



REPORT FIN-2026-007

TO: Mayor and Members of Council

PREPARED BY: Mary Hasan, Director of Finance/Treasurer

PRESENTED BY: Mary Hasan, Director of Finance/Treasurer

MEETING DATE: February 11, 2026

SUBJECT: 2026 Budget - Final
File No. F05 BUD

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Report FIN-2026-007 entitled 2026 Budget – Final be received; and

That Council give 3 readings to By-law No. 2026-004 being a by-law to adopt the Budget for the Corporation of the Township of Puslinch for the year 2026.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1.) Provide a summary of the results from the Public Information Meeting (PIM) held on January 21, 2026, regarding the proposed 2026 Budget.
- 2.) Present the results of the community engagement survey conducted through the Township's online engagement platform, [EngagePuslinch.ca](https://engagepuslinch.ca).
- 3.) Seek Council's approval to enact the 2026 Budget By-law.

Background

Table 1 summarizes the reports and presentation materials that Council has received to date as part of its deliberations on the 2026 Proposed Budget.

Table 1: Reports and Presentations Provided to Date for 2026 Proposed Budget Deliberations

Report	Council Meeting/ Public Information Meeting (PIM)
REPORT FIN-2025-024 - 2026 Proposed User Fees and Charges	September 17, 2025
2026 Proposed User Fees and Charges PIM Presentation and Draft By-law	September 17, 2025
REPORT FIN-2025-027 – 2026 Proposed Capital Budget	October 22, 2025
REPORT FIN-2025-028 – 2026 User Fees and Charges By-law	October 29, 2025
REPORT FIN-2025-025 - 2026 Proposed Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)	October 29, 2025
REPORT FIN-2025-029 - 2026 Proposed Operating Budget	December 17, 2025
REPORT FIN-2025-030 - 2026 Grant Application Program	December 17, 2025
REPORT FIN-2025-031 – 2026 Municipal Insurance	December 17, 2025
REPORT FIN-2026-002 - 2026 Capital and Operating Budget Update	January 21, 2026
2026 Proposed Budget PIM Presentation and Draft By-law	January 21, 2026
REPORT FIN-2026-004 – 2025 Completed Capital Projects	February 11, 2026
REPORT FIN-2026-005 – Projected Balances in Discretionary and Restricted Reserves	February 11, 2026
REPORT FIN-2026-006 – Ontario Regulation 284/09 – 2026 Budget	February 11, 2026
REPORT FIN-2026-007 - 2026 Budget - Final	February 11, 2026

PIM

A PIM was held on January 21, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. via electronic participation to receive public input regarding the proposed 2026 Budget and the associated draft by-law.

At the time of writing this report, and based on the comments received from the public to date, Township staff are not recommending any amendments to the proposed 2026 Budget or the draft by-law as presented at the January 21, 2026 PIM. The minutes of the PIM are included in the February 11, 2026 Council agenda package.

Township staff will provide Council with an update should any additional comments or questions be received in advance of the Council meeting scheduled for February 11, 2026.

Community Engagement Survey – Engage Puslinch

Attached as Schedule A to this report are the results of the community engagement survey conducted through the Township's online engagement platform, [EngagePuslinch.ca](https://engagepuslinch.ca), for

Council's information. The survey was open from January 7, 2026, to January 30, 2026 at 12:00 p.m.

A total of 13 surveys were completed, with 82 visits to the engagement page as part of the 2026 Budget engagement process. For comparison, the 2025 engagement received 15 completed surveys, with 75 visits to EngagePuslinch.ca.

A comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions document was also prepared and posted on EngagePuslinch.ca to provide residents with background information on the annual budget process.

Financial Implications

Table 2 outlines the comparison between the 2025 approved total tax levy impact and the proposed 2026 total tax levy impact. This comparison includes both operating and capital tax levy requirements, as presented at the Budget PIM held on January 21, 2026.

Table 2: *2025 Approved Total Tax Levy Compared to the 2026 Proposed Total Tax Levy*

Description	2025 Approved Budget	2026 Proposed Budget	Difference
Total Capital Tax Levy	\$1,435,809	\$1,512,559	\$76,750
Total Operating Tax Levy	\$4,236,333	\$4,423,016	\$186,683
Total Municipal Tax Levy	\$5,672,143	\$5,935,575	\$263,432

Table 3 provides a detailed comparison of the 2025 approved budget and the proposed 2026 budget, including operating and capital components and their respective funding sources.

Table 3: 2025 Approved Budget Compared to the 2026 Proposed Budget

Description	2025 Approved Budget	2026 Proposed Budget	Notes
Operating Budget			
Operating Expenditures, Including Contributions to Operating Discretionary Reserves	\$7,477,649	\$7,755,706	Note A, Note C
Operating Revenues, Including Funding from Operating Discretionary Reserves	-(\$3,241,316)	-(\$3,332,690)	Note B, Note C
Total Operating Tax Levy	\$4,236,333	\$4,423,016	Note C
Capital Budget by Funding Source			
Capital Tax Levy	\$1,435,809	\$1,512,559	
Discretionary Reserves	\$3,127,623	\$3,377,584	Note D
Restricted Reserves	\$1,458,530	\$1,894,381	Note E
Other (grants)	\$456,360	\$453,363	
Total Capital Budget	\$6,478,323	\$7,237,887	
Total Tax Levy	\$5,672,143	\$5,935,575	

Note A – A portion of the increase in operating expenditures is offset by reserve withdrawals and increased revenues and recoveries.

Note B – Operating revenues are presented as a negative value, as they reduce the overall operating tax levy requirement.

Note C – Detailed changes in operating expenditures, operating revenues, operating reserves, and the operating tax levy were previously reported in the 2026 Proposed Budget PIM presentation held on January 21, 2026; in Report FIN-2025-029 presented at the December 17, 2025 Council meeting; and in staff responses to Council questions arising from that meeting.

Note D – The increase in discretionary reserve funding in the 2026 capital budget is primarily attributable to a higher utilization of the Asset Management (AM) Discretionary Reserve and the Gravel Roads Improvement Discretionary Reserve.

Note E – The increase in restricted reserve funding in the 2026 capital budget reflects a higher utilization of the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Restricted Reserve for eligible parks and recreation projects compared to 2025.

Table 4 below summarizes the 2025 approved and 2026 proposed budgeted contributions to discretionary reserves.

