

Budget Survey 2021: Response to Written Comments

>> In the budget section of the “Looking Ahead” survey (July – August, 2020), residents were asked if they wished to share any additional comments related to the budget.

>> The responses are presented below as they were received - no edits were made.

>> Staff assigned each comment a number for tracking purposes (presented in brackets), and then sorted and combined similar issues / topics.

>> A response to each issue/topic is presented below.

>> This chart was shared with Municipal Council as they began deliberations on the 2021 Middlesex Centre Budget.

Building, By-Law & Planning

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Building – Permitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less emphasis should be paid to our over reaching building inspections (actually seeking out issues rather than complaint driven) and spend those funds in other areas (ie. anything else). (#28) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's a priority of our building division to protect public health and safety and to provide consistent building inspection services. Where building without a permit is observed, staff will investigate, educate and ensure that permits and inspections are obtained.
By-Law Enforcement – Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If we are all going to pay into the by law services there should be a way to appeal by laws, if there is a reasonable explanation for not following a by law the defendant should be given the means to appeal. (#33) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By-laws are passed by council in a number of categories to protect public health/safety and to provide consistent and organized standards for the community to grow and live together. Some matters are subject to variance applications while others would require a change in the by-law. Where opportunities are found that by-laws can be improved, staff can work with the public and council in amending certain standards which may not have been contemplated at the time of the by-law's passing
Conservation Authorities – Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond that, with all my property being under the auspices of the Conservation Authority, I pay a tax to you for something you don't control. Messaging on this tax never happened when it was implemented and still hasn't happened. (#5b) Conservation authorities must be brought into line(#38b) Why is \$33 of our tax bill going to things like "conservation authority"? What do they do? Where does the money from Komoka park admission fees go? Oh ya, nobody goes there anymore! Maybe get rid of the parking meter and go back to the good old days where people could freely walk and enjoy nature. (#34) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Komoka Provincial Park is managed by the Province of Ontario (Ontario Parks) information can be obtained from their website: ontarioparks.com/park/komoka In Ontario, conservation authorities (CAs) are public sector organizations that develop and deliver resource management programs that safeguard our watersheds. Governed by the Conservation Authorities Act, CAs carry out programs including those related to flood and erosion control, flood forecasting, drought/low water response and clean water. There is a municipal representative on the board of each of the five (5) CAs located in Middlesex Centre, and which tax dollars fund. If you have comments or concerns please feel free to reach out. You can find the list here: middlesexcentre.on.ca/services/residents/boards-committees

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Conservation Authorities – Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation authorities provide outstanding value for the levy assigned to the municipality. Budget to support / enhance the work of conservation authorities. (#15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The general levy requests for the conservation authorities are provided by the each conservation authority administration once passed by their boards.
Development – Rural Character / Farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less development...keep us rural(#3) keep the agricultural land sacred(#65a) the ability to separate housing from a farm acreage should be maintained or increased(#65c) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex Centre is an attractive place to live and work, and many people want to settle in our communities. This growth needs to balance against protecting the very things that make the area so attractive – our smaller towns, rural communities, and general quality of life. In general, this balance is set out in our Official Plan. Middlesex Centre is currently undertaking a review of our Official Plan. We would welcome your comments and participation in the process. Please see our website at middlesexcentre.on.ca/OPR for more information, or contact our planners at planning@middlesexcentre.on.ca
Development – Settlement Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stop build so much for towns(#8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please see above response re: Official Plan Review

