



**Township of Howick Special Council Minutes
Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.
2026 Municipal Budget – Draft #1**

1. Call to Order

Reeve Harding called the Special Council Meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance.

2. Acceptance of Agenda

Moved by: Deputy Reeve Gibson

Seconded by: Councillor Grimes

That Council of the Township of Howick accept the Agenda for the December 16, 2025 Special Council Budget Meeting, as presented.

Carried.

3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

None Declared.

4. Staff Reports

4.1 Fire Chief/Manager of Development & Protective Services - Josh Kestner

4.1.1 FIR- 2025-26, Writing off of Unpaid Fire Invoices

Reeve Harding called upon Fire Chief/ Manager of Development & Protective Services Josh Kestner to present his two reports.

Fire Chief Kestner explained that these were 2024 invoices that were generated for motor vehicle accidents. Multiple attempts have been made to rectify the invoices, and staff are confident they will not be paid. Staff will investigate in the future an option of a collections agency to possibly pursue payment.

Moved by: Deputy Reeve Gibson

Seconded by: Councillor Rognvaldson

That the Council of the Township of Howick receive report FIR-2025-26 for

information purposes.

And further that Council approving the writing off of Fire Invoice # 0013796 in the amount of \$1,553.75, and Fire Invoice # 0013531 in the amount of \$1,548.10 to be paid out of the 2025 Operating Budget.

Carried.

4.1.2 FIR-2025-27, Car 2 Extended Warranty

Staff requesting approval for the extended warranty coverage for the new 2022 F150. Council expressed interest in extended warranty as it is a used vehicle. Platinum warranty package was selected by staff which covers 200,000km over what is currently on the truck. The cost for the extended warranty to be paid out of the fire reserve.

Moved by: Councillor Grimes

Seconded by: Deputy Reeve Gibson

That the Council of the Township of Howick approve the purchase of the extended warranty for Car 2 (2022 F-150) at a cost of \$6,621.31 minus recoverable HST, to be drawn from the Fire Reserve.

Carried.

4.2 Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk Caitlin Gillis

4.2.1 AMD-2025-27, Changes to Recycling Program

Reeve Harding called upon CAO Gillis to present her two reports.

Staff have had difficulty gathering information in regard to the changes to the provincial recycling program. Residential recycling has been removed from municipal responsibility. As of July 1, 2024, Circular Materials Ontario (CMO) has been reimbursing Howick for the recycling collected in Howick Township. CMO will completely take over curbside collection effective January 1, 2026 using Waste Management as their sub contractor. Howick will only be responsible for delivering information and education material to residents, as there is a large expansion of acceptable materials at the curbside but not directly at the Howick Landfill.

Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Properties (IC&I) properties can not be collected with residential recycling at the curbside, they are to become responsible for sourcing their own collection and recycling from their properties. Staff are requesting direction from Council on how they wish to proceed with accepting recycling at the Howick Landfill. Under the new legislation, the recycling depot at the Howick Landfill will no longer be emptied by CMO. Staff will work to encourage residents to use the service that is provided curbside instead of driving their waste and/or recycling directly to the landfill.

Staff feel that taxpayers should not be responsible for covering the recycling costs for IC&I properties by paying for recycling collection at the Howick Landfill. Two options were outlined in the report. The first option is to do nothing, IC&I properties are entirely responsible for recycling from their own properties. Option 2 proposed operating the recycling depot at a cost to the Township. Howick could provide recycling bins at the Howick Landfill strictly for IC&I users with a recycling tipping fee. Staff feel as though not accepting recycling at the Howick Landfill will result in recyclables going into the garbage and adding to the landfill. Proposed recycling tipping fees for disposal at the Howick Landfill are \$2.00 per bag/blue box of recycling or \$2.00 per armful for cardboard.

Waste Management confirmed that the agreement at the last meeting is effective January 1, 2026 – delivery of the waste carts is anywhere from May – July. Until the scale is installed, staff are requesting a way that IC&I properties can utilize the landfill. Staff are proposing that IC&I properties will receive the waste carts once they are implemented.

A member of council inquired about staff looking into whether any local businesses would consider installing an incinerator to deal with cardboard. Can cardboard be ground up and used as cover for the landfill? Staff to investigate.

Council agreed that the taxpayers should not cover the cost of the IC&I properties to dispose of their recycling. The hope is to get residents to set their recycling and waste curbside instead of driving it to the landfill on the weekend, as this is a service that is already provided and staffing the landfill comes at an additional cost, so the tipping fees are required.