Table 4: 2025 Approved and 2026 Proposed Budgeted Contributions to Discretionary Reserves

Discretionary Reserve	2025 Approved Budget	2026 Proposed Budget	Notes
Insurance Contingency	\$0	\$0	Current balance is \$113K.
Legal Contingency	\$0	\$0	Current balance is \$158K.
Elections	\$13,750	\$13,750	Current balance is \$41.3K prior to any further contributions through the 2026 budget process. Net operating tax levy impact is \$13,750.
Heritage Financial Incentive and Plaque Programs	\$10,600	\$10,600	Current balance is \$29.5K prior to any further contributions through the 2026 budget process. Net operating tax levy impact is \$0, as expenditures are also budgeted in Administration.
AM	\$1,002,575	\$1,051,509	See Report FIN-2025-027 presented at the October 22, 2025 Council meeting.
Information Technology	\$20,000	\$20,000	See Report FIN-2025-027 presented at the October 22, 2025 Council meeting.
Winter Maintenance	\$0	\$0	Current balance is \$25K. It is recommended that any Public Works departmental surpluses in 2025 be allocated to this reserve once the surplus is confirmed in April 2026.
Administrative Studies	\$40,000	\$40,000	See Report FIN-2025-027 presented at the October 22, 2025 Council Meeting.
Gravel Roads Improvement	\$344,050	\$394,050	See Report FIN-2025-027 presented at the October 22, 2025 Council Meeting.
Total	\$1,430,975	\$1,529,909	Contributions are informed by projected reserve balances, planned contributions, and anticipated withdrawals, as outlined in Report FIN-2026-005 included in the February 11, 2026 Council agenda package.

Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) - 2026 Returned Assessment Roll

Based on the 2026 MPAC returned assessment roll and the tax levy impacts outlined in this report, approximately each additional \$57,500 of taxes levied results in a 1% tax rate increase for the Township portion of taxes on the median/typical single-family home.

Consistent with prior practice, the 2026 returned assessment roll, received from MPAC in mid-December, has been compared to the 2025 returned assessment roll to determine assessment

changes for median/typical properties within the Township. Township staff verified median/typical property assessment changes using the Ontario Property Tax Analysis Tool, which became available in December 2025. These assessment changes have been incorporated into the calculation of tax rate impacts for median/typical properties, as outlined in the tables that follow in this report.

The education tax rates are based on correspondence received from the Ministry of Finance in December 2025 and remain unchanged from 2025. The County of Wellington (County) adopted its 2026 budget on January 29, 2026. The County tax rate has increased from what was previously presented at the Budget PIM on January 21, 2026. Both Township and County tax rates remain subject to change pending adoption of the County Tax Policy, anticipated in approximately April 2026.

Assessment Base and Growth

The 2026 returned assessment roll continues to be based on January 1, 2016 assessed values, reflecting the Province's continued postponement of the 2021 assessment update. As a result, property assessments for the 2026 taxation year remain based on January 1, 2016 values, with the 2021 assessment values deemed for 2026.

Despite the continued postponement of reassessment, the Township has experienced minimal new assessment growth related to new construction and renovations.

The Township's 2026 weighted assessment growth is approximately 0.63% (2025: 1.67%), representing \$17.9M in new assessment (2025: \$46.9M). This growth generates approximately \$35.6K in additional Township tax revenue, based on a comparison of the 2025 returned assessment roll to the 2025 year-end assessment roll. The 2026 returned assessment roll is consistent with the 2025 year-end roll.

Absent any new assessment growth, the proposed 2026 budget would have resulted in:

- A Township tax increase of 4.64%, or approximately \$62 on the median/typical single-family home; and
- A blended tax increase of 3.27%, or approximately \$233 on the median/typical single-family home.

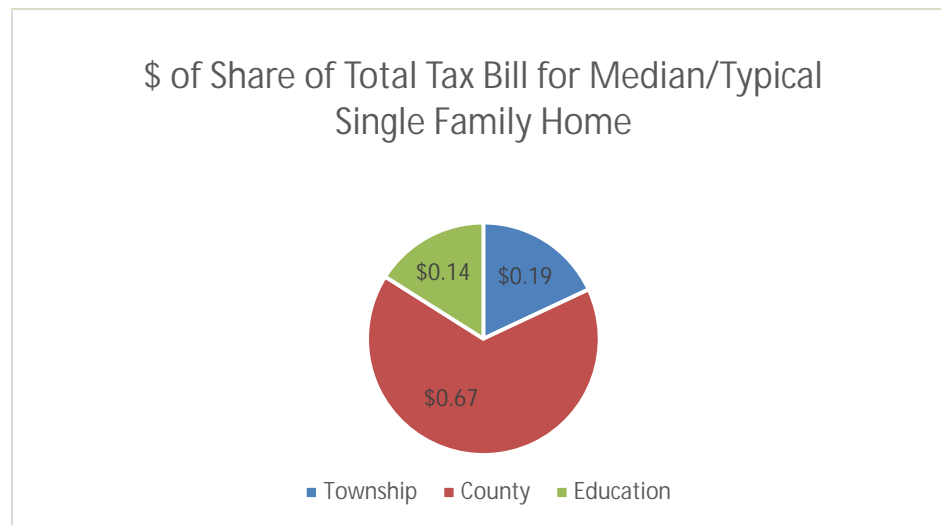
Median/Typical Single-Family Home

Table 7 illustrates the impact of the proposed 2026 budget on a median/typical single-family home with an assessed value of \$666,000, unchanged from 2025.

- Township taxes increase by approximately 3.99%, or **\$53 annually (approximately \$4 per month)**.
- Blended taxes (Township, County, and Education) increase by approximately 3.15%, or \$224 annually.

Table 7: Median/Typical Single-Family Home – Tax Impact

Description	Share of Total Tax Bill	2025	2026	\$ Change from 2025	% Change from 2025
Median Assessment		\$666,000	\$666,000	\$0	0.00%
Yearly Township Taxes	\$0.19	\$1,326	\$1,379	\$53	3.99%
Yearly County Taxes	\$0.67	\$4,772	\$4,943	\$171	3.59%
Yearly Education Taxes	\$0.14	\$1,019	\$1,019	\$0	0.00%
Yearly Blended Taxes	\$1.00	\$7,117	\$7,341	\$224	3.15%
Yearly Township Taxes per \$100K Assessment		\$199	\$207	\$8	3.99%
Yearly Blended Taxes per \$100K Assessment		\$1,069	\$1,102	\$33	3.15%



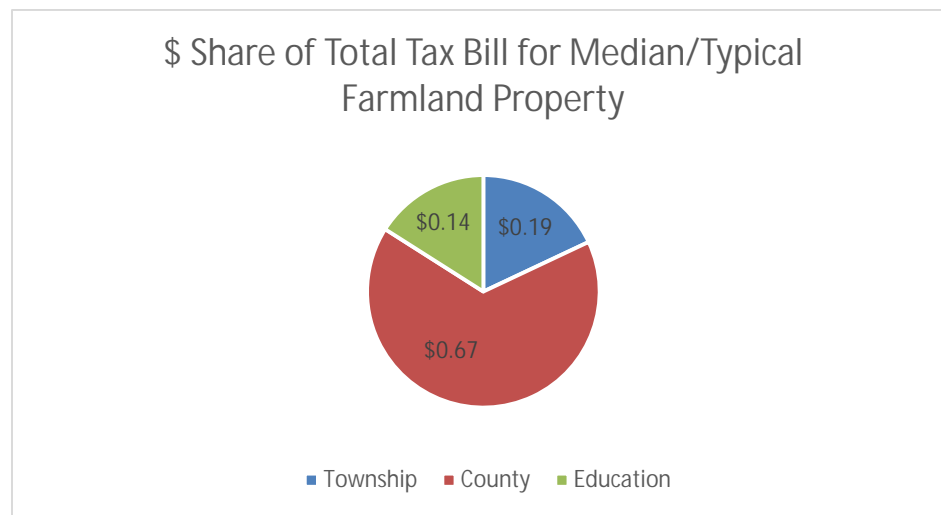
Median/Typical Farmland Property

Table 8 illustrates the impact of the proposed 2026 budget on a median/typical farmland property with an assessed value of \$709,100, unchanged from 2025.