Community Services

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Community Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spend our funds on community events and opportunities. Bring together the community. (#83) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex Centre’s Council Grants Program offers funding for non-profit groups running special events and other community programs (environmental, cultural, etc.). It currently distributes about \$20,000 a year to a variety of programs across the municipality. Groups must apply for funding to be considered. Logistics and coordination happens well before the event even takes place. Middlesex Centre’s Community Services and Public Works and Engineering departments are there to support the events in many ways, just not necessarily through direct funding. Depending on the event, this could include extra grooming of the event site, waste and recycling collection, etc.
Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more support for an archives (#65b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex Centre does provide yearly funding to the Middlesex Centre Archives, specifically \$8,750 has been provided to the Archives over the last three years (2018-2020). The Archives group is supported by the municipality providing free space and access to the Delaware Community Centre.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Recreation - Arena & Recreation Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a new double pad arena in Ilderton with a bigger community centre! (#70a) • The increasing younger generation requires a significant increase to our recreation facilities. A multi use facility like that in komoka as well as a bigger community centre can also increase revenue with weddings and events (#72) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feasibility study for a new arena was completed in 2017. Staff are now actively seeking external funding (grants, etc.) to support the building of the new arena. This would include upgrades to facilities such as the washrooms, which are starting to show their age. • The municipality was unsuccessful in applying for the recent Infrastructure Grant. There has been a significant amount of work completed to date in working with our project partners (Ilderton Agricultural Society & Ilderton Curling Club). Through these efforts, we now know where the facility will go and are continuing to refine the details of the project and partnership agreements. The build is estimated at approximately \$45 million. The municipality will be seeking other funding options to support this build in the coming years. • The municipality already has a few venues that can support weddings, etc. The Ilderton Community Centre is a great venue for these types of events.
Recreation – Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that community and sports organizations are adequately consulted as they can provide good input into efficient use of these funds in their areas. (#10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff consult regularly with the various minor sport groups to seek ways to support and partner with groups to provide better services to the athletes while keeping registration costs low. • All Minor Sports Associations and Community groups were invited to participate in the initial discussions for the Strategic Plan that took place in August.
Recreation – Cost Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider cost sharing or asking for rent for Arva park with London- likely more than half that use the dog park are London residents- it's a jewel for the municipality- use it for leverage when discussing sewage infrastructure with London? (#18) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our fee by-law does have a non-Middlesex Centre fee for those renting the park / pavilion. • Staff are seeking other alternatives to capture revenues for this park.
Recreation – Dog Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delaware/Komoka/Kilworth are in desperate need of a dog park(s). I know this was on the docket in past years and needs to be added in for the coming year. This is a priority for residents. There are numerous dogs in this area and having a park would benefit both dogs and residences of Middlesex.) I strongly encourage you to look into a model and reach out to residents to gauge interest. (#47) • Dog park :) (#93a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans were in place to seek public input for a potential dog park at the old Kilworth Water/Wastewater Plant. \$50,000 was in the budget for 2020 as a place holder for this, with a goal of partnering with a community dog association, however due to COVID-19 funds were deferred to 2021 and the conversation will continue in 2021.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Recreation – Parks & Green Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase importance of Parks as long term vision. Please consider developing old Ilderton Co-Op lands for Community Recreational use as a key portion of a long term vision to increase park and public space especially in the core of Ilderton. (#6) • Spend less money on the arena and more on our green spaces. (#7) • More trails needed especially taking advantage of the river (#23) • Anything that gets people outside - trails that are suitable for walking and cycling. (#40b) • I like living in a small town, enjoying our green spaces and nature around me. All this retail is not necessary, so many empty retail spaces and yet more being built. Lets create some parks instead (#57) • Spend it on the outdoors and recreation. Middlesex homeowners are here for nature and country living. Keep it up for all to enjoy! (#88) • We also could benefit from some better trails to walk on with garbage cans!!!! (#74b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails are developed based on the Trails Master Plan (2015). When new developments, growth, funding or other opportunity presents itself, trails are put in to meet the intent of the plan. For instance, trails were built in the Clear Skies Development as the area was developed. • Providing recreation services to a community requires a balanced approach in providing these amenities to all users. Staff are continuing efforts to fulfill the vision of the Trails Plan and identifying funds in our capital budgets for these trail networks. The municipality has a large network of parks and open space for a small community. • Garbage cans are available throughout our trail and park network in strategic places that allow for efficient pick up and disposal by staff. Often the municipality will work with requests to add additional cans where feasible.

