

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

December 10, 2019

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Tuesday, December 10, 2019, beginning at 5:00 p.m. with Warden Bruce Morrison in the Chair.

Present were:

District #1 – Paul MacNeil
District #2 – Perla MacLeod
District #3 – Bruce Morrison, Warden
District #4 – Merrill MacInnis
District #5 – Fraser Patterson
District #6 – Larry Dauphinee, Deputy Warden
District #7 – Wayne Budge
District #8 – Norman MacDonald

Also present were:

Leanne MacEachen, CAO
Alix Redden, CFO
Jocelyn Bethune, Communications Officer
Heather MacLean, Recorder

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Warden Morrison called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval. He indicated an In Camera session to deal with a property issue will be held at the end of the Council agenda.

**It was moved and seconded that the agenda be approved with the noted addition.
Motion carried.**

THEATRE BADDECK

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Kristy Ziss and Hannah Ziss, Co-producers of Theatre Baddeck.

Hannah Ziss indicated they were in attendance to update on Theatre Baddeck's impact on the local community and their success in 2019.

Theatre Baddeck continues to grow and improve each year and are becoming a known, trusted and enjoyed entity. Their attendance increased by 24% in 2019 with fewer performances and their average attendance per performance was 41% over 2018. Their total earned revenue increased 47% over 2018. Hannah Ziss advised that these statistics are encouraging as it is only their 5th season of operation.

Hannah Ziss advised that Theatre Baddeck is an economic driver in Victoria County, as tourism and spending motivator. Their Brand loyalty was outlined, as were the origins of their audiences.

The evidence of Theatre Baddeck as a draw to Victoria County was outlined. Patrons call to book tickets before they book a place to stay. There are an increasing number of requests for restaurant recommendation and a lot of questions about things to do. They achieved a 34% increase in visitation over 2018 with the same level of Google/AdWords investment. Their customer reviews ranked them #1 on "Things to Do" in Baddeck and they were nominated for three Merritt Awards and received two wins for their 2018 season.

Despite recommendations from the Peer Assessment Committee, they were unsuccessful in their application to Arts Nova Scotia for operating funding and they are looking for ways to fill the void to ensure their sustainability. Their current administrative budget is \$10,000.00 and they would like to grow this to \$70,000.00 over the next three years. This will allow them to extend activities throughout the calendar year.

Ms. Ziss indicated that Theatre Baddeck is requesting support for their operations and assistance in reaching their goal of sustainability from the Municipality. Their ask for 2020 is \$10,000.00.

In 2020 they are increasing their season from June to October and will have four productions. High-profile directors have expressed an interest directing their shows and an official announcement on their 2020 season will be released in February, 2020.

Kristy Ziss expressed a thank you to members of their Board in attendance for their support and assistance in running Theatre Baddeck.

Council individually congratulated Theatre Baddeck on their success. The plays are an excellent addition to Victoria County.

Whether there was capacity to take performances on the road was questioned and discussed. Their location at the Masonic Hall works well for them at present and having one location assists in building their brand. There has never been a complaint from their patrons about the venue.

Warden Morrison congratulated Hannah and Kristy Ziss on the two Merritt Awards and indicated that Council would consider their request during budget deliberations. Theatre Baddeck is a great asset to our County.

Theatre Baddeck's presentation tonight will count as their formal application for funding.

Hannah and Kristy Ziss thanked Council for their time and consideration.

VICTORIA COUNTY TRANSIT

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Jessie MacDonald, Executive Director, Strait Area Transit, who was in attendance to provide an update on the Victoria County Transit.

Ms. MacDonald indicated that they are three months in to transit service in Victoria County and all is going well. Their original goal was for 60 trips per month but the results have been incredible with 344 trips from northern Victoria County and 518 in southern Victoria County.

The ridership statistics to date show 10% travelling to CBRM, 5% to Inverness County and 85% throughout Victoria County. The reasons the service is being utilized is 55% for recreation, 20% for employment, 15% for medical and 10% for other.