- Township taxes increase by approximately 3.99%, or **\$14 annually (approximately \$1 per month)**.
- Blended taxes (Township, County, and Education) increase by approximately 3.15%, or \$60 annually.

Table 8: Median/Typical Farmland Property – Tax Impact

Description	Share of Total Tax Bill	2025	2026	\$ Change from 2025	% Change from 2025
Median Assessment		\$709,100	\$709,100	\$0	0%
Yearly Township Taxes	\$0.19	\$353	\$367	\$14	3.99%
Yearly County Taxes	\$0.67	\$1,270	\$1,316	\$46	3.59%
Yearly Education Taxes	\$0.14	\$271	\$271	\$0.00	0.00%
Yearly Blended Taxes	\$1.00	\$1,894	\$1,954	\$60	3.15%
Yearly Township Taxes per \$100K Assessment		\$50	\$52	\$2	3.99%
Yearly Blended Taxes per \$100K Assessment		\$267	\$276	\$9	3.15%



Median/Typical Small Retail Commercial Property

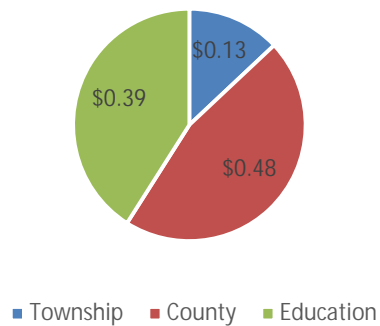
Table 9 illustrates the impact of the proposed 2026 budget on a median/typical small retail commercial property with an assessed value of \$615,600 (2025: 636,100).

- Township taxes increase by approximately 0.64%, or **\$12 annually (approximately \$1 per month)**.
- Blended taxes (Township, County, and Education) decrease by approximately 1.06%, or \$151 annually.

Table 9: Median/Typical Small Retail Commercial Property – Tax Impact

Description	Share of Total Tax Bill	2025	2026	\$ Change from 2025	% Change from 2025
Median Assessment		\$636,100	\$615,600	-\$20,500	-(3.22%)
Yearly Township Taxes	\$0.13	\$1,888	\$1,900	\$12	0.64%
Yearly County Taxes	\$0.48	\$6,795	\$6,812	\$17	0.25%
Yearly Education Taxes	\$0.39	\$5,598	\$5,417	-\$180	-(3.22%)
Yearly Blended Taxes	\$1.00	\$14,281	\$14,130	-\$151	-(1.06%)
Yearly Township Taxes per \$100K Assessment		\$307	\$309	\$2	0.64%
Yearly Blended Taxes per \$100K Assessment		\$2,320	\$2,295	-\$25	-(1.06%)

\$ Share of Total Tax Bill for Median/Typical Small Retail Commercial Property



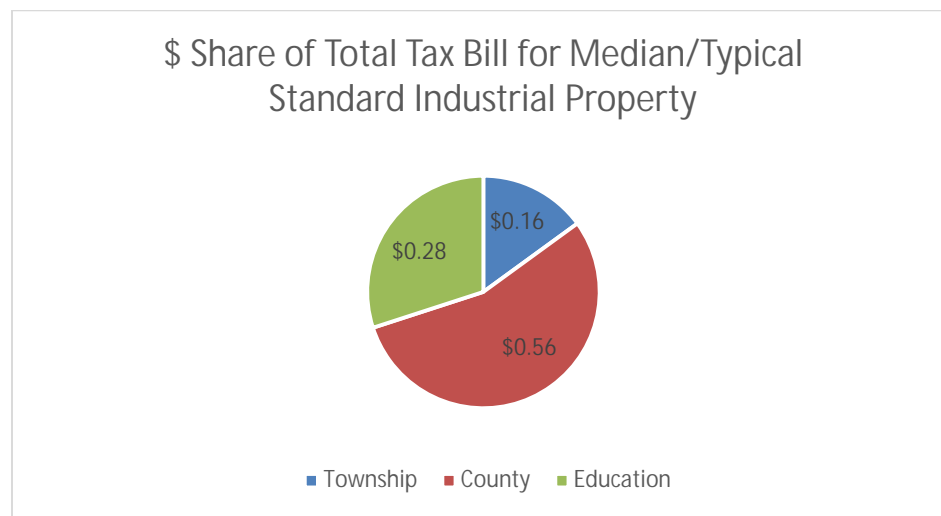
Median/Typical Standard Industrial Property

Table 10 illustrates the impact of the proposed 2026 budget on a median/typical standard industrial property with an assessed value of \$1,649,000, unchanged from 2025.

- Township taxes increase by approximately 3.99%, or **\$315 annually (approximately \$26 per month)**.
- Blended taxes (Township, County, and Education) increase by approximately 2.63%, or \$1,333 annually.

Table 10: Median/Typical Standard Industrial Property – Tax Impact

Description	Share of Total Tax Bill	2025	2026	\$ Change from 2025	% Change from 2025
Median Assessment		\$1,649,000	\$1,649,000	\$0	0%
Yearly Township Taxes	\$0.16	\$7,879	\$8,194	\$315	3.99%
Yearly County Taxes	\$0.56	\$28,355	\$29,373	\$1,018	3.59%
Yearly Education Taxes	\$0.28	\$14,511	\$14,511	\$0	0.00%
Yearly Blended Taxes	\$1.00	\$50,746	\$52,079	\$1,333	2.63%
Yearly Township Taxes per \$100K Assessment		\$478	\$497	\$19	3.99%
Yearly Blended Taxes per \$100K Assessment		\$3,077	\$3,158	\$81	2.63%



Applicable Legislation and Requirements

Municipal Act, 2001

Engagement Opportunities

The Township has incorporated a number of engagement opportunities as part of the 2026 budget process, including:

- Advisory Committee Budget Input
- Social Media Posts and/or Advertisements on:
 - [Facebook.ca/TownshipofPuslinch](https://www.facebook.com/TownshipofPuslinch)
 - [Twitter.com/TwpPuslinchON](https://twitter.com/TwpPuslinchON)
 - [Instagram.com/TownshipofPuslinch](https://www.instagram.com/TownshipofPuslinch)
- Township Website Banner and Budget Page at puslinch.ca/government/budget/
- Community Engagement Survey at [EngagePuslinch.ca](https://engagepuslinch.ca) open from January 7, 2026 to January 30, 2026 at 12:00 p.m.
- Wellington Advertiser Advertisement
- PIM - January 21, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.
- Media releases promoting the [EngagePuslinch.ca](https://engagepuslinch.ca) survey and highlighting the final budget.
- Community Newsletter outlining final budget highlights, distributed with the final tax bill in August 2026.