Economic Development

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Ilderton Downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ilderton needs work when compared to other locales. (#42) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middlesex Centre has a Community Improvement Plan for Ilderton which provides grants for businesses to make improvements to their facades, signage, streetscapes, etc.
Small Farms and Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After Covid it has made me realize the importance of small farms, small businesses and community in our municipality and I hope our leaders recognize this in planning for the future. (#55) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the values of Middlesex Centre in the Strategic Plan is “Tradition,” which states, “As a diverse municipality, Middlesex Centre is home to many proud histories and varied traditions. The actions of community must value those existing traditions while continuing to forge new traditions moving forward.” • Council and staff recognize the importance of this and it is top of mind when developing budgets and prioritization of projects. • As we develop our new strategic plan, the importance of “tradition” is something we are hearing about from residents and businesses. Information on the development of the new strategic plan may be found at: middlesexcentre.on.ca/Strat plan

Fire Services

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Fire Safety Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire booth at the London Farm Show is a joke. I attend. How many Middlesex Centre residents stop at the booth at the farm show.. Almost all farm show attendees come from outside our municipality. Many attendees drive over an hour to get to the farm show. How much does that booth cost? How many plastic fire hats do they give out to kids from other municipalities - cost? (#95) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large majority of our municipality is in farming/agriculture, and the London Farm Show is the premier farm event in our region. • Data is not provided from this venue organizer to the same so it is unknown how many of our municipal farmers attend. • Costs of the booth are very reasonable for this type of event.
Funding – Decrease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut fire services budget. Fire prevention has eliminated the need for huge expense. (#68) • Do not want to see unnecessary spending such as the over spending on the fireball in Coldstream- this was a gross waste of taxpayer money (#85a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire prevention is only one facet of Fire Services. With Fire Prevention now in place, we are able to better address Fire Code compliance. Our Fire Prevention program operates with consider cost recovery (approximately two-thirds of overall cost), as Middlesex Centre provides services to two neighboring municipalities. • To cut our already very reasonable and fiscally responsible budget would mean increased response times, less trained firefighters, and decreased services.
Funding – Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget for fire and policing should probably enhanced. Especially for fir trucks and equipment as we grow. (#30) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great point – as the municipality grows, new equipment will be required. To be fiscally responsible, funding for replacement, and anticipated needs for new, fire trucks and equipment is accounted for in our asset management plan.

Municipal Fleet

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Decrease Number of Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the amount of service vehicles, as I have heard from employees that it has been a huge waste of money, some machinery only gets used once a year and it's not maintained properly. Clearly that is not the best use of resources. (#51b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middlesex Centre maintains all equipment in accordance with manufacturer recommended schedules. Equipment is purchased with multiple uses in mind to ensure equipment downtime is minimized. An example is a trackless sidewalk plow: this machine is used for plowing sidewalks in the winter but is outfitted with a mower deck in the summer for cutting grass. There are pieces of equipment that which are task specific such as our tar and chip application equipment which is only used for that specific purpose but we use complete approximately 30km of resurfacing with this per year within about a 6 week period.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Green Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to invest in green vehicles. (#94a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Municipality understands the effects of climate change and our responsibility to do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Municipality has adopted a Community Energy Management Plan as well as a Green Fleet Plan and as such we are implementing the recommendations contained in these plans. Not only does green energy projects have a favourable impact on our environment but it has a significant impact on the operation expenses for the electric vehicles, Coldstream Fire Station, etc. If we can limit our dependence on hydro and natural gas, then we can save on operational costs which has a direct impact on the tax payer.

