

NORTH BAY TAXPAYERS' ASSOCIATION

Published: Bay Today

Date: January 10, 2014

Also Published in North Bay Nugget, Jan 13, 2014 "Tax Increase is 2.79%"

Association Stands Behind Its Numbers

Dear Sir:

Read with interest Councillor Vrebosch's interview with your paper concerning the Taxpayers' Association presentation regarding the 2014 operating budget and also your editorial praising the budget.

We stand by our statement that the tax levy increase is 2.79% not the 1.57% being suggested by the mayor and council members and will happily debate any suggestion to the contrary. The tax levy increased by \$2,105,660 over last year's levy which represents a 2.79% increase. We also would like to point out that the tax increase is not the lowest in a number of years. Last year's increase totalled 2.16%.

Our presentation took the budget figures presented to council by staff, explained those figures to council and suggested that council was either deliberately trying to deceive the public or lacked the knowledge to understand those figures. The councillor has denied the former suggestion but apparently doesn't understand that denying that option leaves the latter in play.

Staff was given more than ample of opportunity to explain the budget report figures to us before our presentation and they stood by their figures. Their figures are demonstrably incorrect and we proved that during our presentation. We also expressed our disappointment that council was not living up to their obligation to serve the public interest in this matter. To suggest that we were picking on staff when they can't defend themselves is incorrect. The councillor's unnecessary defence of staff appears to reinforce the point made in our presentation which indicated that some councillors feel their first responsibility is to staff rather than taxpayers.

The councillor's comments concerning the herculean budget efforts by council and staff in arriving at the 2014 figures echo the comments taxpayers heard during the 2013 budget discussions. A report was released by KPMG barely six months following the passing of the 2013 budget that recommended a further report be undertaken, costing an estimated \$50 to \$100 thousand dollars, to completely overhaul Fleet Operations. Fleet Operation comes under the responsibility of the Public Works department. The chairman of the Public Works committee at that time was Councillor Vrebosch.

The Taxpayers' Association's goal is to try to ensure that taxpayers are receiving full value for the taxes they pay. In a perfect world, they would be able to rely on their mayors and councils to do that on their behalf. Unfortunately, this is not a perfect world and the need for associations of our type continues to exist.

Don Rennick
North Bay Taxpayers' Association