Attachments

Schedule A - Community Engagement Survey Results – Engage Puslinch

Respectfully submitted:	Contributors:	Reviewed by:
Mary Hasan, Director of Finance/Treasurer	Mike Fowler, Director of Public Works and Capital Projects Management Justine Brotherston, Director of Corporate Services/Municipal Clerk Sarah Huether, Director of Community Services and Human Resources Jamie MacNeil, Fire Chief Andrew Hartholt, Chief Building Official Michelle Cassar, Deputy Treasurer Laura Emery, Manager of Corporate Services/Deputy Clerk	Courtenay Hoytfox, Chief Administrative Officer

2026 Proposed Budget

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

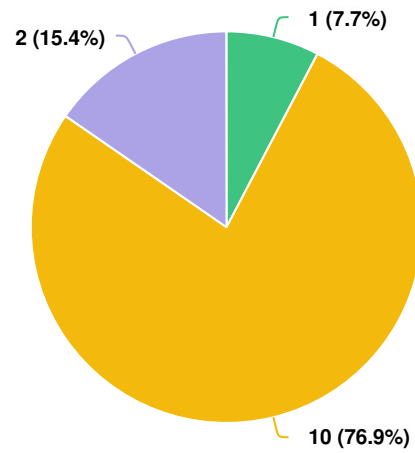
07 January 2026 - 30 January 2026

PROJECT NAME:

2026 Budget Process: Proposed Budget Survey



SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 What percentage of my 2025 tax bill went towards Township of Puslinch services?**Question options**

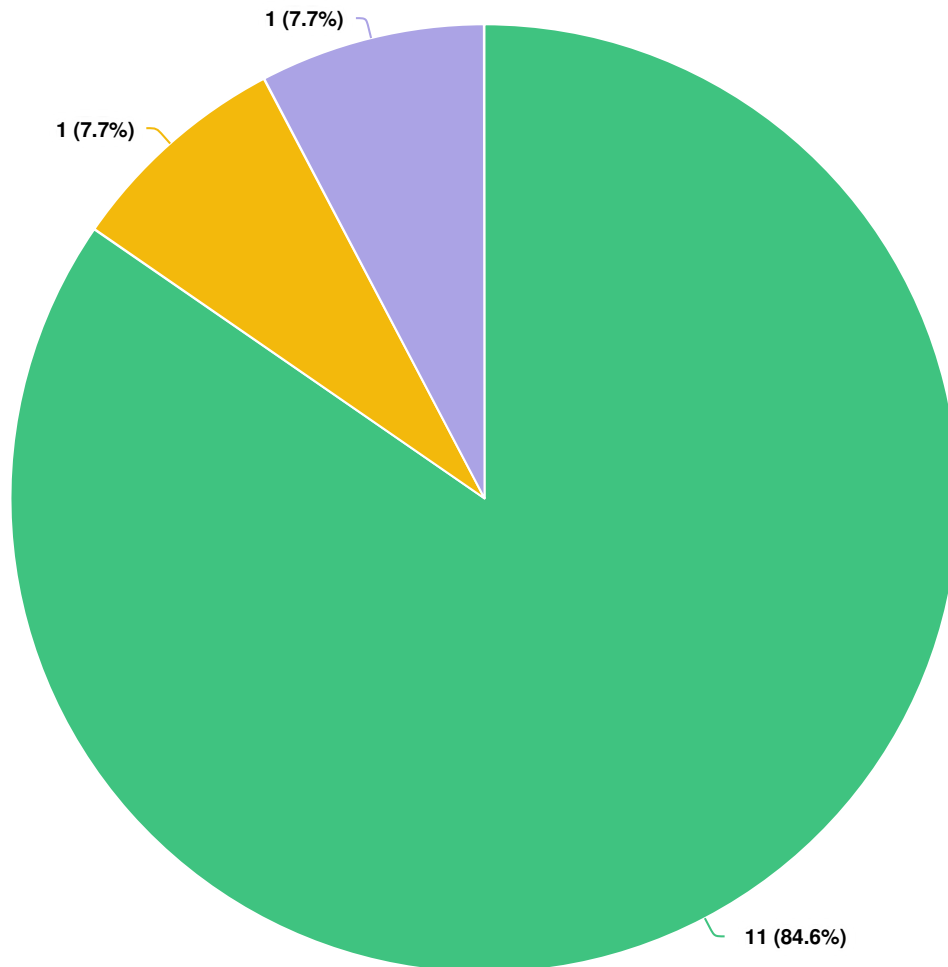
● 67%
 ● 19%
 ● 14%

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))

Question type: Dropdown Question

Question Options	Responses
19%	10
14%	2
67%	1

Q2 In 2025, a typical single family home paid \$7,063 in taxes. Of that \$7,063, how much was applied towards Township of Puslinch services?