Policing

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Policing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you say policing I'm not entirely sure what that means given that we don't have a police department here. But we could sure use some increased police patrol at night! (#49) Seems like a lot on policing. I rarely see an officer around here and the one time my neighbour called it took a half hour. (#56) Re: policing - I said to maintain the costs, but I do think certain areas ie) longwoods road at springer must be patrolled better. Many accidents happen here due to people speeding. (#59) Policing budgets need to be focused on training and community involvement Speed cameras and red light cameras would help reduce time wasted catching speeders and increase time for communities (#82) Community safety- theft prevention (#93b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ,unicipality does not have its own police department and uses the services of the OPP. The OPP is responsible for ensuring adequate policing coverage in the areas they serve; the municipality has very little control over this. The OPP has certain tips on how to prevent break-ins as this is a matter that is difficult for us or the police to control. Please check out this website, there is some great information that can help you. (http://www.opp.ca/index.php?id=115&entryid=570bf1a58f94ac983906709c&lng=en)

Road Maintenance

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Clarke Road Resurfacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finally will you finish the hard surface extension of Clarke road from 10 mile to Ilderton road seriously you spent all that money upgrading the road surface in 2018 why just leave it 1.6km short? Decisions like this are baffling. (#26) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This was planned for 2020, but it was one of the projects deferred to 2021 as a precaution due to the unknown financial impact of COVID-19 earlier in the year. This is being carried forward into the 2021 budget for construction next year.

Road Safety

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Hyde Park Rd. Pedestrian Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And a safer situation at the crosswalk on Hyde Park by the library. (#67c) • Put up the damn flashing crosswalks at the fire hall and library crossings on Hyde Park Road before someone is killed in our community. Will someone finally listen to all our community concerns. This has been asked for numerous times by our community but falls flat! Make this happen! (#70) • Please put in a flashing light pedestrians can press when crossing the street at Hyde park rd. (south of heritage park). (#74a) • The pedestrian crossing on Hyde Park Rd needs to be addressed ASAP, before someone gets killed. (see previous notes). (#86) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyde Park Road south of Ilderton Road is under Middlesex County jurisdiction so the decision whether or not to install a controlled crossing is ultimately the decision of Middlesex County. • We continue discussions on this topic with the County and with the County's permission have installed new signage for pedestrians to provide better awareness of how the existing crosswalk is intended to function. • We conducted our own pedestrian count at this location this summer and found that the number of pedestrians still do not meet the requirements for a controlled crossing. However, we will continue to advocate with the County for further improvements.
Road Safety – General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road safety should be considered. We have recently had some fatal and/or very serious accidents. (#1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road safety is an important area. Under the Vision Zero program staff are embarking on an educational campaign and plan on purchasing lawn signs and an additional speed radar trailer. Staff are seeking out partners and organizations to further reinforce road safety and benefit from consistent messaging across multiple organizations and jurisdictions.
Street Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also, maintaining street lights (#67b) • Consider street lighting improvements in Kilworth—the new wave of street lights, although brighter, affect a lesser area of the street and do not light the sidewalk at night. (#2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the next budget cycle, staff will be proposing a budget item to commence a regular street light replacement program over multiple years.
Traffic Lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic lights in some areas to improve safety. Sid all's important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of traffic control lights is traditionally dictated by traffic volumes. Traffic light requests on Middlesex County roads should be directed to the County.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Winter Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow plotting must start earlier in the morning especially on rural roads (#41) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The municipality's Winter Maintenance Program aims to provide safe roads and sidewalks during the winter season at an affordable price. • The municipality's response team maintains 583km of roadway, and 30km of sidewalk in Middlesex Centre. • The municipality tracks weather conditions and deploys road temperature sensors outfitted to its fleet which monitors our roads for snow and ice detection. Staff monitor snow accumulation and ice formation to deploy resources to ensure the safety of the public in a cost effective manner. The deployment of resources generally follows the Minimum Maintenance Standards for response times, and depending on road classification response times can vary from 8-24 hours, and can be further impacted by large snow events. • After the snowfall ends, it can take: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 8-12 hours to clear priority roads, and ○ For all municipal roads approximately 24 hours. • A larger or continuous snowfall event may extend the time necessary to clear snow from local streets and cul-de-sacs. • The municipality follows the provincially prescribed standards for winter maintenance (Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways, O. Reg. 239/02). Roads are categorized into five main classes. Class 1, 2 and 3 or priority roads, which include arterial and some secondary collectors, take first priority. Classes 4 and 5, which include local streets and cul-de-sacs, have less priority.

