Budget 2016 Public Engagement Question Bank

FINAL QUESTIONS

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|  |  | **Background Information** | **Test Questions** |
|  | **Introduction** | * Welcome * Test functionality of equipment * Profile of demographic of attendees * Help construct lens through which we review and analyze the data from the session | 1. My favourite type of birthday cake is: 2. Chocolate 3. Vanilla 4. Marble 5. Please indicate your age within the following ranges: 6. 65+ 7. 50-64 8. 35-49 9. 25-34 10. <24 11. Please indicate how long you have been a resident of Summerside: 12. All my life! 13. 20+ years 14. 10-19 years 15. 5-9 years 16. <5 years 17. Not a resident of Summerside |

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|  |  | **Background Information** | **Question** |
| **1** | **New Fire Hall Construction and Operation**  **(Essential Services)** | * A new fire hall is needed for our firefighters and their equipment. * The current main station built in the 1950s is nearing the end of its life. * There is currently no major federal or provincial funding available to support this project. * Funding often contributes 1/2 to 2/3 toward major municipal projects. * Other municipalities charge residents fire dues. This does not currently happen in Summerside. | **The City needs to find new dollars for the construction and operation of a new fire hall.**  **Which direction would you support?**   1. A property tax rate increase where incremental taxes are reserved for construction and operation of a new fire hall. 2. New resident fire dues to be used for construction and operation of a new fire hall. 3. Funds borrowed by the City, adding to current debt, for construction and operation of a new fire hall. 4. None of the above. Wait until major funding is available from federal and provincial governments even if this does not take place in the next few years. |
| **2** | **Safety & Security**  **Policing (Essential Services)** | * Policing is one of the services delivered by the City to help citizens feel safe and secure in our community. * The policing budget represents 19% of the property tax dollars collected by the City. | **Any increase in the level of policing services will require more dollars.**  **Which direction would you support?**   1. Maintain current level of policing and budget. 2. Increase level of policing and budget through an increase in property taxes (e.g., 1-2 cents per $100 of property assessment). 3. Increase level of policing and budget through a reduction in spending on other municipal programs and services. |
| **3** | **Municipal Infrastructure** | * The City maintains important municipal infrastructure (e.g., sewer, water, storm water systems) on behalf of residents. * Much of this infrastructure is hidden underground, out of sight and out of mind for many people. * Much of this infrastructure has reached the end of its life cycle. * One of the biggest challenges facing cities is deciding between fixing old or building new infrastructure. | **The City is looking to the public to provide guidance on municipal infrastructure spending.**  **Which direction would you support?**   1. More tax dollars on fixing existing infrastructure and  less tax dollars on building new infrastructure. 2. Less tax dollars on fixing existing infrastructure and  more tax dollars on building new infrastructure. 3. An equal amount of tax dollars on fixing existing infrastructure and building new infrastructure. |
| **4** | **Snow Clearing Levels** | * The City of Summerside spends on average $800,000 clearing snow. * This is due in part to our snow-clearing standards (clear and salt all streets, clear all sidewalks, clear the boardwalk) which are very high compared to other municipalities. * In many municipalities across Canada: * residents and businesses are responsible for clearing sidewalks located along their properties * the acceptable timeframe for clearing streets after a snowfall is much longer * the volume and frequency of sand and salt application is also much less | **Would you support a reduction in snow clearing standards to save property tax dollars?**   1. Yes 2. No 3. Unsure |
| **5** | **Winter Access to the Boardwalk** | * Maintaining winter access to the boardwalk adds significantly to the City’s total snow clearing expenses. * In addition, heavy equipment used to clear snow from the boardwalk causes damage which is costly to repair. * The indoor walking track at Credit Union Place is provided to everyone free of charge year round. | **Are you in favor of reducing the level of winter access to the boardwalk if it helps save money?**   * 1. Yes   2. No   3. Unsure |
| **6** | **Painting Street Markings** | * Painting street markings (e.g., lane divisions, cross-walks, directional arrows) for 120 kms of streets in our community is a large annual project for the City. * It keeps a full-time crew of 4 people busy from early spring to late fall. * Some residents are unhappy with the amount of time it can take to get street markings painted each year. * The cost to hire additional street marking painters would need to come from additional property tax dollars. | **Would you be in favour of an appropriate increase in the property tax rate to cover the costs for additional street painters?**   1. Yes 2. No 3. Unsure |
| **7** | **Ditch Infilling** | It costs $1,400 per meter to fill a ditch. There are 19,000 meters of ditches in the City left to be filled. Infilling all remaining ditches in Summerside would cost municipal tax payers $25 million dollars.  On average, the City spends about $500,000 annually on ditch infilling. At this pace it will take 50 years to completely infill all ditches in the City. | **In your opinion, what is an appropriate level of annual spending for ditch infilling?**   1. $0. 2. Up to $249,999 3. Between $250,000 and $499,999 4. Between $500,000 and $999,999 5. Between $1,000,000 and $1,500,000 |