Question options

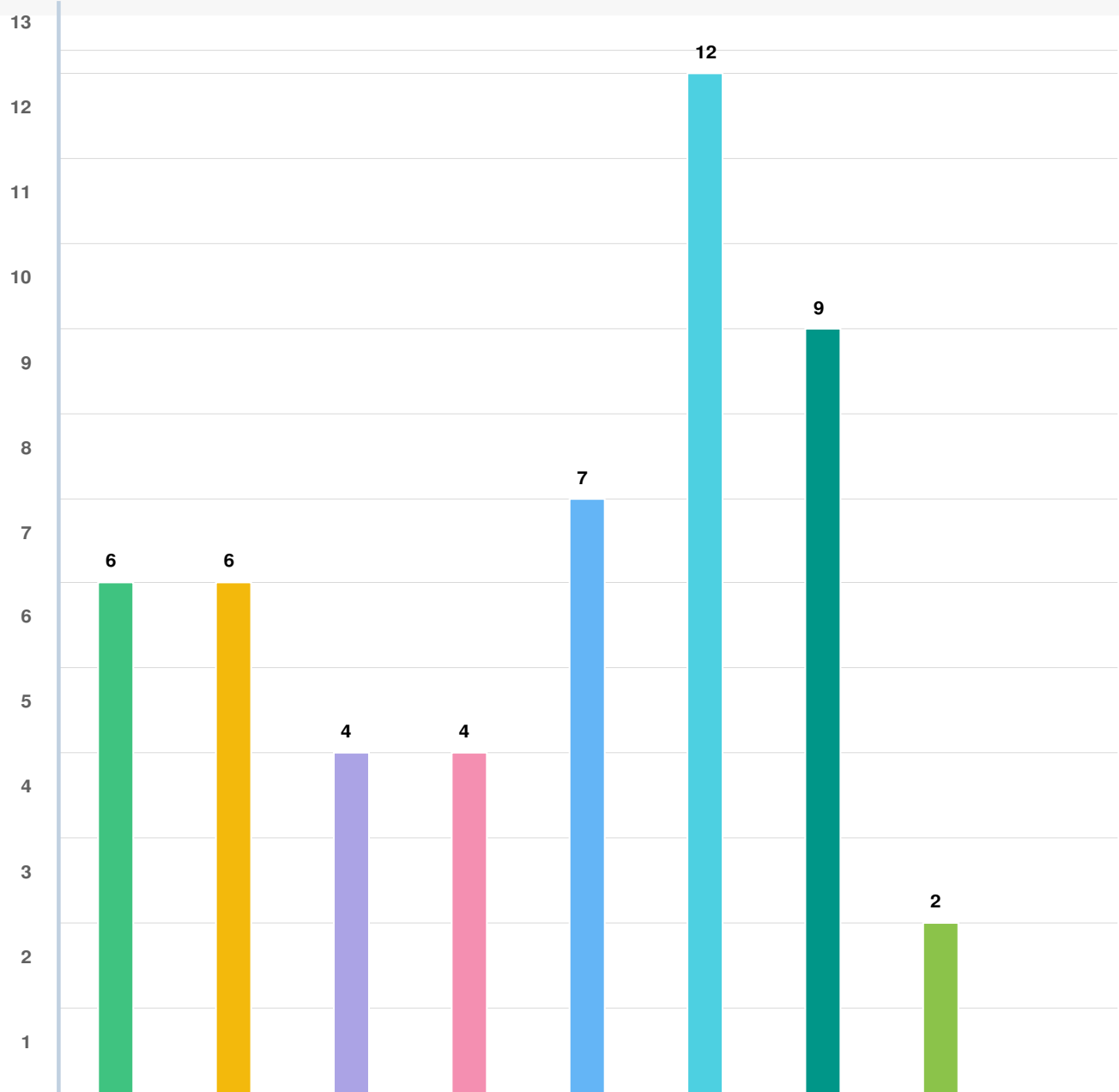
☒ \$1,316
 ☐ \$4,736
 ☐ \$1,011

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))

Question type: Dropdown Question

Question Options	Responses
\$1,316	11
\$1,011	1
\$4,736	1

Q3 The Township strives to balance excellent service delivery while maintaining affordable tax rates. Which of the following Township services are most important to you? (select up to 5)



Question options

- Community Centres and Recreation Facilities
 ● Customer Service
 ● By-law Enforcement
 ● Parks
- Planning & Development
 ● Roads (including Winter Maintenance)
 ● Fire Services
 ● Trails
- Animal Licensing and Control (Dog Tags, Dogs at Large, etc.)

Question Options	Responses
Animal Licensing and Control (Dog Tags etc)	0
Community Centres and Recreation Facilities	6
Customer Service	6
By-law Enforcement	4
Parks	4
Planning & Development	7
Roads (including Winter Maintenance)	12
Fire Services	9
Trails	2

Optional question (13 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

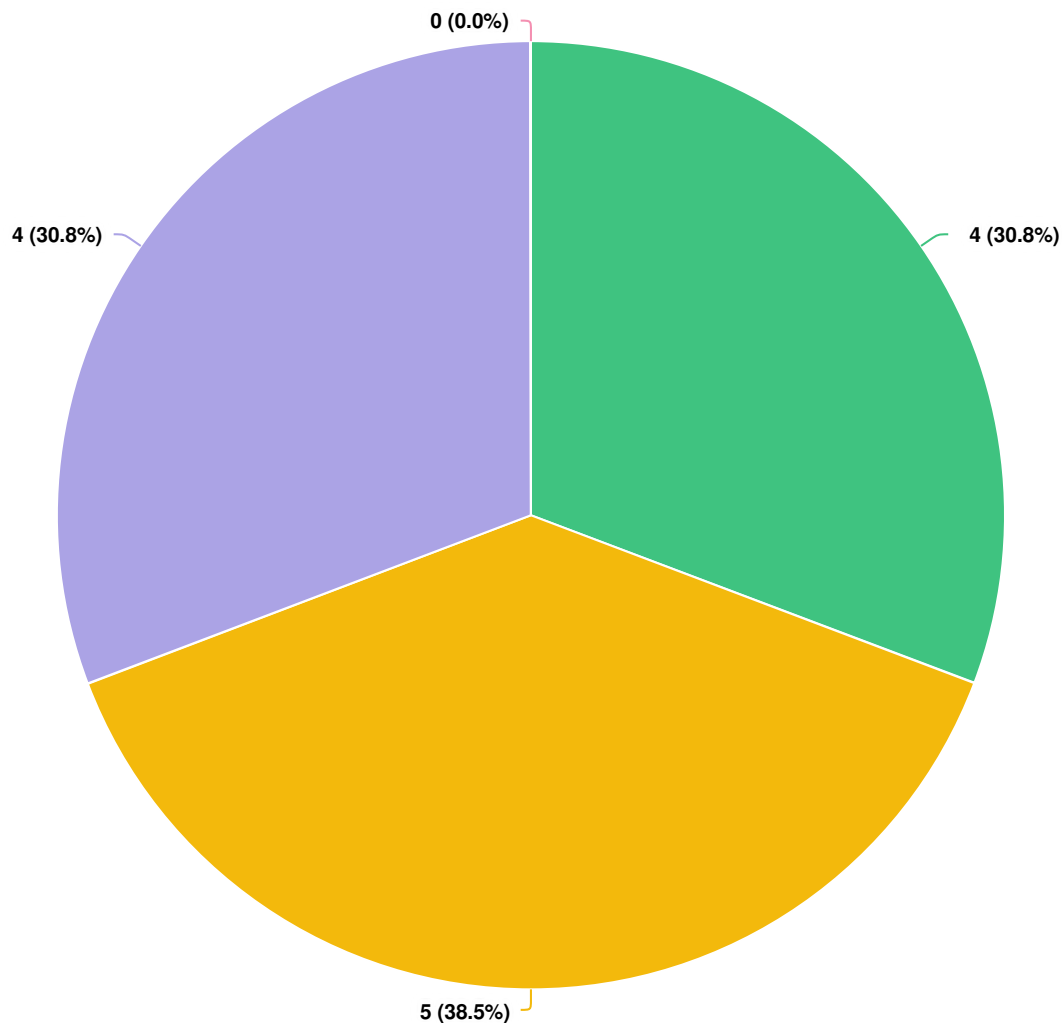
Q4 Which of these action items do you see as the highest overall priorities that you would like Council to consider for Puslinch? Rank in order of priority with 1 being the highest.

OPTIONS	AVG. RANK
More Paved Roads	3.23
Economic Development	3.77
Growth	4.31
Increased Service Levels - Fire	4.54
Increased Service Levels - Public Works	5.00
Access to Recreation Programming	5.77
Additional Recreation Facilities	6.15
Innovations and Partnerships	6.31
Increased Service Levels - Building	7.23
Increased Service Levels - Planning	8.69

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))

Question type: Ranking Question

Q5 Which of the following options would you prefer the Township implement in order to balance the increasing costs of delivering services to Township residents?