Rural Internet

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide internet for rural customers that has been promised for years!!! (#75) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and council recognize this as an issue, particularly in light of more residents working and attending school online. The lack of high-speed internet in rural areas has been identified as a pressing issue at both the federal and provincial level. Staff and council are working with the County of Middlesex to access funding and support. The challenge in Middlesex County is that it would cost in excess of \$140M if the municipalities were to bury fibre across the County to every home, business, and farm-gate. As we don't provide this service ourselves, we are somewhat reliant on those companies who are in the business of providing internet services and they are looking at the business case for extension of services. We continue to advocate for rural internet, and partner with all levels of government to enhance the availability of local service.

Spending Priorities

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Budgeting – Asset Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping services maintained and not increasing unless critical is what is needed. Planning long term equipment replacement so that capital can be properly forecasted is also important and i think was mentioned over the last couple of years. No one is closer to the "business" than the staff of our municipality and their ideas on ways of reducing costs or increasing efficiencies is important. Ask for ideas and consider feasible ideas for improvement. (#52) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The municipality has an asset management plan and is currently working internally to strengthen it. Municipal staff and Council use this as a guiding document when building each municipal budget. Staff are working hard to create efficiencies and improve their understanding of assets and replacements costs so that sustainable funding models can be achieved. Municipal staff always have an opportunity to provide their valuable insight into the operation and Council and the administration encourages it.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Budgeting – Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgets should be multi-year and discourages "spend it or loose it" philosophy. (#63a) The prior three questions were related to current expenditures not in maintenance. Your questions were based on if you don't spend it you won't get it. This mentality is dated and cost people lots of money a total review yearly within each department is required to know what the current expenditures are required moving forward each year. (#66) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Municipality of Middlesex Centre does not budget or operate on a "spend it or lose it" mentality. Each year, municipal staff bring forth a report to council outlining any year-end surplus and this surplus is then transferred into reserve funds to be utilized in the future on other projects and priorities. Municipal staff and Council have built a culture of ensuring that budgets are build based on service levels and needs of the organization to provide the best value for money for the tax payers of the municipality. Additionally, the Municipality does review a five year capital budget annually as part of the approval of the capital budget.
Spending Priorities – Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce Council positions. (#51a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The municipality has five wards, therefore there are five Councillors (one for each area of the municipality) and a deputy mayor and mayor representing the tax payers of this community. The mayor and deputy mayor also are elected at large to represent Middlesex Centre at the County of Middlesex.
Spending Priorities – Increasing Taxes for Better Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am prepared to pay higher taxes for an increased quality of life for our communities but the money must be spent wisely (#17) We don't mind having a tax increase for service we actually receive. (#50) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget is a key planning document in achieving the municipality's strategic priorities. It is important that the budget meet the needs of as many of our tax payers as possible in a fiscally responsible way. This is further complicated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the needs and wants of our residents vary from person to person misperceptions about which services are under the control of the local government This is a balancing act while some tax payers would like to see an increase in taxes to provide more services while others would like service cuts and a decrease in taxes.
