

From: Viv Saunders <>

Sent: May 4, 2021 9:27 AM

To: DL - Council Only <dlcouncilonly@hamilton.ca>; clerk@hamilton.ca

Cc: Zegarac, Mike <Mike.Zegarac@hamilton.ca>

Subject: Re: ~ 22+% increase on Final Tax Bills for 6000 properties in Ward 10 and 11 ???

Dear Honourable Mayor & Council,

Further to my email on April 18th which is on the Council Agenda for tomorrow, I've done some further digging on what was approved by Council previously as well as read through most of the 10 year plan for HFS.

I don't understand why (as per the Attached Appendix), Council are set to approve charging urban rates to an area that is serviced by 2 volunteer stations?

It appears we have 3 Levels of Service for Fire delivery (urban, rural & suburban aka composite in Upper Stoney Creek, Waterdown and Ancaster) with only 2 Levels of Service in our Taxation Policy (urban and rural).

This conflict between service & taxation combined with a 'special one-off', will result in a significant increase in taxation to the rural properties city-wide, as well as in area of Ward 10 even though the operating costs/financial impacts of the 10 years plan have been in Upper Stoney Creek and Waterdown.

As a refresher, in 2019 the 10 Year plan included the following:

Waterdown - **hire** 5 additional FTEs in 2020, increase Volunteer Staff from 25 to 40 ; proceed with a process of building a new station. **No changes to expand the urban boundary for tax purposes.**

Upper Stoney Creek - **hire** 5 additional FTEs in 2020, increase Volunteer Staff from 25 to 40; and **expand the urban fire boundary** for tax purposes.

Lower Stoney Creek - **no new hires** in 2020, replace the Ladder with a multi-purpose pumper, continue to "*service the area as a Volunteer Response area but for purposes of analysis it will be considered a composite area*". (Page 71 of 292); and use both of the volunteer stations to service a combined area instead of the 2 separate areas. In other words, **expand the urban boundary for tax purposes** regardless of the fact that lower Stoney Creek doesn't have a composite station and zero FTEs were hired in 2019 or 2020.

The operating impacts of the additional FTEs in Waterdown & Upper Stoney Creek was projected to add just less than \$1M to the overall HFD budget in 2020.

The boundary changes before Council tomorrow, if approved, for the most part has properties outside of the impacted area absorbing the greatest % of the cost.

Specifically, the Winona area (**+91% in fire levies***) as well as the rural properties in Wards 9, 11, 12, and 13 (**+60% in fire levies estimated****)

As per page 72 of the 10 year HFS plan presented in June 2019, a further assessment of the impacts to area rating was intended prior to Council approving changes to the Fire Boundaries.

While I can appreciate that the urban property owners are celebrating a .5% reduction in overall property taxes, I would respectfully request that Council consider a more detailed assessment be conducted prior to the decision to amend the boundaries .

Sincerely,

Viv Saunders

* Oops! Previously, it appears that I did one step twice & therefore did a miscalculation that gave the impression the increase would be 11%/22%. My apologies. A 91% to 102% increase in fire tax levies will result in about a 4% increase due to Tax Policy Change; overall a 5.6% annual increase & an 11.2% increase in the final tax bills for those Ward 10 properties, including Mom & Pop businesses as well as industrial.

** Please note, that the 2.6% change in the tables is the bottomline city services increase due to the fire boundary changes. The actual fire levies, based on my limited resources, will be increased by ~ 60% in the rural areas of Ward 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15 with the loss of the Ward 10 rural assessment values..

On Sun, Apr 18, 2021 at 10:08 AM Viv Saunders < > wrote:

Dear Honourable Mayor & Council Members,

I've read the recent articles in the Hamilton News & the Public Record as well as the March 29th Communication Update titled 2021 Tax Impacts due to Area Rating ([2021 Tax Impacts due to Area Rating \(hamilton.ca\)](#)) which was/is scheduled to be discussed at the GIC Meeting this week, April 21st.

What isn't apparent to me in the report or in the Tables attached, is clarity of the impact to those 6000 properties that are moving from Rural fire tax levies to Urban fire tax levies.

Based on my analysis, which I hope is proven wrong, those 5,200 residential properties (of which 4,347 are in Ward 10) impacted by the change in Tax Policy, will experience:

- a .5% reduction due to Area Rating
- a 2.3% increase due to Budget; as well as
- a 9.1% increase due to Tax Policy change (Table 1, Page 2 of 3)

While I appreciate there is no way around this - In total, an ~ 11% increase in those homeowners annual 2021 property taxes will result in an ~22% increase in their final 2021 tax bills over their interim 2021 tax bill. I didn't calculate it out, but presumably the impact to the 800 businesses will be roughly 2x or 3x these residential % increases.

As I stated previously, I hope I have incorrectly calculated out what isn't clear to me from the report, but if I have Council & property owners should have a clear understanding of what the full impacts are of

approving Tax Policy changes (redrawing boundary lines) prior to but more so, after approving the final budget.

Even though I honestly believe the boundaries for Fire Services (inclusive of Waterdown & Ancaster though) should have been keeping pace with Growth with slight modifications occurring over the last 20 years, I'm wondering if there is an alternative that might be considered such as phased in levies?

In my respectful submission, for obvious reasons, Council might want to give pause on approving the Tax Policy change in full at this time.

Sincerely,

Viv Saunders

P.S. It would help with transparency & comprehension, if a Mapping of the locations of only the 6,000 properties in Ward 10 & 11 impacted by this change in service is also part of the communication to Council; and by extension the public. Is it possible to have that included in the report please?

P.P.S Don't tell my husband I wrote this, he wouldn't be pleased that I'm questioning/opposing something that would see us personally get a .5% reduction in our 2021 2.1% property tax increase. 😊