Question options

- Increase taxes a little above the rate of inflation to provide for enhanced service levels such as expanded recreation amenities, without the need to cut services elsewhere to offset.
- Increase taxes by the rate of inflation; if services are enhanced in one area, these should be offset by a reduction to services elsewhere.
- Reduce existing service levels to have a tax increase below the rate of inflation.
- Don't know

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

Question Options	Responses
Increase taxes a little above the rate of inflation to provide for enhanced service levels such as expanded recreation amenities, without the need to cut services elsewhere to offset	4
Increase taxes by the rate of inflation; if services are enhanced in one area, these should be offset by the reduction to services elsewhere	5
Reduce existing service levels to have a tax increase below the rate of inflation	4
Don't know	0

Q6 | If you would like to reduce Township service levels, please list the service(s) you would like to have reduced:

Anonymous

1/08/2026 10:52 AM

Idling of vehicles to reduce gas consumption. Animal licensing and control - nothing seems to get done anyway through outsourcing the humane societies in the area.. Staffing levels at the township office.

Anonymous

1/10/2026 11:47 PM

Fire , building upgrades

Anonymous

1/20/2026 09:38 AM

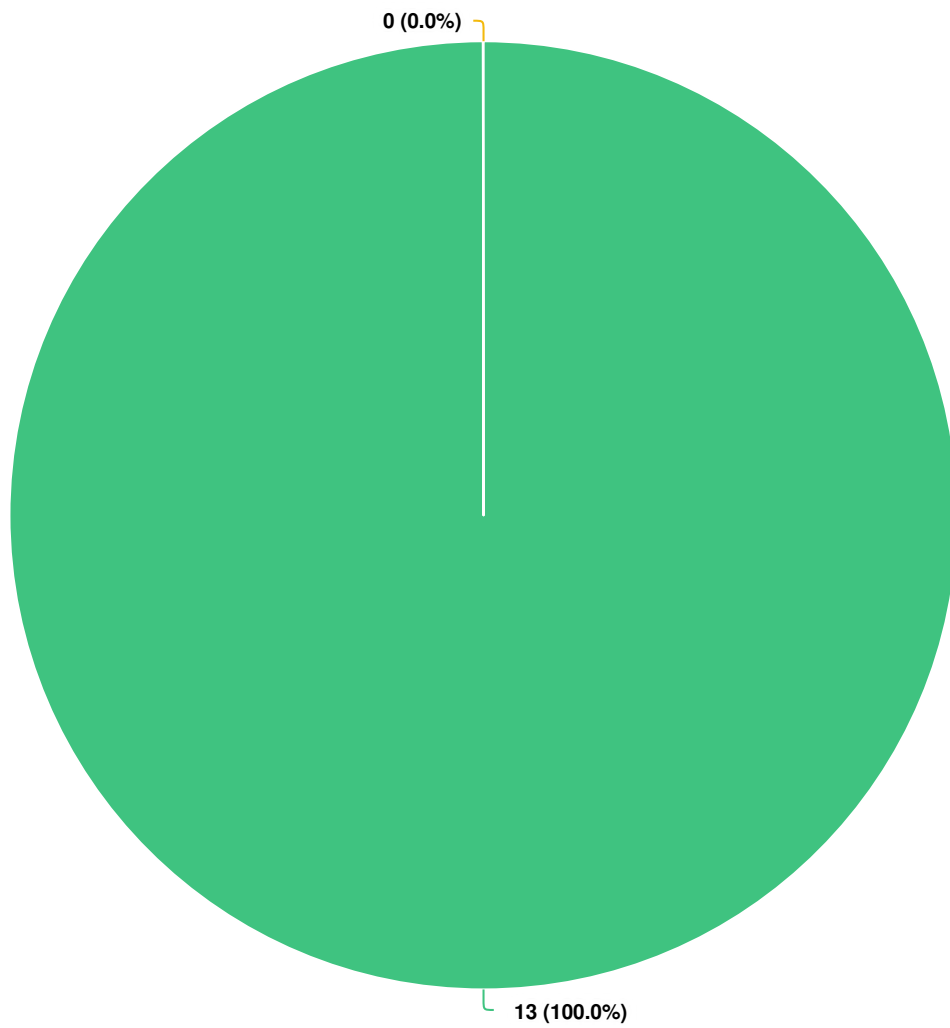
Reduce public works because it's not done anyway.

Anonymous

1/20/2026 03:59 PM

innovation and Partnership, Public Works, Building, Paved Roads, Staff levels at the Municipal Office--let AI increase productivity with less workers

Optional question (4 response(s), 9 skipped)**Question type:** Single Line Question

Q7 | Are building permits a Township or County service?

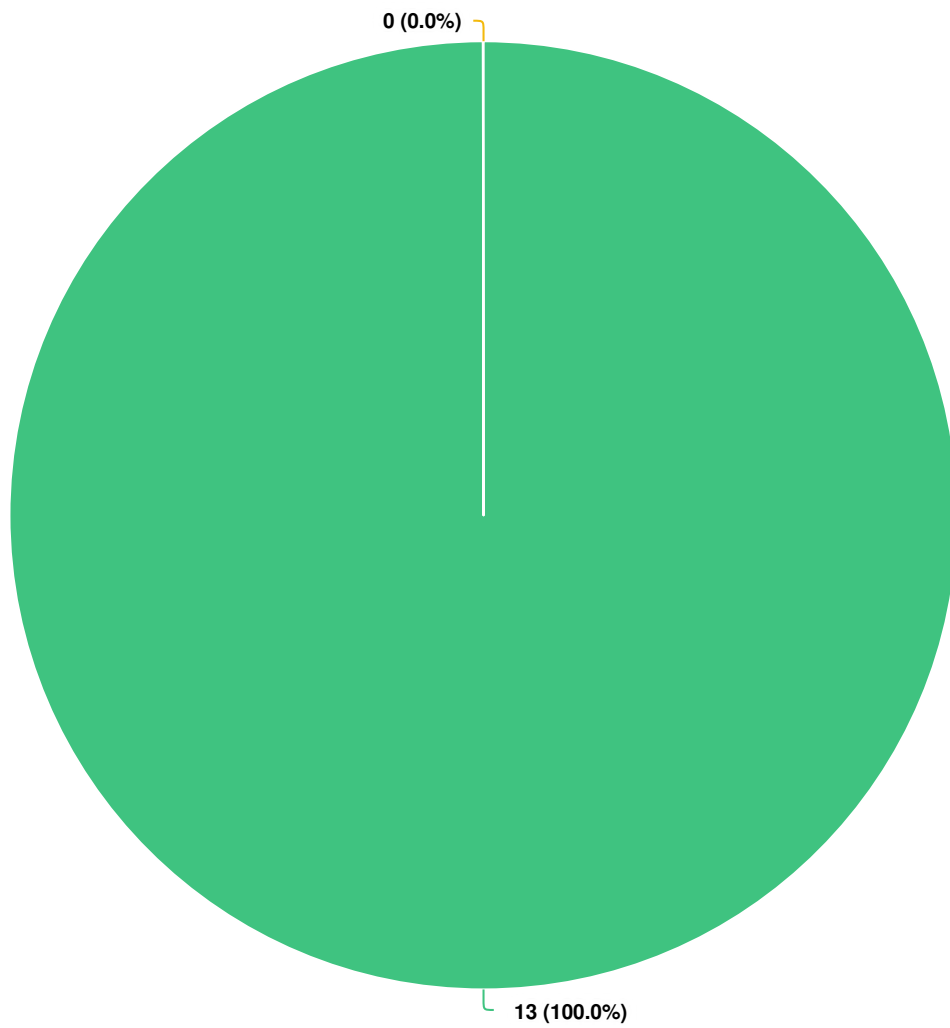
Question Options	Responses
County	0
Township	13

