Dear Editor

I had to grimace while reading the year end message from Mayor Evans of Tiny in Midland Today.

I am a retired Tiny resident who has worked in the property management field for over 40 years; managed multi-million-dollar budgets; staff in the hundreds and attended or watched almost every Tiny council meeting since moving here in 2011. As such, I do feel qualified to comment on the message and specifically the budget being considered by council this year.

In his message, the mayor thanks community groups that make Tiny Township a better place for everyone yet has ignored deputation after deputation to do a total re-think of the administrative building needs going forward. An issue that was at the bottom of the 15-item priority list presented for almost all delegates polled during the last election. And then, to start off their new term, pulling the funding for Arenas and Libraries operated by our neighbouring municipalities only having to back-track on the libraries after a huge public outcry. Again, for most, two issues at the bottom of the issues priority list

The Mayors Community Wellness Committee apparently could not decide what its purpose was and so renamed itself the Mayor's Ad Hoc Task Force on Community Wellness until it disbands at the end of this council's term. This years Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament missed its fundraising goal by a significant amount due to the withdrawal of sponsorships by disgruntled residents.

And what's with all of the charitable donations anyway. The County of Simcoe funds over $1M. to Georgian Bay Hospital each year and individual residents, businesses and service clubs already provide generous funding to local charities. Is it really councils' job to reallocate tax dollars to charities?

The mayor even takes credit for long standing annual community events such as the Winter Carnaval d'Hiver, summer community BBQ, farm crawl and tree lighting celebration.

He notes the township becoming a World Health Organization Age-Friendly Community as the first in Simcoe County for the recognition, yet council continues to raise taxes for those who can least afford it.

The installation of 13 accessible water fill stations at municipal parks, facilities, and beaches in Tiny due to an Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant of $113,700 is hardly a laudable accomplishment.

The pursuit of funding for improvements to the Midland Water and Wastewater Treatment Centre is one thing, but getting an agreement on it with Midland moving forward is a totally different matter.

The mayor feels that the short-term rental (STR) licencing program saw continued success while it had to draw from a reserve to break even this year.

"Significant process on the Township of Tiny Administrative Centre project this year and creating a community hub space for everyone to enjoy." No mention of the signs on almost every second household lawn calling to "Stop the Build". For 2025, the mayor highlighted that the administrative centre was anticipated for construction to begin in spring even though there is so much opposition and an environmental assessment yet to be completed.

And now, to continue to stifle public input, they have moved council meeting time to begin at 2:00 pm instead of 5:30 pm. This to accommodate one councillor and making it extremely difficult for resident delegations and even one other councillor's attendance.

During recent budget discussions, they cut a proposed $12 K. project to replace the main Audio-Visual controller for the Council Chambers AV System. It was noted that the impact of not proceeding leaves the Township with the potential of unexpected failures and/or outages that directly effect how they can conduct internal and public meetings. It was also noted that the expense would be covered by the computer reserve, so no cost impact on the proposed tax rate. Deputy Mayor Miskimins and Councillor Walma questioned reinvesting in an old system given there will be new system in the new municipal building scheduled for move in in 2027. The comment from the Deputy Mayor was that "we have a public gallery, and that live stream is a convenience not an actual service we decided to provide."

The township's first multi-year budget for a two-year operating plan and five-year capital plan leaves much to be desired with staff sent away to come back with a targeted 7% municipal tax increase to be approved at the January 8th council meeting.

Well based on the report on the agenda for the upcoming meeting, the cuts submitted certainly tell a story.

To bring the budget in line with the 7% target the removed a pickup truck (75 K.) from the capital budget and will purchase from the water reserve; removed an allocated $ 45.3 K. for contingency which should never have been allowed in the first place and provided $30 K. for the sale of an old plow since they need to buy 3 new plows all this year at a cost of $637.5 K. The balance to achieve their target was to be taken from the estimated surplus from 2024 ($188,361).

As you can see, just by replacing two plows this year they could have reached their target without taking estimated surplus into consideration.

The MPAC assessments have yet to be received and the actual surplus from2024 will not be known until the books are closed in February and reported to council in March. Based on my experience over the past many years the surplus will be much higher than that proposed, and the entire amount should be used to reduce the tax rate for 2025. There is certainly more that could be deferred, and I believe that without a doubt the annual municipal tax rate should be targeted at no more than the cost-of-living increase. This is what our mayor and councillors should be striving for.

Council members seem oblivious to the current state of the economy. Not aware that grocery bills are expected to climb 3-5% next year and if newly elected Donald Trump follows through with his tariff threats, Canada will be facing a full-blown recession.

The costs of goods, groceries, and basic household expenses require our residents to spend more money just to maintain the standard of living they're used to. The annual wage increase expected for many workers will provide some relief but not enough to offset the total cost of living increase, especially for those who work in sectors that experience lower wage growth. And a huge majority of Tiny residents are living on pensions.

The housing crisis continues in Ontario, driving up competition and home/rent prices are making it increasingly more difficult to find adequate housing at affordable prices. Bank rates are still high, with rent and mortgage payments requiring a significant portion of monthly income and expenses. This making it difficult to save or invest with the bit of money left after paying for housing and other essentials.

Our council does not seem to be able to focus on the big picture. While past councils have for years focused on working closely with our neighbouring municipalities, this council seems to be adopting a “Tiny First” mentality. They tout our low tax rate but seem to forget Tiny is a residential community with almost no commercial or industrial tax base. We rely on our neighbours in Penetanguishene, Midland, Springwater and Wasaga for shopping and services not locally provided. Given our location along the shoreline this makes absolute sense from an access and feasibility standpoint. All residents manage their own septage and only 25% of the households are on municipal water. The County handles waste and recycling and the maintenance of the majority of major roadways including County Road 6.

Although council seems to feel they are doing an exceptional job on focusing on resident needs, the plethora of lawn signs indicate otherwise with most residents counting the days until October 2026.

So that is one resident’s year end message to council and happy New Year.

Chuck Stradling

64 Forest Circle

Tiny ON L9M 0H4