Moved by: Deputy Reeve Gibson

Seconded by: Councillor Grimes

That the Council of the Township of Howick hereby receives the report of the Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk, dated December 16, 2025, regarding upcoming changes to recycling programming in the Township of Howick effective January 1, 2026;

And That Council directs staff to Option#2 with fee and cost recovery as identified in staff report ADM-2025-27 regarding the recycling disposal options for Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) properties within the boundaries of the Township of Howick as of January 1, 2026.

Carried.

4.2.2 AMD-2025-28, 2025 IT Review

Staff contacted a local company out of Teeswater to provide an assessment of our current IT system. The cost of our current IT provider continues to

increase, and there have been several additional fees above our monthly fee associated to their services. David McDonald, Owner of Fort44, came to assess the equipment at the Howick Township Office, Fire Hall, Howick Community Centre and Public Works Road Shop and recommendations were made. Fort44 will provide education to staff, so staff are aware of what is happening and how to troubleshoot IT issues. Staff have determined that there is no actual written contract in place with our current IT provider.

Wightman has notified the Township that the current telephone system is becoming obsolete and will need to be replaced. Three quotes were procured for Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone services, Wightman was the most competitive quote for the VoIP phone line at \$18.99/ phone, per month.

GHD Solutions is the current leader in the industry of municipal website and hosting. They also have an award-winning content management system. Our current website designer & host charges additional fees for any back-end issues that need corrected. The Govstack platform utilized by GHD Solutions provides non-technical website building that can mostly be completed by staff with imbedded accessibility features. The Deputy Clerk/ Communications Coordinator received a demo for the proposed new website and was impressed by the functionality and features available. Funds have been earmarked from the remaining Modernization Fund for the upgrades from Fort44 Inc., GHD, and Wightman. Once agreements are signed, the transition will start early in 2026.

Moved by: Deputy Reeve Gibson

Seconded by: Councillor Rognvaldson

That the Council of the Township of Howick hereby receives report ADM-2025-28 of the Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk, dated December 16, 2025, regarding the 2025 IT Review;

And That Council authorizes the CAO/Clerk to engage Fort44, GHD and Wightman Telecom for the provision of fractional IT services, website design and hosting, and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone system for the Corporation of the Township of Howick;

And That the Reeve and CAO/Clerk be authorized to sign the associated agreements.

Carried.

5. Budget Presentation and Discussion

Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk Caitlin Gillis provided an introduction to the presentation to Draft # 1 of the 2026 Municipal Budget. The draft 2026 municipal budget maintains essential services and infrastructure and considers affordability for Howick residents. Council should consider that any potential cuts to the proposed tax rate

increase will result in a higher tax rate increase in the future. Staff are seeking council direction on any changes that they would like to see for Draft #2.

5.1 FIN-2025-40, 2026 Municipal Budget – Draft #1

The sections of the budget will be presented in the following order:

5.2 Budget Comparisons, Draft # 1 Budget Summary, Reserves, Donations, Village Management Boards

5.3 General Government and Administration – Treasurer, Amy Van Meeteren and Clerk-Administrator Caitlin Gillis

Reeve Harding called upon Treasurer Van Meeteren to present the first draft of the 2026 budget.

Highlights of Draft #1 of the Budget:

- OMPF funding increased by \$40,200.
- OCIF funding increased by \$19,502.
- Unaudited 2026 opening Reserve Balance of \$4.278 million
- Draft # 1 proposes a 2026 end reserve balance of \$2.827 million.
- Howick's assessment increase for 2026 is 0.37% compared to 1.1% in 2025.
- OPP costs increased by the 11% capped rate.
- Municipal insurance increase (July – Dec 2026) is estimated at 10%.
- No levy estimate from Maitland Valley Conservation Authority yet.
- Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority has submitted a levy with a 1.59% increase.
- Three (3) new staff positions are included, adding 5.27% to the proposed 2026 tax rate. (Full-time Child Care Centre Supervisor position, the new full-time Landfill/Public Works employee, and a proposed contract, full-time By-law Enforcement Officer).
- A 2% capital levy is also included, resulting in \$5.1 million required to be raised through taxation.

Capital Projects and Reserve Transfers

- Proposed capital projects were reviewed, including the purchase of a property for a future new firehall.
- The IT review was added to 2026, carried forward from 2025 as it was not completed. This includes four new iPad for the new council at the end of 2026.
- Annual council donations are outlined on Page 8. increased due to the three (3) Community Improvement and Beautification Façade Grants being added in the amount of \$2,500.00 each – adding \$7500.00 total. This was a recommendation from the Community Improvement and Beautification Committee.
- Major changes were increases in OMPF and OCIF funding. More revenue in the building department and more at the Landfill. Circular materials agreement is no

longer in place so that revenue is lost in 2026.