Question options

☒ Township ☐ County

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))

Question type: Dropdown Question

Q8 Is garbage and recycling a Township or County service?

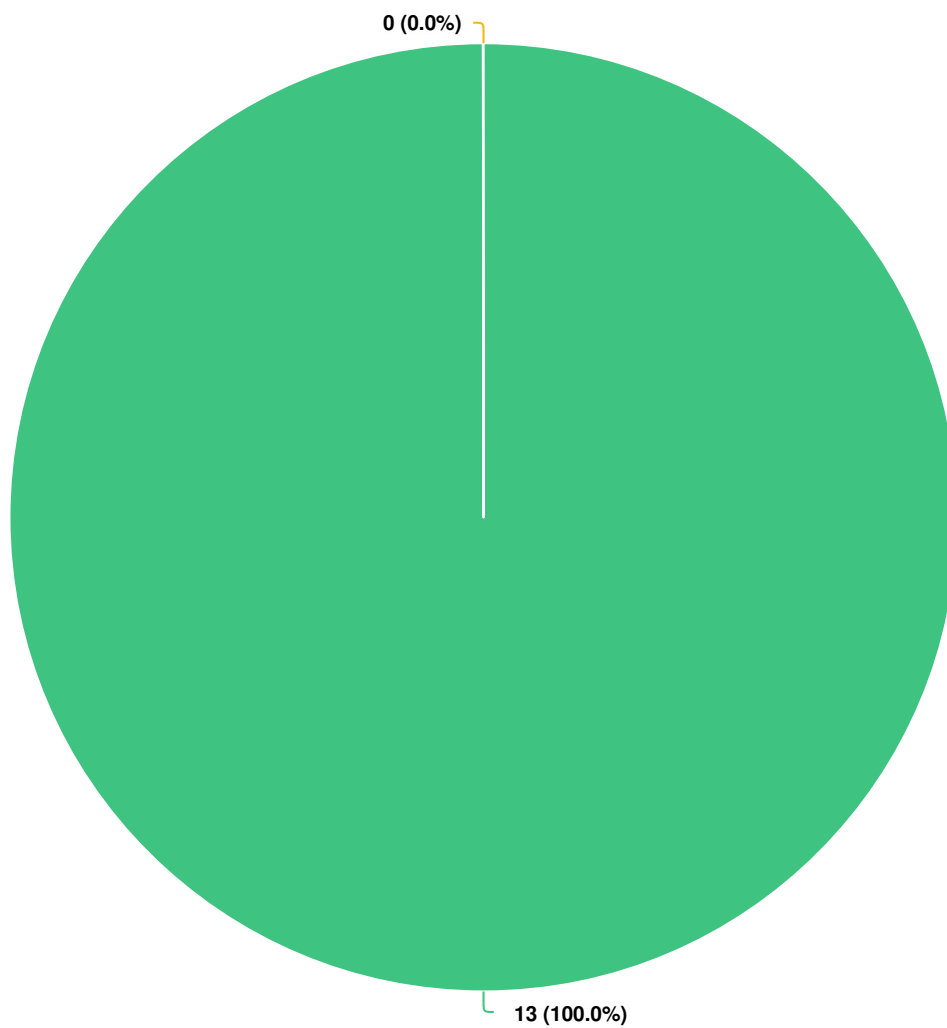
Question Options	Responses
County	13
Township	0

Question options

☒ County
 ☐ Township

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))

Question type: Dropdown Question

Q9 Are police services a Township or County service?

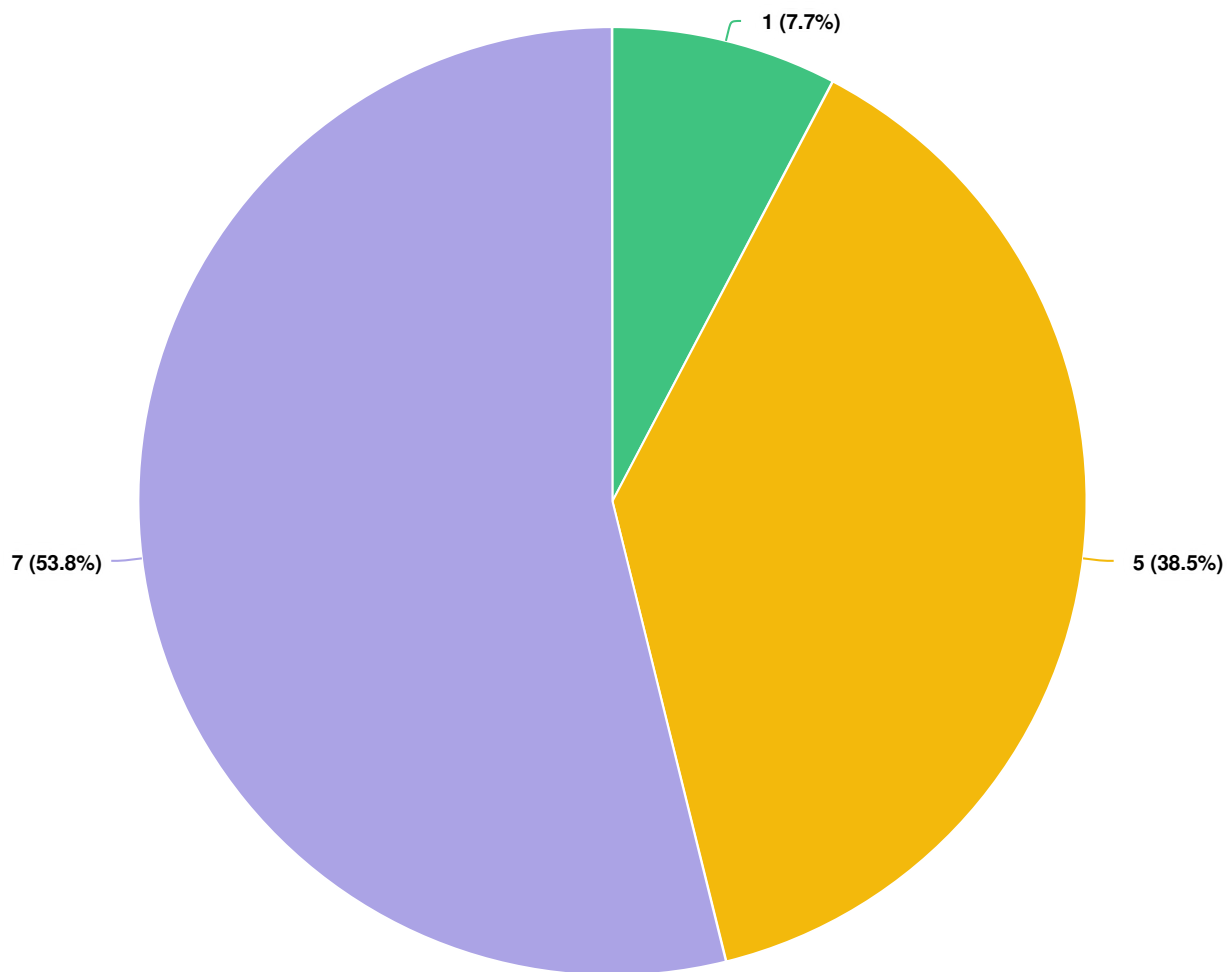
Question Options	Responses
County	13
Township	0