Jessie MacDonald advised that they have provided medical services to both hospitals in Victoria County, the Cape Breton Regional Hospital, Northside General Hospital and Inverness Hospital. They have also taken patrons to local eating establishments such as the Bite House, Gaelic College, and the Iona Heights Inn.

They anticipate the ridership to remain about the same over the winter months and see an increase in the spring/summer.

All Council expressed their positive comments on the service to date within their districts.

Another driver is required for the north of Smokey area and any assistance Council could provide in identifying candidates for the position would be appreciated. Additional spare drivers are also required.

The \$5.00 per trip fee within Victoria County was discussed as to whether to would increase over time. Jessie MacDonald indicated that this would be a decision of Council.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that all residents in his district did not receive the \$5.00 free coupon when it was mailed out in September, 2019. There will be another free ride coupon sent out in the Council Corner newsletter.

Wait time for the drivers was discussed and Ms. MacDonald advised that they allowed one hour of wait time but over and above the hour would be charged at a rate of \$22.50 per hour for each additional hour.

Council was advised that the vehicles are equipped with studded winter tires for our weather conditions and the two major mountains to be travelled.

The CAO advised that she and a few staff took the transit to the Ingonish area today and were pleased with the service, the driving and cost.

When the transit would be taken out of service due to weather conditions was questioned and Ms. MacDonald indicated they would monitor school cancellations, driver's suggestions, etc. with regard to this matter.

Warden Morrison thanked Jessie MacDonald for the update on Victoria County Transit.

COFFEE BREAK

Warden Morrison announced that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 26, 2019

The minutes of the November 26, 2019, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

Where “sewer” is mentioned, it should be changed to “septic”. Also the AED cost for North Highlands Elementary School should be \$1,200.00.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of November 26, 2019, be approved with the noted corrections. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

The Little Narrows Water bills have been fixed, updated and mailed, and posted on both the website and Facebook.

Lynk Electric has the street lights required for replacement on the Barra Strait Bridge and have been waiting for some time for traffic control to enable them to repair the lights.

The CAO advised that curbside collection that falls on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day will take place on the Monday prior – December 23, 2019 and December 30, 2019, respectively.

NEW BUSINESS

The CAO advised that Dan Coffin, Tourism and Development Officer, attended the recent TIANS Conference in Halifax and strengthened and made new connections.

The tender for Ingonish Beach Sidewalks will be closing shortly. To date, two submissions have been received.

The Municipal Building will be closed from noon on December 24, 2019, to 8:30 a.m. on January 2, 2020. Staff will be taking vacation time.

The Cape Breton Partnership and the Municipality of the County of Victoria have partnered to launch a survey to collect data on the area’s housing and rental market. The survey is on the Municipal website and does not take much time to complete.

TAXATION UPDATE

Leanne MacEachen advised that a Tax Sale was held earlier this afternoon. There were four properties remaining on the Tax Sale and one sold.

As of today, there is \$1.88 million owing in taxes, down from 1.89 million this time last year. Current is behind by \$129,000.00, however; arrears are ahead by \$141,000.00. Overall we are ahead by \$12,000.00.

Efforts will continue and the momentum will be placed on current collection.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL CONCERNS

District #1

Councillor MacNeil indicated that his concerns are the same as last Council meeting with the addition of flooding on the Birch Point Road, South Cove. This road has again flooded and something must be done to upgrade the road.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod requested that a Merry Christmas and safe operations be forwarded to TIR staff and drivers.

District #4

The Englishtown Ferry went out of service today to undertake work and will be out for a period of up to 4 weeks, which will likely extend to a longer duration. The interruption in service is not acceptable.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee advised there are two areas in his district where water flows over the road and freezes, making for dangerous conditions. One area is below Jim Gunn's in Ingonish Ferry and the other is in Ingonish Beach.

There is an area in Ingonish Harbour where you can see the absence of road under the guardrail. TIR are to be requested to investigate and at the least put a sign up in the area.

District #5

Councillor Patterson brought up the reply received from the Minister of TIR concerning Council's request for an increase in highway maintenance funding.

