



Water tops City Hall meeting

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City Council headed to the discussion table on Tuesday to determine where the city's financial priorities lie and water was high on the agenda.

Council met for the third and final part of the June Strategic Planning sessions to discuss priorities for the city for the period of 2012-2014 and the longer term vision of imagineCALGARY.

City council signed off on an increase to the cost for water use. They approved an increase of almost 10 percent which translates to about \$8 a month for most households.

The Mayor says the reason for such a jump was because previous councils didn't take into account the cost of water and waste. "We already incurred the cost to build the waste water treatment plant. We had to do it. People need safe drinking water, but if you're going to do something like that you have to have a plan to pay for it. And the previous council's plan appeared to be let someone else deal with it and pile up more and more debt."

The city also looked at increasing property taxes to make up for the budget shortfall.

One proposal from Councillors Gord Lowe and Diane Colley-Urquhart suggested an 8.7 percent increase for next year and then 6 percent for the following two years.

But council voted 9-6 in favour of Mayor Naheed Nenshi's proposal of 5 percent in 2012, 5.1 the year after, and 5.5 in 2014.

On June 7, Council discussed Calgary's growth patterns and implications, as well as the financial outlook, revenue and expenditure pressures, and indicative tax rate scenarios.

On June 14, Council approved a corporate strategy to build on service efficiency and effectiveness.

The Strategic Planning meetings are part of the process used to build the next three years of business plans and budgets for the City of Calgary.

The process provides Council with complete information it needs to make decisions and give clear direction to Administration in planning 2012-2014 budgets.

City Council will now develop budgets for 2012-2014 from July through to October.

The final report is available on calgary.ca/ourfuture.