



TOWN OF LAKE COWICHAN

Minutes of a Budget Meeting held and transmitted electronically via Council Chambers located at 39 South Shore Road, Lake Cowichan, BC on Tuesday, February 10th, 2026

PRESENT: Councillor Aaron Frisby, Chair
Councillor Carlyne Austin
Councillor Kristine Sandhu
Councillor Lorna Vomacka

REGRETS: Tim McGonigle, Mayor (leave of absence)

STAFF: John Thomas, Chief Administrative Officer
Jas Sandhu, Superintendent, Public Works and Engineering Services
Dalton Smith, Manager, Cowichan Lake Education Centre
Brigid Reynolds, Contract Planner
Roni-Lee Roach, Executive Secretary

PUBLIC: 2

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

None.

3. AGENDA

Moved: Councillor Sandhu
Seconded: Councillor Austin
that the agenda be approved as amended and presented.

CARRIED.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Michael Compton, Fern Road resident, was on hand to discuss the opening of Fern Road at Point Ideal Drive to address safety concerns at the South Shore Road intersection.

5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

6. BUSINESS ARISING AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7. DELEGATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

None.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

9. COUNCIL AND OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) Council discussed the 2026 Draft Budget and reviewed the PowerPoint presentation.

The 2026 Property Assessment information was reviewed with the applicable property classifications.

Council reviewed the revenue estimates based on the rates in the financial bylaws which also include the recent ratification of the Fees and Charges Bylaw in January 27th, 2026.

The Chief Administrative Officer reviewed the consolidated 2026 draft budget and reviewed the general fund – five year budget (2026-2029).

The following was noted:

- sewer lagoon project was not from taxation but from conditional grants and transfers;

No. Budget01/26
Agenda

2026-2029 Financial
Plan – Operating and
Capital Budgets



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- request to reflect parking revenue(s), including the boat launch, sani-dump and parking revenues;
- reflection of revenue and expenses to allow for clarification on return of investments; and
- separation of capital from general operational.

The Chief Administrative Officer reviewed the 2026 general fund capital expenditure outlining each of the following departments with the listing projects, departments, expenses and how the Town will be funding the projects for the following:

- General administration;
- Cowichan Lake Education Centre;
- Lakeview Park;
- Fire Department;
- Public Works; and
- Parks.

No. Budget02/26
General Administration –
meeting management
software

Moved: Councillor Sandhu
Seconded: Councillor Vomacka
that Council approve the addition of \$15,000 to general administration budget for meeting management software for 2026.

CARRIED.

No. Budget03/26
Cowichan Lake Education
Centre – waterfront dock

Moved: Councillor Sandhu
Seconded: Councillor Austin
that Council approve the addition of \$50,000 for Cowichan Lake Education Centre capital budget for the waterfront dock in 2026 with \$25,000 listed as external source and the other \$25,000 with funds to be identified at a later date.

Councillors Austin, Frisby and Vomacka Against
DEFEATED.

No. Budget04/26
Cowichan Lake Education
Centre – waterfront dock

Moved: Councillor Sandhu
Seconded: Councillor Austin
that Council approve the addition of \$50,000 for Cowichan Lake Education Centre capital budget for the waterfront dock in 2026.

Councillors Frisby and Vomacka Against
DEFEATED.

No. Budget05/26
Public Works – parking
programme

Moved: Councillor Vomacka
Seconded: Councillor Austin
that Council approve that the “parking meters” be changed to “parking programme” for 2026.

CARRIED.

No. Budget06/26
Public Works – Fern Road

Moved: Councillor Vomacka
Seconded: Councillor Austin
that Council approve the addition of \$15,000 to Public Works General fund Capital budget for researching, report and possible implementation of the opening of Fern Road onto Point Ideal Drive.

Councillor Sandhu Opposed
CARRIED.

Council took a ten-minute recess break at 5:50 pm.



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The meeting re-convened at 6:00 pm.

The General Fund Expenditure review by Department with the following highlights:

General Government Expenses:

- Council indemnities have been increased to reflect rates in Bylaw 1126-2025; council expenses have been increased to include new council orientation costs.
- The 2025 office wages budget was increased due to staffing changes. In 2026, three office staff have been increased to full time resulting in an additional five days per week (or the equivalent of one additional person).
- Contingency budget for emergency.
- Legal expenses have been increased to reflect operational requirements.
- Data processing includes IT contract costs.
- Elections budget increased to cover estimated elections costs.
- Insurance costs increased due to higher asset appraisal costs and rising premiums.

No. Budget07/26
General Government –
Ohtaki Expense

Moved: Councillor Austin

Seconded: Councillor Sandhu

that Council reduce the Ohtaki Expense budget of \$15,000 to \$10,000 for 2026.

Councillor Frisby Opposed
CARRIED.