Spending Priorities – Increasing Taxes for Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance spending on infrastructure prior to development (#58) It is okay if the municipality charges more in taxes now in order to deliver important infrastructure upgrades sooner than projected (#79) Property taxes in the region are some of the lowest in our province, with all of the recent growth - Middlesex Centre should seriously consider raising taxes and investing in growth, I would happily pay more in order to have some of our important capital projects completed sooner. I genuinely believe that the benefits will greatly offset the immediate cost incurred. (#80a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please refer above to the response within Spending Priorities – increasing taxes for better services.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Spending Priorities – Keep Taxes to Inflation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-15% annual tax increases are inappropriate and unsustainable. Manage local mill rates so that tax increases are held to the rate of inflation. (#21) please try to keep overall increases to be inline with inflation (#76) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax rate increases have historically been lower than inflation. Each tax payer will see a different increase as the taxes being paid are based on two main factors: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment - determined by MPAC Tax rate – determined by the Council of the municipality
Spending Priorities – No Increase or Reduce Taxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freeze (#37) Just don't spend foolishly and know that people are taxed to death and tired of it going up every year! (#48) Stop raising taxes. All you do for me is plow roads and road maintenance. I'm on septic and have my own well. The taxes I pay is absolutely ridiculous. (#11) Time to get spending under control! I pay more and more in property taxes each year! (#32) Cost control. Total property tax revenue increase should be below the rate of inflation. That is the impact of both assessment and tax rate. (#16a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please refer above to the response within Spending Priorities – increasing taxes for better services.
Spending Priorities – Reserve Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keep a healthy reserve fund (#12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex Centre has a reserve and reserve fund policy in place. The goal of the municipality is to build healthy reserve balances – although this is a priority, it will take time
Spending Priorities – Service Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on "needs" not wants, and don't outsource to insulate the staff or council from an unpopular decision. MXC must "own" the outcome. Outsourcing should be for lack of capacity or lack of ability only. (#63b) what do we really need? what would we like to have? (#29) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The municipality does focus on needs of the community, but what constitutes a "need" varies from tax payer to tax payer, and municipal staff and council must find a balance. There are many different cost drivers that need to be taken into consideration.
Spending Priorities – Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't give staff that work in an office a raise. (#94c) I would like to fully understand and have justified the staff positions that exist and why they are needed Community services spending must be cut (#38a) Efficiency of municipal staffing costs evaluated. (#61) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The municipality reviews service levels each budget year and we are always looking at how to deliver our services more effectively and efficiently.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
<p>Spending Priorities – Watch all Spending</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More common sense approach to decision making (#85b) • Please be cognizant of spending. She me cannot afford to be taxed much more in the current climate. (#81a) • THINK, before spending our tax \$\$\$, please. (#92) • Watch your spending,,,,!!!! (#31) • We are entering a recession. Low priority projects need to be deferred. (#78) • Well we are in a state of emergency for Covid19. Probably a good idea to curb spending and try to keep a balanced budget until the world and our community stabilizes. Hang on to your purse strings! You never know how this pandemic will go! (#77) • Pandemic means we all need to reduce spending / cost cutting and find savings. All levels of government will need to find ways to reduce costs once we get through this pandemic. The taxpayer cannot do it alone (#69) • Reduce budget in every department and focus on core needs. (#25) • Covid-19 has made all of us tighten our belts, and Council should too. There is only one taxpayer! You can't keep begging for money. Take care of priorities only. (#13) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The municipality is doing many things to control/decrease costs. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reviewed the Rates & Fees Study for Community Services to assist staff in understanding our costs and assist in developing rental rates of our facilities. ○ Joined the Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford Purchasing Group to achieve better pricing for products and services. ○ Joined the Vendor of Record program to achieve better pricing for services/purchases. ○ Partner when we can on community capital projects. ○ Use of inspection zones and timing schedule for building department inspections to reduce travel time/costs. Technology is used on site to enter inspections electronically for increased efficiency, accuracy and improved documentation. ○ Conducted a building permit fee review and the building department now uses full cost recovery fee schedule. Development pays for development. ○ Ongoing review of spending through the annual budgeting process. ○ In 2020, tracked expenses associated with COVID-19 (including lost revenues) to ensure maximum cost recovery where possible under provincial and federal grants. Revisited all funding to look at areas where project deferral was possible.

