

**Committee:** Committee of the Whole – Administration & Operations

**Date:** December 2, 2024

**Department:** Administration

**Topic:** Pre-Budget Approval – Website Update

**Purpose:** To obtain pre-budget approval to update the Township website software to address end-of-life implementation with GHD software.

**Background:** The Township implemented the current website at the end of 2020 with GHD (then eSolutions). Township staff have been informed by GHD that the current software used to run and manage the website and backend maintenance has reached its end of life, after nearly 25 years in use. Features within the current i:Create software are no longer compatible with various interfaces and GHD has determined that it has reached its end of life, rather than continue to implement work around fixes to various issues on a monthly basis. As a solution, GHD has decided to launch a new platform known as Govstack. GHD confirms that the new software will allow for greater functionality, security, support and usability for both front and back-end users of the system.

Currently over 150 GHD customers from various sectors have transitioned over to the new Govstack software for the website. GHD has informed all users of an end-of-life deadline for 2027, with Edwardsburgh Cardinal scheduled for Fall 2025. Staff have attended multiple webinars and meeting with GHD to discuss implementation costs, transition timeline and how the new front face of the website may look for the public.

Reasons to transition before the Fall of 2025:

- Implementation costs to increase in January 2025.
- Staff would prefer to transition prior to deadline to provide additional staff time to work with GHD to implement new back-end software and customize front-end user experience. This will allow staff and GHD to work out any unknown concerns prior to end-of-life.
- By implementing and transitioning earlier, it will allow more time for staff, the public, council and future candidates to become familiar with the new look and feel of the system prior to the launch of the 2026 election. This will hopefully avoid unnecessary confusion and time for the Township to advertise the new website.

- Staff have negotiated a discount with GHD to transition earlier, with a savings of \$6,300.00, which is valid to the end of December 2024.

**Policy Implications:** The procurement policy 2023-51 requires that all expenditures shall be within the current approved budget or within approved estimates; otherwise, prior approval of Council shall be required.

**Strategic Plan Implications:** This initiative related to 2.3 of the strategic plan around good government. Being that the Township is trying to ensure that services are delivered in an effective and efficient manner. With the early implementation of Govstack, it will mitigate the front-end user issues due to current and future interface concerns and alleviate staff time in resolving back-end service concerns.

**Financial Considerations:** As noted above, staff have negotiated a discount with GHD if the Township enters into the agreement for 2025 implementation start by December 31, 2024. The overall cost for implementation and annual fees is \$34,937.50 plus non-rebated HST (\$25,447.50 one-time fees, plus \$9,490.00 annual fees going forward). It is recommended to incorporate and authorize an upset limit of \$40,000.00 in case staff need additional support from GHD during the migration phase of the website software. Annual maintenance fees, starting in 2026, will be incorporated into the operating budget.

**Recommendation:** That Committee recommends that Council provide pre-budget approval to an upset limit of \$40,000.00 plus non-rebated HST and authorize the Clerk to execute an agreement with GHD Digital to complete the migration implementation from i:Create to Govstack and supporting software for the Township website in 2025.



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Clerk



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