Polling Questions for 2020 Budget

Question 1:

For the 2020 budget, City Council has set a 3% target for expenditure increases. Which of the following options do you support?

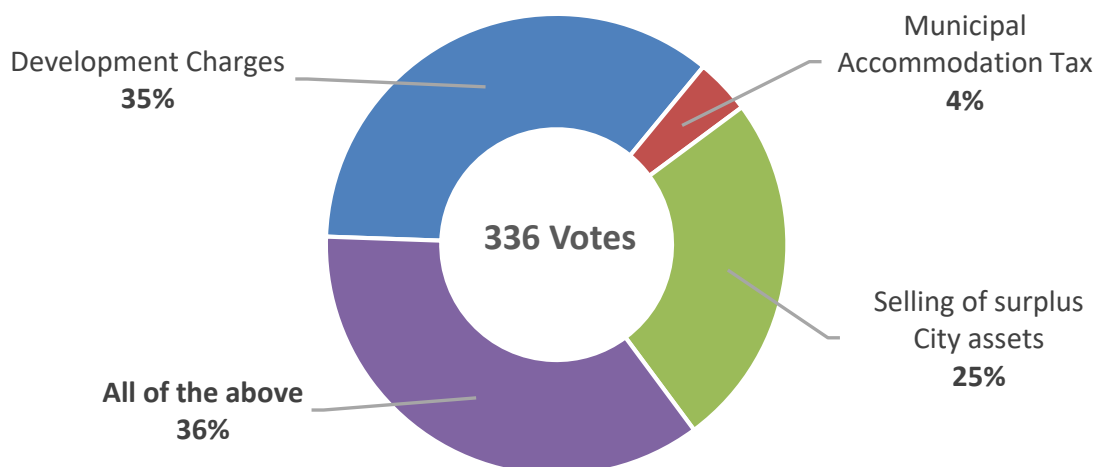
- **Less than the target increase of 3% - 40%**
- 3% seems right – 36%
- I would be willing to pay more than 3% increase to address climate change, social issues, and asset management – 24%



Question 2:

The City is seeking new revenue generating options to offset property tax increases. Which would you support?

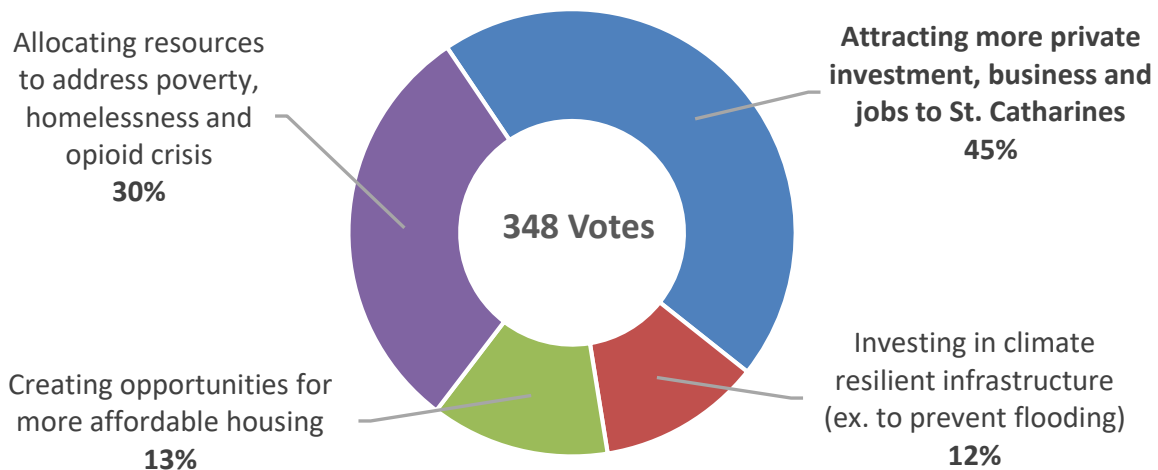
- Development Charges – developers pay for cost of growth – 35%
- Municipal Accommodation Tax – Taxing overnight visitors – 4%
- Selling of surplus City assets – 25%
- **All of the Above – 36%**



Question 3:

Which of the following is the most important to you and your family?

- **Attracting more private investment, business and jobs to St. Catharines – 45%**
- Investing in climate resilient infrastructure (ex. to prevent flooding) – 12%
- Creating opportunities for more affordable housing – 13%
- Allocating resources to address poverty, homelessness, and opioid crisis – 30%



Question 4:

If the City had to reduce services, which would you reduce?

- Reduce hours at recreation centres, arenas, and other community spaces – 11%
- Reduce grass cutting, landscaping and tree trimming – 14%
- Reduce business support programs: investment attraction, incentives and grants – 20%
- **I don't want to see any services reduced – 55%**