Taxation

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response																														
Farm Taxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm tax rate should be adjusted to compensate for assessment rate increases. (#16b) Taxes should be more fairly distributed. Farm land is taxed too much and allocated to individual projects such as Recreational Centers. Farmers are less likely to use these facilities and should not have to pay for the brunt of it (#84) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The farm tax ratio is determined by the County of Middlesex. The revenue earned by each class of property is below; residential property taxes make up the majority of revenue: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">2020 Projected Assessment Revenue</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: right;">2020</th> <th style="text-align: right;">2019</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Residential</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15,094,149</td> <td style="text-align: right;">13,920,208</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Farm</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2,426,497</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2,144,516</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pipeline</td> <td style="text-align: right;">795,384</td> <td style="text-align: right;">754,265</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Commercial</td> <td style="text-align: right;">920,525</td> <td style="text-align: right;">801,360</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exempt</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Industrial</td> <td style="text-align: right;">124,879</td> <td style="text-align: right;">116,204</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td style="text-align: right;">265,773</td> <td style="text-align: right;">270,252</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Assessment Revenue</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 19,627,208</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 18,006,804</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2020 Projected Assessment Revenue				2020	2019	Residential	15,094,149	13,920,208	Farm	2,426,497	2,144,516	Pipeline	795,384	754,265	Commercial	920,525	801,360	Exempt	-	-	Industrial	124,879	116,204	Other	265,773	270,252	Total Assessment Revenue	\$ 19,627,208	\$ 18,006,804
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Taxes Benefit Other Areas More	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a resident residing in the most north eastern part of the municipality I feel that we do not benefit from our taxes which go to recreation and park facilities as they are to far away. (#22) In answering some of the previous questions I realized that a lot of them pertain to other parts of the county, not where I live. I think the amounts billed to each home owner should be based on what services are in the area where they live. I do not think I should have to contribute to the costs of something that is not in my area. (#24) For those of us in rural areas lower taxes let the urban areas pay for the city life accommodations they want (#36) Living, as we do, in the country, we should not be expected to pay for and maintain city services for people who have chosen to live here. (#45) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Council develops the municipality's budget, they seek a balance between the fiscal pressures within the community and the facilities and services that our residents rely upon and use. Simply put, they must effectively manage the associated costs while providing significant value to ALL taxpayers. As with all municipalities, Middlesex Centre strives to strike the right balance for its residents: maintaining existing services, programs and infrastructure and providing new services, while minimizing tax increases. In a climate of increasing costs, this can be a challenge. Middlesex Centre's residential property taxes remain below the group average when compared to other municipalities in our County. 																														

Waste Management

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Yard Waste Pick-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any thought to having yard waste pick-up to allow for proper disposal? We see numerous residential "dump sites" around in public park areas. Grass clippings, old hedges, tree stumps, etc. (#27) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Enviro Depots are set up to accept the yard wastes at no charge to Middlesex Centre residents. We have no current plans to implement curbside pickup of yard waste.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Enviro Depots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> waste disposal should have increased hours/days and include local drop off for compost and hazardous waste with no charge. (#89b) More hours for Denfield Enviro Depot. (#90) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compost and hazardous waste are not part of our regulatory permitting with the provincial Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). Obtaining this status it would be a very timely and expensive process. Middlesex Centre residents are able to drop compost and recyclable material off at Try Recycling year-round at no cost to the resident.

