

Interviewer:

I will start again. This is the special meeting for the RM of Springfield to discuss our 2025 financial plan. Today's date is April 29, 2025, and the time is exactly 6:00 p.m. I am Mayor Patrick Terriam for the RM of Springfield. All of the council is present to my right. The seated order is Glen Fuel, Andy Kaczynski, Mark Miller, and Melinda Warren. If I can get an adoption of the agenda, moving on to a seconder, please. Melinda and Glen. Are there any additions to the agenda? I see none. If I can get a mover or those in support of the adoption of the agenda. Andy, that is unanimous and is therefore passed. We will get into item 4.1, which is the adoption of the 2025 financial plan. Can I get a mover and a seconder for that as well, please? Melinda and Patrick. I will turn this over to the council: that the Council of the RM of Springfield adopt the 2025 financial plan consisting of: one, an operating budget; two, a capital budget; three, an estimate of operating revenue and expenditures for the following fiscal year; and four, a five-year capital expenditure program. Thank you. Are there any questions? Councillor Miller.

Participant:

Yes. We cannot hear. Is it unmuted? Does that work? Okay, sorry about that. I have a couple of comments and questions. First, to the CAO or CFO: under Section 304(1) of the Municipal Act, no later than May 15th of each year after adopting its operating budget for the year, the council must, by bylaw, set a rate of taxation. I assume that in the coming meetings, we are going to have a bylaw to adopt the financial plan.

Interviewer:

Yes, we pass a financial plan by resolution, and then that becomes Schedule A to the bylaw for taxation.

Participant:

Thank you for that clarity. I have a few concerns I wanted to share with the council regarding this particular proposed 2025 financial plan. I noted at least one resident got back to me—actually, there were a few—who had input and questions for our council. As you know, we do not have a question period, we do not have delegations, and we really have no mechanism for the public to engage with us. This one individual, as you know, is in our agenda but is hidden from the public. This individual submitted comments to the CAO and expressed that those comments be made publicly known. I am wondering, when people submit comments—because we have eliminated the question period and we do not really have delegations for this special meeting—there is no opportunity for the public to engage with us at all. This individual took the effort to do a two or three-page exposition or series of questions for the financial plan. When they submitted them online, this individual had the understanding that they would be posted publicly for people to share his concerns or respond to them. I think you know who I am referring to, and I am not sure if that individual wants me to say their name. I am wondering, when people submit comments, wasn't that supposed to be the mechanism where the public still has the opportunity to have their concerns shared with the community? Are we now just relying on "Rant and Rave" for the community to engage with us? That used to be the only mechanism. I am frustrated because people are calling me and saying, "Mark, other than you expressing our concerns at these meetings, there is no ability for the public to engage with the bureaucracy or with the council in general." Some feel their concerns have fallen on deaf ears. They share those concerns with council representatives, but they are not brought up, shared, or responded to. They feel very frustrated. They feel that the only mechanisms they have now are to institute recall legislation, which won't happen quickly, or to vote differently at the next election in October 2026. It is unfortunate we have come to this situation where the public is relegated to the backwoods. Regarding the provincial reassessment this year, we have an addition of \$2 million to our fund. We have taken it upon

ourselves to find ways to spend that \$2 million. I came to council wanting to sharpen my pencil to save taxpayer dollars on discretionary items. I am not sure if these things are necessarily for the clear benefit of the ratepayers of our community. I have tried to do that, but in a democracy, if they do not flow with the rest of those who vote, they end up in the dungeon and do not get passed. With this proposed budget, I have seen that I am going to have an 18% increase in my municipal taxes. I do not have the biggest house in our municipality. My neighbor across the street has a house worth at least five times mine, and they are going to go ballistic if their rate increases 18%. I know that is not the average, but some people will have 20%, some will have 2%, and some will have 8%. They are going to ask where we are spending this money. Why do we have \$2 million extra because of the reassessment, yet we are spending it just because we have it? We have some very important and critical projects coming forward, and we have to address those. I would like our council to set a goal of reducing expenditures going forward, not increasing them just because we have an influx of \$2 million. Next year, we are not going to have that extra money. If our expenses keep rising the way they are, people will be stretched to the limit. We saw it in the election yesterday; affordability and the cost of living are the top priorities for all political parties. We have to realize at the grassroots level that people do not have an endless credit card. I am not going to go on a rant, but you get the gist of where I am going. Thank you.