Fire Department Expenses:

- Other wage costs includes a \$70,000 budget for succession planning.
- The Firesmart grant program expenses have been budgeted for the remaining grant funds available. This \$75,000 increase has a corresponding increase in the CRI grant revenue.
- An additional \$20,000 has been included in lease expenses due to anticipated repairs at the ambulance building.

Bylaw and Development Services:

- The building inspector/bylaw enforcement officer hours will increase to full time – an additional one day per week.
- A new position, the Director of Bylaws and Development Services is included in the development services budget.

Public Works Administration:

- Administration wage budget increased by \$15,000
- Small tools and equipment budget moved from capital budget
- Road maintenance budget increased to reflect projected wage costs. Public Works was short staffed in 2025 due to staff turnover
- Increase in tipping fees and recycling costs

Visitor Centre, Parks, Lakeview Park Campground and Cowichan Lake Education Centre:

- \$20,000 budget for Lakeview Park Public beach added to Parks
- \$20,000 budget increase to parks for Central Park repairs and maintenance
- \$60,000 budget added to CLEC to cover succession planning costs.

Council reviewed the Sewer and Water Funds and the current utility rate increases and usage charges for 2025 and 2026.

The number of parcels subject to sewer and water parcel tax was provided:

- Water Fund – 1839 (2025 – 1833)
- Sewer Fund – 1802 (2025 - 1796)



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- There are properties within Lake Cowichan that are not on the sanitary sewer system (for example Greendale Road)

No. Budget08/26
Sewer Parcel Tax - 2027

Moved: Councillor Austin
Seconded: Councillor Sandhu
that the proposed budget reflect an increase to the Sewer fund Parcel Tax budget by \$25 annually, starting in 2027 with increase of \$25 per year to 2030 year.

CARRIED.

Sewer Fund – Five Year Plan (2026-2030)

- The Sewer Treatment Plant project is budgeted at \$6,000,000 in 2026 and \$3,226,265 in 2027 with grant covering 73.33% of the costs
- Sewer user fees rate increases will need to be determined by Council starting in 2028.
- 5% increases have been used for information only purposes for 2028 to 2030.

Sewer Fund – 2026

- Sewer Treatment Capital upgrades - \$6,000,000 budgeted cost with the grant covering \$4,399,800 of the costs
- Infiltration and inflow \$100,000 budget moved to operations, previously a capital budget
- General maintenance and sewer lagoon maintenance budget increases in the sewer fund.

Water Fund – Five Year Plan (2026-2030)

- The budget estimates do not include a parcel tax increase from 2026 to 2030
- Next year water user fees for 2028 and future years will need to be set by Council.
- For information purposes 5% increases are shown for the years 2028 to 2030.

No. Budget09/26
Water and Sewer Parcel
Tax Review

Moved: Councillor Vomacka
Seconded: Councillor Austin
that Council review the amounts of the sewer and water parcel tax annual increase, starting in 2027, with direction to staff to report back on the possible amendments to the Parcel Tax bylaws.

Councillor Sandhu Opposed
CARRIED.

Water Fund – 2026

- In 2025, a one-time contribution was made to Ts’uubaa-asatx First Nation’s water reservoir, which will benefit and Town and will be operated by the Town.
- There are no other significant changes in the budget.

Council reviewed the cash and reserve balances which include unrestricted and restricted reserves and grants received.

Council then reviewed the proposed tax increase scenarios provided for 2%, 4%, 6% and 8% with the summary table of rate increases reflected.



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No. Budget01/26
2026 Taxation Rate
Increase

Moved: Councillor Sandhu
Seconded: Councillor Austin
that Council set a 4% tax increase for the Town of Lake Cowichan for 2026.

CARRIED.

10. OTHER REPORTS

None.

11. STAFF REPORTS

The Chief Administrative Officer advised that staff will make the adjustments as directed by Council and will bring back the revised budget to the next meeting to be held on February 24th, 2026.

Upon Council’s review and further changes and then get direction on public consultation dates to be determined.

12. BYLAWS

13. NEW BUSINESS

14. MAYOR’S REPORT

None.

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

None.

16. QUESTION PERIOD

None.

17. IN CAMERA

No. Budget02/26
Retire to In-Camera

Moved: Councillor Austin
Seconded: Councillor Vomacka
that the Council close the meeting to the public to deal with matters which falls under s. 90(1) (c), (e) and s.90(2) of the Community Charter. (6:47 pm).

CARRIED.

18. ADJOURNMENT

No. Budget03/26
Adjournment

Moved: Councillor Vomacka
Seconded: Councillor Austin
that Council arise without report and adjourn the meeting 8:16 pm.

CARRIED.

Certified correct _____.

Confirmed on the _____ day of _____, 2026.

Chairperson