- A member of Council requested that the proceeds of the sale of two unopened road allowances and the one lot in Gorrie should be deposited in the road construction reserve. Staff were directed to investigate a 2019/2020 sale of Mud Lake Line road allowance. Draft a motion at a future Council meeting to have the proceeds of this sale moved to the Road Construction Reserve.
- Increase in election expenses for 2026 due to Municipal Election. Money is put aside each year for the election, then transferred from Election reserve the year of an election. Increase in Council training budget for the expected new council members.
- Computer support increase to account for increases experienced over the past year with current company. Township is working on transitioning to a new IT provider for 2026.
- Village Management no major increase. Fordwich is trying again in 2026 to complete some sidewalk repairs, clock tower lighting. Fordwich mailboxes will be getting a solar light and pole. Capital projects in Gorrie will be sidewalks as well.
- The Belmore Arena Board also included a breakdown of their capital projects for 2026 for council to review and approve.

5.4 Fire Chief/Manager of Development & Protective Services - Josh Kestner

Fire Chief/Manager of Development & Protective Services Josh Kestner presented his Draft Fire Capital Budget for 2026.

- Annual capital expenses for hoses, helmets, vehicle upgrades, bunker gear etc.
- Radio upgrades, 8-10 dry hydrant installations, generator transfer switches, shelving, cabinet and lighting upgrades.
- \$15 000.00 also added for a used vehicle for the proposed new By-Law Enforcement employee. Total of \$171, 000.00 to be funded out of the Fire reserve.

Operating Expenses:

- Travel increased as staff intend to attend a conference.
- Training and education supplies increases, insurance increased, supplies increased, services increased as there are inspections on the bunker gear that is required.
- Supply accounts of each truck have been decreased and moved to the supply account.
- Ford Expedition SUV and Ram truck have been removed.
- Ford F350 van and F150 added in.
- Rescue truck and body have been purchased and operating expenses added for that truck as it has about 10 years of life left.
- Minto fire service contract increase, and COLA increase in the future per year.

- Canine Control – no changes for the services, R&R provides great services and a worthwhile expense.
- No changes to livestock protection.
- Emergency management slight increase and community wellness increased.

By-law enforcement:

- Interest has been shown from the public and council for a full-time By-law Enforcement Officer position on a two-year contract.
- Draft # 1 includes a full-time By-law Enforcement Officer wage of \$90,000.00 increase based on the step grid for the position starting in April. Miscellaneous supplies increased for uniform, services increased for a phone. Council discussed adding this position. Some members are not completely sold on a full-time employee, as it is a considerable amount of money.
- Council would like to see if the new administrative staff assists with the current by-law officer.
- Preferred request from the public was full time 2-year contract and they would still have support of the administrative assistant to complete billing and invoicing.
- The previous By-law Enforcement Officer was two days a week.
- Council feels as though if the problem buildings are there, By-laws are not going to fix them.
- For the bulk of the issues staff feel as though more day-to-day presence could correct a lot of issues.
- Howick Township has never had a full-time By-law Enforcement Officer, having a contract 2-year position leaves an out for the municipality if things are not corrected.
- Direction was provided to staff for draft #2 to include options for 30 hours a week, 4 days a week and to investigate any shared service agreement options or a shared time and materials agreement with Minto. Staff to bring back what that will look like as well as what a shared agreement would look like with North Huron.

5.5 Building Department – Chief Building Official – Ed Podniewicz

Chief Building Official Ed Podniewicz presented his 2026 budget overview. Small increase in expenses, salaries for the shared administrative staff and insurance has increased on the CBO's vehicle. Staff expressed that the 4th quarter of 2025 was very good. It looks as though there will be about \$50 000.00 – \$60 000.00 deposited into the reserve fund at the end of 2025.

5.6 Public Works and Landfill – Manager of Public Works, Scott Price

Manager of Public Works Scott Price provided an overview of Draft # 1 of the Public works and Landfill budgets.

Capital:

- Replacement of one patrol truck. Staff would like to transfer the used truck to the Recreation Department for grass cutting.
- The storm sewer study that was not completed in 2025 has been carried over to 2026.
- Re-paving of Huron-Bruce Road cost to be shared with South Bruce.
- Three and a half blocks of George Street in Gorrie as per the roads needs study will also be re-paved.
- Orange Hill culvert replacement for a full box culvert.
- Spencetown Road bridge to have some re-construction work completed and engineering completed on the Toll Gate Line bridge.
- Equipment replacement includes a roadside flail mower and a boom mower to be attached to the newest grader to cut roadside to the fence lines. There has been interest from neighboring municipalities for the rental of this unit as well.

Landfill Capital

- 2026 we will be finishing everything at the landfill. GEI has to do final report, and investigation at the back where the landfill used to be.
- Additional items to complete the Landfill project include A gravel, cement for bins to sit on and interlocking cement blocks for the retaining wall. Laptop to hook into the scale, lighting, security cameras, finish hydro installation and fencing on the east side adjacent to the laneway/ bush area to catch any blowing debris.