Water / Wastewater / Stormwater

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Stormwater Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm not sure where to put this, but the whole drain water tax implementation was a debacle and remains a shame on any administration that does not address it. It requires a separate billing system, at a cost to the taxpayer, rather than being setup as a separate fund from an additional charge to municipal taxes. (#5a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stormwater consists of the rain and melted snow that flows from local properties into the streets then to storm drains and eventually ends up in Ontario's lakes. Our stormwater infrastructure protects our water quality and helps lower the risk of flooding. In Middlesex Centre, our stormwater infrastructure includes stormwater ponds, storm sewers, catch basins, maintenance holes, oil grit separators, culverts and municipal drains. The inspections, repairs, maintenance and end-of-life replacement of this infrastructure is currently funded through the stormwater fee. The municipality moved to a rate-based funding mechanism as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It provides a dedicated funding source for stormwater management costs which allows for sustainability, flexibility and adaptability to respond to issues and legislative changes. It is a fairer and more equitable rate for each property based on the property's use and size as opposed to the tax rate which is based on the property value. It includes all contributors to the stormwater management systems based on property use. It provides increased transparency and improved opportunity for customer awareness and education. A comprehensive stormwater management program is very intensive and cannot be successful without a consistent, dedicated source of revenue such as the stormwater charge.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Water Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water too expensive (#4) • The water/sewage bills are too high - less sewage cost in the summer when water is used for pools, gardens, trees etc. (#40a) • There needs to be an over view of the high water costs in how to lower this for the home owner. (#43) • Reduce water rates (#46) • Do something about the ridiculous water rates (#60) • Reduction in water costs would be nice (#67a) • Water infrastructure costs are way too high (#71) • Water rates are TOO high. We need a full explanation to understand these rates. (#87b) • Water rates are too high in Middlesex centre (#89a) • Water rates are the highest in Ontario (they are stunningly high in comparison to nearby cities) and make other cities more attractive for home ownership. (#91) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water, wastewater and stormwater fees pay for the day-to-day operation and long-term maintenance of our water system. They ensure that we have a safe, clean and reliable water supply, proper wastewater treatment, and well-maintained infrastructure to protect water quality and lower the risk of flooding. • After seeing no increase in water rates for more than three years, Council approved an increase in water and stormwater fees for 2020. This was necessary as costs like electricity and supplies continue to rise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For residents with water service, monthly fees increased by \$1.74 before variable charges. ○ For those that only pay stormwater fees, the monthly charge increased by 49¢. • It is important to remember that legally all of the costs associated with the water and wastewater system must be paid for by users.

General Comments

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Approach to Municipal Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be totally daring and embrace the risk implied by being truly innovative - build a community that is based on a 2050 vision when everything is done differently and is focused on very long-term sustainability. Build that community in 2021. (#20) • Think different (#96) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation is a value in the municipality's strategic plan, which states that we, "...must remain open to all ideas to become a flexible, progressive municipality which can successfully anticipate and adapt to changing conditions." • As we develop our new strategic plan, we hope to capture innovative ideas from residents and businesses. • Information on the development of the new strategic plan may be found at middlesexcentre.on.ca/Strat plan
Budget Survey Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The questions are limited to the existing expenditures. How do we take new and transformative projects into consideration? (#19) • It was difficult to make a decision on some the categories because they were so wide ranging. (#94b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for your comments. At any time please feel free to contact the municipal office with your ideas, as we would love to hear from you.

Topic	Comment	Middlesex Centre Response
Budget Survey Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks for sending out this survey- would be good to distribute this to as many people as possible- I just happen to come across this on social media (#53) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media was just one way we notified residents about this survey. • It was shared through a media release, social media, municipal e-newsletter, municipal website and the front sign at the municipal office. As there was a randomized survey, 652 copies were mailed to residents across the watershed. • The survey was open from mid-July to August 24, 2020.
Compliments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, you do a fine job. (#39) • Good work. (#62) • Thank you for seeking contributions from your constituents, we appreciate all the time and effort that goes into this process. (#80b) • But you're doing a good job folks! (#81b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank-you! Municipal staff take pride in providing excellent service to our residents, farms and businesses.
Great Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are fortunate to live in Middlesex Centre with a vibrant community. (#87a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed!!!
Support for Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good luck (#64) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank-you!