Interviewer:

Thank you, Councillor Miller. I want to remind people in the audience that there is no recording allowed. Thank you. Are there any other questions from the council? Councillor Kaczynski.

Participant:

Thank you. I would like to point out, Councillor Miller, that it is not \$2 million, but \$3.3 million that we are going to receive from that increase by the reassessment of houses. I will echo your comments and your concern that we have to be really frugal with our money right now. It is not going to happen all the time that we get that reassessment. The province has to realize that people only have so much money to spend, and the gravy train is going to be over shortly. That is my concern and my input. Thank you.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much, Councillor Kaczynski. Are there any other questions or comments from the council? I would like to clarify and summarize everything as the chair. The mechanisms for this budget were totally complied with. We had our public hearing last week, and all the questions were answered. I know who you were talking to; those questions were answered by me on the record. They were referred to as "flags," and I answered all of them. The answers were provided by administration for questions that were not answered at the time of the hearing itself. I understand the situation both Councillor Kaczynski and Councillor Miller were talking about. We are in a strong financial position, and it shows in the progress and the steps we are taking, but we do not take it frivolously. We went through each of these through our Committee of the Whole and working groups. We went detail by detail, line by line, and saved where we could. The "wants" as opposed to the "needs" were all weighed. We rely heavily on our directors for their budgets. We give them something at the beginning of the year, and everybody does an exceptional job with that money. They know it is the taxpayers' money, and most of them are taxpayers within the RM of Springfield themselves. Regarding the increase that Councillor Miller stated, mine went up 21%. I am going to be paying a price for that, and my neighbors and I have had discussions about it. Unfortunately, that is out of our control with this being an assessment year. Yes, we got a significant amount of money, just as we did two years ago when we got \$2.2 million.

We were able to reduce our mill rate by 3.16. It is not going to help a lot of the taxpayers, and that is an average 17% increase within the RM of Springfield. Some might pay a little less, but it goes as high as 21%, which would be myself and my neighbors. I understand the concerns from Councillors Miller and Kaczynski. To reiterate, everyone has input into the budget, and that was expressed eloquently by several people who came to us last week. As time goes on, everyone has a chance to discuss this through delegations and questions to their councillors. I answer every inquiry. That is all I have to say to summarize. Are there any other questions from the council at all?

Participant:

Yes, Mayor. I would just like to say that we did a really good job working through this budget. As I said before, we went through this budget and reduced the mill rate once. We went back a second time and it became even lower. All administration put their hearts into this to make it work. I agree that the administration and staff involved in the budget take every resident's dollar seriously and do the best they can. Costs are going up wherever we look, so we are doing the best we can. This budget, to me, is a good budget. We have a plan for the future, and that is what we are doing because these costs are not going down; they keep going up. Thank you.

Interviewer:

Thank you, councilmember.

Participant:

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. It is good we have a council because we have different voices. I wouldn't necessarily agree with the Deputy Mayor in this particular situation. I think we can do better. A 17% average increase—if the public knew that, they would go ballistic.

They would not be embracing us; in fact, they would be very upset. They would be saying we ought to look line by line one more time for a sober second thought. We can use the excuse that costs are going up—everyone seems to—but in reality, Manitobans are not getting paid that much more, and we are getting squeezed. I think there is improvement to be made, and I cannot support this budget as proposed. I think we can use the excuse that people had an opportunity for a public open house, but if we put the information up clearly that it was going to lead to a 17% increase, I think you would have this room packed because people are fed up and are not going to put up with this anymore. We will see it in October of 2026. Thank you.

Interviewer:

Thank you. Are there any other questions? I see none. We can read the resolution and vote on it. Be it resolved that the Council of the RM of Springfield adopt the 2025 financial plan consisting of: one, an operating budget; two, a capital budget; three, an estimate of operating revenue and expenditures for the following fiscal year; and four, a five-year capital expenditure program. With a show of hands, first, those in support? That will be Councillor Warren, Deputy Mayor Fuel, and Mayor Terriam. Those opposed? Councillor Miller and Councillor Kaczynski. The motion is passed. Unless there are any other questions from the council—I see none—I propose to adjourn. Can I get a mover and a seconder to adjourn? Councillor Melinda Warren and Deputy Mayor Fuel. At 6:17 p.m., the meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much to the people attending in the audience and online, and to the council.