| **8** | **Debt** | * Approximately $2.8 million is spent annually on interest payments to support the City’s debt (general taxpayer fund plus all the utilities). * The City has accumulated debt as a result of the following projects: Credit Union Place, the Wastewater Treatment Plant, Wind Turbines, City Hall Addition/Renovation, Police Station Renovation, West End Redevelopment and utility capital requirements. * The City has been able to manage its debt and interest while maintaining investments in infrastructure and program and service delivery for residents. * A faster reduction in debt and interest payments would need to come from reduced spending on infrastructure, programs and services. | **The City is looking for your feedback on debt management which is directly impacted by the City’s spending on infrastructure, programs and services and/or access to dollars to pay down existing debt.**  **Which direction would you support?**   1. Maintain current debt management and current spending. 2. Reduce debt and interest payments at a faster rate through reduced spending. 3. Reduce debt and interest payments at a faster rate through an increase in property taxes allocated to debt reduction. 4. Increase debt and interest payments as necessary to support increased spending. |
| **9** | **Water & Sewer** | * City water and sewer service is currently unmetered. * Summerside residents and businesses pay a flat rate no matter how much water is used. * Many municipalities meter their water supply so those who use more water, pay more, and those who use less, pay less. * Implementing a metering system would be expensive. * Once paid for, however, there would be more equity in how residents pay for the service. * Water meters could increase or decrease water and sewer rates depending on use. | **In your opinion, should the City further investigate the potential for installing water meters?**   1. Yes 2. No 3. Unsure |
| **10** | **Contributions to Community**  **Not-for-Profit Organizations and Charities** | * $650,000 to $700,000 is requested annually (dollars and in-kind services) from not-for-profit and charitable organizations. * The City contributes approximately $400,000 of tax payer dollars annually to support not-for-profit and charity organizations. * Some facilities, programs and services are delivered at a lower cost than if they were provided by the municipality. * Maintaining or increasing annual contribution levels will require reductions in dollars available for other programs and services delivered by the City. | **The City needs your feedback as to amount of tax payer dollars that should be contributed to not-for-profit and charitable organizations.**  **Which direction would you support?**   1. Maintain annual contribution of $400,000, even if this means decreases in programs and services delivered by the City. 2. Reduce annual contribution below $400,000 and use savings to support programs and services delivered by the City. 3. Increase annual contribution above $400,000 even though this will mean an increase in taxes. |
| **YOUR BREAK** | | | |
| 11 | **Active Transportation & Living:**  **Making the City More Walkable** | * The City currently has a network of 5 kms of trails, 6.3 kms of boardwalks and 51.4 kms of sidewalks in various locations in the city. * This network promotes active transportation and living making it easier and safer for citizens to walk throughout our community. * The City would like to increase linkages and expand current network of trails, boardwalks and sidewalks without increasing the City’s overall budget. | **Where would you reduce spending to free up funds for making the City more walkable?**   1. Street paving and maintenance 2. Ditch infilling 3. Curb replacements and maintenance 4. All of the above 5. None of this above. The City’s network of trails, boardwalks and sidewalks does not need to be extended. |
| **12** | **Active Transportation & Living: Making the City More Bike-friendly** | * Almost 100% of the money the City spends on streets ($1.36 million) is used to improve, expand and maintain our streets for car and truck traffic. * The City has traditionally spent little to nothing on street improvements to accommodate bicycle traffic. * Canadian cities are increasingly investing in municipal infrastructure that promotes healthy living through active transportation like biking. | **Are you in favor of the City allocating a certain percentage (%) of the street improvement budget toward improvements for bike traffic (e.g., bike lanes)? If so, what is an appropriate percentage?**   * 1. Yes. 5 %   2. Yes. 10 %   3. Yes. 15 %   4. Yes. 20 %   5. No. Do not allocate any dollars to improvements for bike traffic. |
| **13** | **Playground Experiences to Challenge and Excite the Children of the Community** | * 14 small playground parks are located throughout the City. * The parks are under-used where there have been demographic changes in nearby neighbourhoods. * The City spends up to $70,000 annually on replacing old playground equipment and incurs other costs to maintain these 14 playground parks. * The City is exploring a “Super Park” concept where smaller playgrounds would be centralized into 3-4 large “Destination Parks” in the City. * “Destination Parks” would be indoor or outdoor and include water features, enhanced play structures and a broader scope of services. | **Would you be in favor of replacing the current 14 smaller playground parks with 3-4 larger “Destination Parks”?**   1. Yes 2. No, keep the 14 small playgrounds 3. Unsure |