It was moved and seconded that these concerns be forwarded to the Department of TIR and a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Finance, Premier and Minister of TIR, that there is insufficient funding in the TIR budget to conduct proper maintenance and request that additional funding be included in the Department of TIR's budget for road maintenance operations. Motion carried.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #5

It was moved and seconded that 3 streetlights be approved for District #5 to be installed at 11934 Kempt Head Road; to assume payment of existing street light at 8238 Kempt Head Road; and at the Ross Ferry Fire Department's dry hydrant at 10382 Kempt Head Road facing parallel to the highway. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that up to \$1,500.00 be approved from the special projects budget for the purchase of an AED for the Boularderie School. Motion carried.

District #6

It was moved and seconded that \$1,000.00 be approved from the District #6 budget - \$500.00 for the Cape Smokey Elementary School Ski-in-School Program and \$500.00 for their clothing bank. Motion carried.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that one item identified at the Healthcare Meeting was that there was only one breast pump shared between the two hospitals in Victoria County.

It was moved and seconded that a breast pump be purchased at a cost of \$2,500.00, so there will be one located at each hospital in the County. Motion carried.

A Healthcare follow-up meeting will be held in the Conference Room at Buchanan Memorial Hospital on Wednesday, November 11, 2019, at 6:00 p.m.

District #7

It was moved and seconded that \$500.00 be approved from the District #7 budget for Cape Smokey Elementary Ski-in-School Program and \$1,000.00 for the Ingonish Volunteer Fire Department. Motion carried.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald advised that he was contacted by a resident who cleaned up debris that was left following Halloween. She collected the materials and left them at the roadside and would like to have it picked up.

This can be done through the District #8 budget through a community group.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis brought up the recent death of Barry Campbell, former EMC for Victoria County. He passed away in Ontario. An expression of sympathy is to be forwarded from the Municipality.

The RCMP has not attended Council for some time and they are to be requested to come to a January session of Council to provide a report.

District #3

Warden Morrison advised that a few unsightly premises complaints have been received for properties within the Village that he will be forwarding on to the EDPC for action this week.

TRANSIT BOARD MEETING

A meeting of the Transit Board will be held at 4:00 p.m., prior to Council on January 7, 2020.

CORRESPONDENCE

A letter was received from John MacKinnon, Deputy CAO, CBRM, concerning their 311 system. There is an overlap between CBRM and Victoria County's geographic area and exchanges. CBRM are requesting that a letter be forwarded from Victoria County that we have no objections to routing such calls to CBRM on the understanding that non-CBRM residents will be given the option of being transferred to Victoria County.

It was moved and seconded that Victoria County agree to CBRM's request regarding their 311 program and their proposal with regard to the overlap between CBRM and Victoria County. Motion carried.

Correspondence was received from Tressa St. John, NSPI, concerning very short duration road closures.

It was moved and second that Victoria County has no objection and would be willing to provide blanket permission for very short duration road closures, not to exceed 30 minutes, for all public roads in Victoria County. Motion carried.

Councillor MacNeil brought up the increase in power outages in District #1.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to NSPI expressing concern on the increasing number of power outages in District #1, Victoria County. Motion carried.

A letter of resignation was received from Gina Reid, as Victoria County's lay member on the Cape Breton Regional Library Board.

It was moved and seconded that a letter and gift certificate be sent to Gina Reid thanking her for her many years of service to Victoria County as our representative on the Cape Breton Regional Library Board. Motion carried.

A call is to be made for residents interested in filling the vacancy as Council's representative on the Cape Breton Regional Library Board.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETINGS

The January, 2020, meetings of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held on January 7 and January 20, 2020.

A Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on Thursday, December 12, 2019. Group ATN, in conjunction with the Cape Breton Partnership, will be presenting at 5:00 p.m.

IN CAMERA

It was moved and seconded to move In Camera to deal with a property issue. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded to return to the regular session. Motion carried.

RECOMMENDATION FROM IN CAMERA

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations made In Camera be approved. Motion carried.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO