

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
March 19, 2007

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, March 19, 2007, beginning at 5:00 p.m. with Warden Wayne Budge in the Chair.

Present were:

District #1 – Dan E. MacNeil
District #2 – Keith MacCuspig
District #3 – Bruce Morrison
District #4 – John Graham MacInnes, Deputy Warden
District #5 – Fraser Patterson
District #6 – Lawrence Barron
District #7 – Wayne Budge, Warden
District #8 – Robert MacLellan

Also present were:

Sandy Hudson, CAO
Heather MacLean, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Warden Budge called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/TIME TO ADJOURN

Sandy Hudson indicated that a presentation from ACAP Cape Breton has been added to the agenda.

It was moved by Deputy Warden MacInnes, seconded by Councillor Morrison, that the agenda be approved with the noted addition and the time to adjourn be set for 6:30 p.m. Motion carried.

MINUTES – FEBRUARY 12, 2007

The minutes of the February 12, 2007, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved by Councillor MacCuspig, seconded by Councillor MacLellan, that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of February 12, 2007, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Department of Community Services

A letter was received from Marian Tyson, Deputy Minister of Community Services, in reply to Council's letter requesting a meeting, declining the invitation to meet with Council.

It was indicated that Ms. Tyson is now the Deputy Minister of Justice and the Department of Community Services have a new Deputy Minister.

It was moved by Councillor Patterson, seconded by Councillor Morrison, that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Community Services, with a copy to the new Deputy Minister of Community Services, requesting a meeting with Department representatives for information purposes. Motion carried.

25% Commercial Tax Rebate

Sandy Hudson advised that he spoke with Lyle Goldberg, UNSM, and a recommendation will be brought to the UNSM Executive to review and amend the clause concerning the 25% commercial tax rebate. \$124,000 in revenue has been lost as a result of this 25% rebate.

Out Migration and Youth Strategy

A letter was forwarded to ECBC, as requested by the Victoria County Municipal Community Development Committee, requesting funding for a study to assist the County in defining and combating our continuing out migration of workers, our declining population and the loss of our youth.

It was felt it may be more beneficial to do a Cape Breton Island wide study on this topic.

Nova Scotia Power

A reply has not been received to the letter forwarded to Nova Scotia Power Inc. Vacant positions within the Baddeck area are now being advertised and hopefully, will be filled in the near future.

Chanterelle's Country Inn

A letter was received from Earlene Busch, Chanterelle's Country Inn, expressing concern with regard to unlicensed tourist accommodations.

It was moved by Deputy Warden MacInnes, seconded by Councillor MacLellan, that a letter be forwarded to Earlene Busch, Chanterelle's Country Inn, acknowledging receipt of her letter concerning unlicensed tourist accommodations. Motion carried.

NORTHERN VICTORIA COMMUNITY CENTRE

Courtesy of Council was extended to representatives from the Northern Victoria Community Centre – Bernie Vassallo, Elaine Vassallo and Jen Moses.

Mr. Vassallo indicated that the Northern Victoria Community Centre completed a strategic plan in 2006. He indicated that Jen Moses would be making a brief presentation on what they are requesting and at any time Council has any questions, feel free to ask.

Ms. Moses indicated that for 30+ years, the Community Centre has been self-sustaining. It is a 30,000 sq. ft. facility that offers family oriented recreation and entertainment events and activities.

She explained the strategic planning process and advised that the strategic planning document is now available.

The Northern Victoria Community Centre is valued at \$1 million. The need for artificial ice in this facility was identified during the planning for the 1987 Canada Games. They now wish to complete the structure at a cost of approximately \$725,000. This will be an addition to the front of the building. The cement pad and piping for this addition is already in place. The addition will be another 80 feet on the front of the building.

The new Board of Directors is eager to get this project completed. Ms. Moses outlined some of the activities and events that have taken place at this facility.

Mr. Vassallo indicated that avenues for funding this extension are being investigated and once a funding commitment has been received for this project, they would then like to get a \$50,000 commitment from the Municipality.

The 2006 Strategic Plan was discussed and a copy of this document, along with the financial statements, is to be provided to the Municipality.

Warden Budge extended a vote of thanks for the presentation.

It was moved by Councillor MacLellan, seconded by Deputy Warden MacInnes, that the request for a financial commitment for the Northern Victoria Community Centre be referred to budget deliberations. Motion carried.

RECESS

Warden Budge advised that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

ACAP CAPE BRETON

Warden Budge extended the courtesy of Council to Valerie O'Grady, Development Officer with ACAP Cape Breton.

Ms. O'Grady updated Council on the Environmental Home Assessment Program. This program was introduced in the fall of 2006, as a 2 year pilot project. It is funded by the Department of Environment and Labour. Nova Scotia homeowners with their own wells and septic systems are eligible for a free environmental home assessment under this program.

There are 4 regions within the province and in year 1, 400 homes took advantage of the program with 1000 homes to be completed in 2007 province wide. ACAP Cape Breton administers the program in the Eastern Region of the province which takes in all of Cape Breton and parts of Pictou and Antigonish counties.

Ms. O'Grady indicated that this a voluntary program and anyone interested just calls ACAP to book an appointment. The home visit is conducted by a qualified assessor. Through the program, the homeowner will receive a septic system assessment, water quality sampling kit, and information on proper oil tank maintenance. Water saving devices and samples of environmentally-friendly cleansers are also provided. Homeowners may also be eligible for a grant of up to \$3,000.00 to repair their septic system and the program also offers a \$50 rebate for septic tank pump outs.

The involvement of the Department of the Environment in this program was discussed. Ms. O'Grady indicated that the only time the Department would become involved is if the homeowner applied for the grant to repair their septic system.

Ms. O'Grady indicated that ACAP Cape Breton will be doing a media blitz in early April to inform people about the program. She left information on the program for Council.

Ms. O'Grady was extended a vote of thanks and left at this time.

REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT CAP

Sandy Hudson updated Council on the proposed changes to the property assessment process where the Province is now proposing to cap the assessments at the

CPI level. This will have a severe impact on revenue generation and the only way for municipalities to collect more revenue is to increase tax rates.

Warden Budge and Sandy Hudson attended a Mayors/Wardens meeting and a motion was passed to oppose this proposed change as vigorously as possible.

Mr. Hudson has forwarded a letter to Keith Bain, MLA, expressing opposition to the assessment cap and requesting that he bring this issue to the Conservative Caucus for discussion.

Discussion took place on this matter.

It was moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Barron, that the Municipality go on record as opposing the proposed cap on assessment. Motion carried.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

Councillor MacLellan indicated that he, along with Sandy Hudson, attended a meeting on Friday past concerning South Harbour Channel. The responsibility for opening and maintaining this channel was questioned and it was suggested that the Provincial Departments of Transportation, Environment, Fisheries and Natural Resources, along with the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, work together to come up with a solution for this issue.

It was moved by Councillor MacLellan, seconded by Deputy Warden MacInnes, that a letter be forwarded to Keith Bain, MLA, requesting that the Provincial Government Departments and Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, work together to come up with a solution to the South Harbour Channel issue. Motion carried.

District #5

Councillor Patterson brought up the matter of an EHS call in his district that occurred recently where the ambulance went to the wrong end of the Kempt Head Road to get to this call. The Kempt Head Road starts at Exit 13 and continues around to CBRM and it creates confusion. This was just for information and Councillor Patterson will contact Charlie MacDonald, Department of Transportation and EHS to discuss his concerns.

There will be a meeting of the Victoria County Municipal Community Development Committee on Wednesday, March 21, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. Holly Boston, Association of Regional Development Authorities, will be in attendance.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil indicated that when the new school was opened in Iona, a school bus was eliminated. There are now 3 busses taking the students to school and some of the students are on the bus in excess of 1 hour and 15 minutes. The Home & School Association and the School Advisory Council have combined forces in opposition to the elimination of the bus. They would like a letter of support for their efforts from the Municipality.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor MacLellan, that a letter be forwarded from the Municipality in support of the efforts of the School Advisory Committee and the Home & School Association in their efforts to have a school bus reinstated for the new school in Iona. Motion carried.

District #2

Councillor MacCuspic advised that before his time in Council, approval was given to locate a street light at the end of the Beverley's Hill Road. In order for this light to be installed a number of poles would have to be installed and the cost would be approximately \$16,000.00.

It was moved by Councillor MacCuspic, seconded by Councillor Morrison, that this matter be referred to budget. Motion carried.

Councillor MacCuspic also indicated that the repaving of the Big Baddeck road has been removed from the list of paving for this season.

It was moved by Councillor MacCuspic, seconded by Deputy Warden MacInnes, that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Transportation, with copies to Charlie MacDonald, Area Manager, and Keith Bain, MLA, expressing Council's displeasure that the Big Baddeck Road has been removed from the paving list for this season. Motion carried.

District #3

Councillor Morrison presented notice that as Phase 2, 3 and 4, of the Baddeck Revitalization Project proceeds, a contribution will be requested from the Municipality in the amount of \$50,000.00. The total cost of the remaining project is \$750,000.00.

It was moved by Councillor Barron, seconded by Councillor Morrison, that this matter be referred to budget. Motion carried.

It was moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Barron, that a letter be forwarded to Charlie MacDonald, Area Manager, Department of Transportation, requesting that if possible, Alexander Drive be graded. Motion carried.

District #4

Deputy Warden MacInnes questioned on how and who to contact to obtain information on a civic address. Contact should be made with the Eastern District Planning Commission.

TAXATION MATTERS

Loch Bras d'Or Salmon Farms

Loch Bras d'Or Salmon Farms ceased operation a number of years ago and there is uncollectible taxes owing in the amount of \$13,282.07. The property is now owned by the Department of Natural Resources.