| **14** | **Health and Wellbeing: Recreational and Leisurely Pursuits** | * The City spends about $5.1 million annually to provide recreational/leisure facilities, programs and services that enhance the quality of citizens’ lives in our community. * 22% or $4.6 million of this is spent on Parks and Sports facilities, programs and services to contribute positively to citizens’ physical health and wellbeing. * 2% or $500,000 of this is spent on Arts, Heritage and Cultural facilities, programs and services to contribute positively to citizens’ intellectual health and wellbeing. | **Tax payer dollars have been allocated to *Parks and Sports* and to *Arts, Heritage and Culture*. Both are important to Summerside. The City is looking to the public for direction on the % allocation of these dollars.**  **Which direction would you support?**   1. Maintain current % allocation. 2. Increase % of dollars for *Arts, Heritage and Culture* even though this means reducing % for *Parks and Sports*. 3. Increase % of dollars for *Parks and Sports* even though this means reducing % for *Arts, Heritage and Culture*. |
| **15** | **Renewable Energy** | * 48% of the electrical power currently used in Summerside is supplied by clean wind energy. | **In your opinion, should the City invest in more carefully evaluated and planned renewable energy projects to increase our percentage of clean energy sources?**   1. Yes 2. No 3. Unsure |
| 16 | **Economic Development through Access to High-Speed**  **Fiber Internet** | * The City has received feedback that some people feel internet access should be made available to the public while others see internet access as a service provided at a fee by the private sector. * Providing high-speed Internet access via our fiber network to businesses and residents could be a significant economic driver for our community, attracting more development, business, and jobs, as few Canadian cities own their fiber networks (as Summerside does) and none to our knowledge provide open access to it. | **Should the City explore opening access to high-speed internet via our fibre network to our businesses and residents as a driver of economic development?**   1. No. This service should remain with the private sector. 2. Yes. Open access to high-speed internet can support economic development. 3. Unsure |
| **17** | **Economic Development**  **Investments -**  **Science Discovery Centre** | * Council recently agreed to cost-share (with the YMCA and Bedeque Bay Environmental Association) a feasibility study to explore locating a Science Discovery Centre in Summerside. * A Science Discovery Centre could attract visitors and residents to the city, and support economic development. * The total build cost would be several million dollars. A large portion of this money would come from a capital fundraising campaign. The City would also invest property tax dollars. | **Further planning and development is needed for the establishment of the Science Discovery Centre. At this time, the City is looking for your initial direction on this potential project.**  **Which direction best reflects your view?**   1. I support a Science Discovery Centre and the City investing municipal property tax dollars in this project. 2. I support a Science Discovery Centre but do notsupport the City investing municipal property tax dollars in this project. 3. I do not support a Science Discovery Centre in the City. |
| **18** | **Downtown Revitalization** | * The City would like to revitalize the historic downtown core of Summerside through arts, heritage and cultural facilities, programs and services such as: * incentive programs * more public art venues and exhibits * designated areas for specific cultural activities * a town square for performances * revised built heritage preservation standards * This would require an increase in property tax dollar allocation to revitalization. | **This would involve the City preparing a plan for the revitalization of the historic downtown core of Summerside.**  **Which statement best reflects your view?**   1. Revitalization of Summerside’s downtown core is important. 2. Revitalization of Summerside’s downtown core is not important and tax dollars should be spent elsewhere. |
| **19 & 20** | **Economic Development** | Economic Development is important to the City, residents and businesses.  The City’s economy can grow through creating more jobs, increasing the number of businesses and through other developments. | **The City is seeking your direction in terms of the top two areas where time and resources should be focused.**  **19. What is the most important way to grow Summerside’s economy?**   1. Helping local businesses grow, expand and diversify 2. Attracting new businesses to locate in Summerside 3. Making the City more senior friendly 4. Attracting and retaining youth 5. Growing post-secondary education opportunities 6. Increasing investments to create opportunities for youth and young adults 7. Incentives for high-tech industries 8. Development of a Green Eco-Park   **20. What is the second most important way to grow Summerside’s economy?**   1. Helping local businesses grow, expand and diversify 2. Attracting new businesses to locate in Summerside 3. Making the City more senior friendly 4. Attracting and retaining youth 5. Growing post-secondary education opportunities 6. Increasing investments to create opportunities for youth and young adults 7. Incentives for high-tech industries 8. Development of a Green Eco-Park 9. Opening access to Ultra-High Speed Internet via our Fiber Network for all commercial, industrial and businesses |