Question options

☒ County
 ☐ Township

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))
 Question type: Dropdown Question

Q10 | Do you feel that you understand how your tax dollars are used within the Township budget?



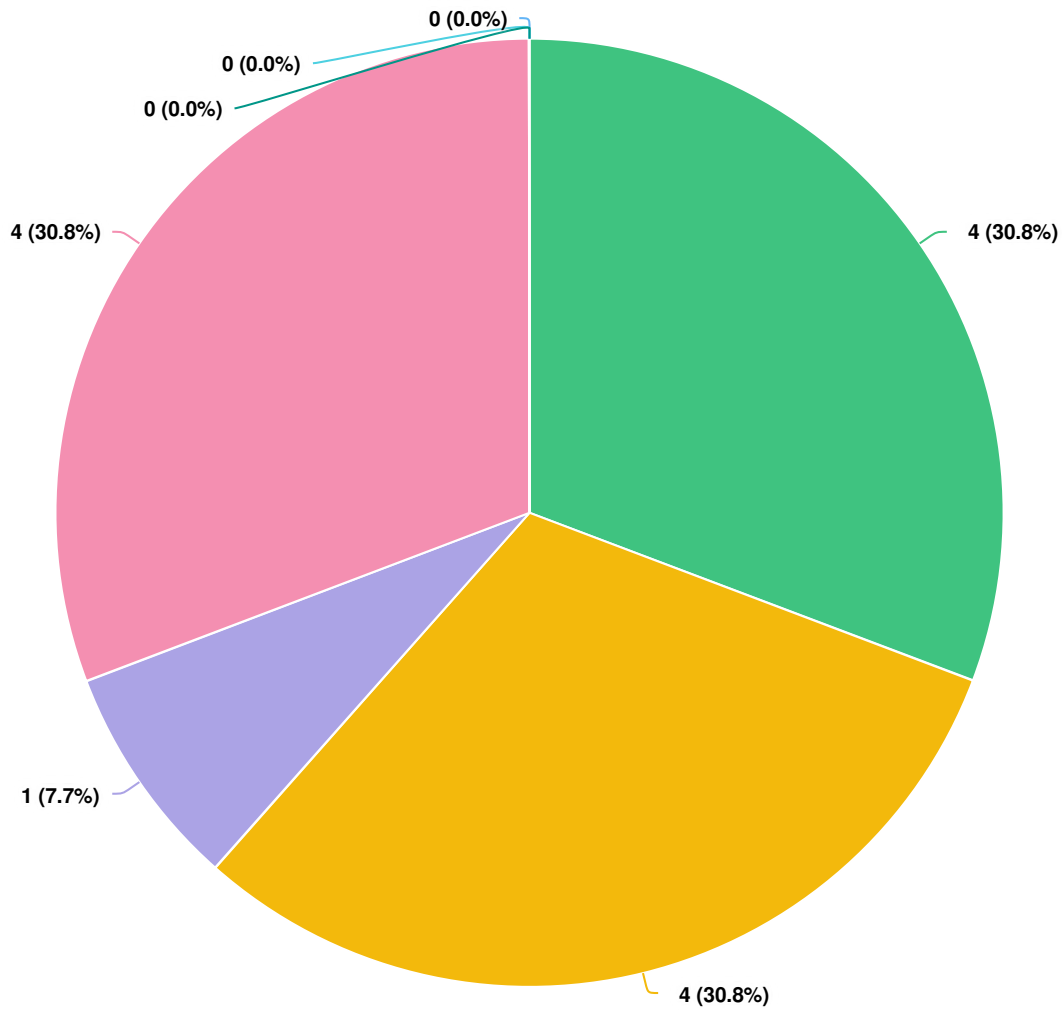
Question options

☐ Do not understand
 ☐ Somewhat understand
 ☐ Good understanding

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

Question Options	Responses
Do not understand	1
Somewhat understand	5
Good understanding	7

Q11 What is your age?**Question options**

● 35-44
 ● 45-54
 ● 55-64
 ● 65+
 ● Under 18
 ● 18-24
 ● 25-34

Mandatory Question (13 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

Question Options	Responses
Under 18	0
18-24	0
25-34	0
35-44	4
45-54	4
55-64	1
65+	4

Q12 | Do you have any comments or feedback that you would like Council to consider on the proposed 2026 Budget?

Anonymous

1/07/2026 12:51 PM

Mayor and council should not be planning to purchase land behind closed doors without consent of taxpayers.

Anonymous

1/08/2026 10:52 AM

Institute a policy to remove vehicle idling. That's gotta save on gas. Decrease in staffing levels or realignment of jobs for office staff and township office.

Anonymous

1/08/2026 09:14 PM

Pave calfass

Anonymous

1/10/2026 11:47 PM

Less money spent upgrading offices at community center

Anonymous

1/13/2026 08:38 PM

Economic times are tight we need to focus on the fiscal responsibility ensuring services are maintained at current levels with out increasing taxes

Anonymous

1/20/2026 09:38 AM

Do what you promised to do, which is clean our pond in our subdivision that we have been asking for three years already and it wasn't done yet.

Anonymous

1/20/2026 03:59 PM

Once a year staff and council should have a public meeting {or have a public meeting after the fact to share what results are actionable} to discuss and prioritize what actions can be taken to reduce operating costs and therefore taxes . Also resolve that unless you get complaints from at least 10 taxpayers an actionable move is not required. All new Hires should have pensions utilizing defined contribution not defined benefit.

Anonymous

1/21/2026 07:36 PM

Not at this moment

Optional question (8 response(s), 5 skipped)

Question type: Essay Question