It was moved by Deputy Warden MacInnes, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that uncollectible taxes owing for the Loch Bras d'Or Salmon Farms in the amount of \$13,282.07 be written off and the account be deleted from the tax role. Motion carried.

Lakeview Subdivision

There is an outstanding balance of \$2,423.34 owing on the Lakeview Subdivision. This amount is uncollectible and Sandy Hudson explained the situation with regard to this property.

It was moved by Councillor MacLellan, seconded by Councillor MacCuspig, that the uncollectible taxes owing for Lakeview Subdivision in the amount of \$2,423.34 be written off. Motion carried.

Tax Exemption By-Law

At present the County will provide a tax exemption of \$100.00 annually to those who with an income of \$15,000.00 or less from all sources. Sandy Hudson questioned whether Council wished to change the income level.

It was moved by Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor Barron, that the municipal tax exemption remain at \$100.00 annually and the income level from all sources be increased to \$20,000.00 effective April 1, 2007. Motion carried.

SURPLUS PROPERTY

Sandy Hudson advised that he received correspondence from R. J Earle, Acquisition and Disposal Officer, Department of Transportation and Public Works, that the former access road to the site of the former ferry dock at Ross Ferry is surplus to the needs of the Department of Transportation and Public Works. Mr. Earle questioned if the Municipality have any interest in acquiring the property. By acquiring the property, this would maintain public access to the waterfront.

It was moved by Deputy Warden MacInnes, seconded by Councillor MacLellan, that a letter be forwarded to the Department of Transportation and Public Works expressing the Municipality's interest in acquiring the surplus property at Ross Ferry. Motion carried.

DERELICT VEHICLES

Sandy Hudson advised that a change is required in the procedure for handling derelict vehicles. He indicated that the Municipal Office should be notified by the hauler prior to hauling derelict vehicles. A letter will be forwarded to all haulers within the County advising them that they must notify in advance and receive authorization prior to removing any further derelict vehicles in the County.

REGION 1 SOLID WASTE

Sandy Hudson advised that CBRM has decided to leave the current Region 1 Solid Waste structure and go out on their own as a Region 1A/1B operation. The future of the remainder of Region 1 was discussed. It may affect us in terms of the education programs provided through Region 1.

It is anticipated that with their departure, CBRM will also take the bulk of the Region 1 funding with them. This information has just been made public today, so further information should be forthcoming in this regard in the coming days.

PUBLIC WORKS POSITION

Twenty-eight applications were received for the vacant position at the Baddeck Municipal Solid Waste Transfer Station. Sandy Hudson questioned on how Council would like this hiring handled.

It was moved by Councillor Barron, seconded by Councillor Patterson, that Councillor Morrison, Chairman of the Public Works Committee; Robert Dauphinee, Director of Public Works; and Sandy Hudson, CAO, shortlist and interview for this position. Motion carried.

RECYCLABLES

Sandy Hudson advised that the transfer of blue bags from Dingwall to Neil's Harbour is costing the Municipality about \$200.00 per month. Discussion took place on this matter.

CAPE BRETON FLAGS

Councillor MacNeil indicated that he was requested by a relative of a soldier from his district serving in Afghanistan for five (5) Cape Breton flags that would be shipped to Afghanistan.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor MacCuspic, that five (5) Cape Breton or Victoria County flags be obtained to be forwarded to Afghanistan for the Victoria County soldiers. Motion carried.

CURLING TICKETS

The tickets for the Grand Slam of Curling events to be held in Port Hawkesbury from March 22 to March 25, 2007, were distributed to Council members.

ROAD NAME CHANGES

Approval has been received from both the Eastern District Planning Commission and the Department of Transportation for the following road name changes:

- Anna Hector's Tea Lane
- Gillis Lane

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Morrison, that Victoria County Municipal Council approve the road names changes for Anna Hector's Tea Lane and Gillis Lane. Motion carried.

PROPERTY AT INGONISH FERRY

Councillor Barron indicated that there is 4 acres of property located at Ingonish Ferry which he would like to see the Department of Natural Resources obtain.

It was moved by Councillor Barron, seconded by Deputy Warden MacInnes, that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Natural Resources requesting that the Department purchase the 4 acre parcel of land located at Ingonish Ferry for future public access. Motion carried.

CABOT TRAIL RELAY ASSOCIATION

A letter was received from David Parkinson, Co-Chair, Cabot Trail Relay Association, indicating that this year represents the 20th running of the Cabot Trail Relay Race and thanking the Municipality for the financial support that has been provided over the years.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, April 30, 2007, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

A Budget Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, April 26, 2007, beginning at 5:00 p.m. in the Court House, Baddeck.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, on motion of Councillor Morrison, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Wayne Budge, Warden

A. W. (Sandy) Hudson, CAO