Operating expenses

- increase in sign budget for Adopt-A-Road signage.
- Roadside maintenance, a few drains need some cleanup.
- \$14 000.00 added for Leonard of Ward Drain on Mud Lake Line as well as replace the culvert crossing, and a drain clean out on Spencetown.
- As per our previous supplier, the Calcium cost will not be increasing, for 2026.
- gravel is sitting at \$14.00 / ton for resurfacing, \$350 000.00 to complete that which is a 10.67% increase.
- T08 will need new tires in 2026.
- F450 going to the rec department.
- T12 needs the top end reset. Grader 22 needs new tires, backhoe needs front tires, Kubota needs new tires all around.
- \$150 000.00 being put into reserves for a new plow truck for eventual replacement of T08.

5.7 Recreation Department – Manager of Recreation, Brady Ropp

Manager of Recreation Brady Ropp presented Draft #1 of the Recreation & Facilities budget for 2026.

Capital:

- An additional utility trailer for Truck 19 for the grass cutting.
- A watering system for watering flowers, pending approval of ROD Grant funding. Costs for beautification have been added.

Revenue:

- Increase in certain areas, i.e. rentals, before and after school increased with the participation as it is doing very well. In total 45 families are participating in the program, some of the families have multiple children.
- Day camp registration on par, slight increase in the pool revenue.
- Swim team registration in 2025 was the best year the Howick Optimist Pool has seen.

Expenses:

- Grass cutting in-house costs reduced as they were an estimate for 2025.
- Fuel charges on par, repairs and maintenance increased.
- HCC the wages took an increase for this budget year, pre-planning for the daycare supervisor position to ensure policies are in place for opening in 2027.
- Training increase for the recreation operator and manager.
- TSSA mandated work needs to be completed in 2026.
- 2007 ford has left the fleet and added the former Public Works one ton to the fleet.
- Reduction of pool staff expenses and reduction in chemicals required to maintain the pool.
- Reduction of wages in Trails. Recreation has not had to rely on public works staff for much maintenance/debris clean up.
- Before and After School wages on par, day camp remains the same.
- Positive comments were received about the lining of the baseball diamonds and keeping all of the fields to the same standard. It was a small investment from the municipality to do so.
- There was a brief discussion on cutting the north side of the Gorrie Conservation Authority property. Should this be funded through Gorrie Village Management?

5.8 Drainage Superintendent – Scott Richardson

Drainage Superintendent Scott Richardson presented Draft #1 of his 2026 Budget.

Capital

- No major projects involving the township in 2026. All proposed work looks to be more County oriented.

Operating Expenses:

- Proposed to be the same as 2025. Would like to increase the unrecoverable expenses from \$5000 to \$10,000 for beaver dam removal, minor maintenance etc.

5.9 Planning/Economic Development – Treasurer, Amy Van Meeteren

Kept the same for 2026.

5.10 Questions/Comments from Council

Abandoned Cemetery Signs are not straight, requesting someone go around and straighten them.

Council discussion around decreasing the tax rate to mirror last year. Currently the only proposed changes for Draft #2 to decrease the tax rate increase would be the different options for By-law Enforcement Officer. Nothing in the Draft capital budget is affecting the tax rate.

Council would like to see the tax rate referenced as cost per \$100,000.00 of assessment for property owners.

5.11 Questions/Comments from Public

None.

6.0 Enactment of By-laws – First, Second & Third Reading

By-law 62-2025

Moved by: Deputy Reeve Gibson

Seconded by: Councillor Grimes

That the Council of the Township of Howick give first, second, third and final reading to By-law 62-2025, being a By-law to amend Schedule “B” of the Consolidated Fees and Charges By-law 60-2024, to amend the Waste Collection and Disposal Fee Schedule.

Carried.

7.0 Confirming By-law

Moved by: Councillor Rognvaldson

Seconded by: Councillor Grimes

By-law 63-2025

That the Council of the Township of Howick give first, second, third and final reading to By-law 63-2025, being a by-law to confirm the proceedings of the Special Council Meeting held on December 16, 2025.

Carried.

8.0 Adjournment

Moved by: Councillor Hargrave
Seconded by: Deputy Reeve Gibson

That the Council of the Township of Howick adjourn the December 16, 2025 Special Council meeting at 1:25 p.m.

Carried.

Reeve, Doug Harding

CAO/Clerk Caitlin Gillis

If any member of the public would like more information on an agenda item, please contact the Clerk's office at 519-335-3208 Ext. 2 or email clerk@howick.ca, alternative formats of this publication available upon request.