

**VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL**  
**May 24, 2011**

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Tuesday, May 24, 2011, beginning at 5:00 p.m. with Warden Bruce Morrison in the Chair.

Present were:

District #1 – Paul MacNeil  
District #3 – Bruce Morrison, Warden  
District #4 – Merrill MacInnis  
District #5 – Fraser Patterson, Deputy Warden  
District #6 – Larry Dauphinee  
District #7 – David Donovan  
District #8 – Johnny Buchanan

Also present were:

Sandy Hudson, CAO  
Heather MacLean, Recording Secretary

Absent was:

District #2 – Keith MacCuspik (Work Related Absence)

**CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Warden Morrison called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval.

**It was moved by Councillor Donovan, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that the agenda be approved as presented. Motion carried.**

**DESTINATION CAPE BRETON ASSOCIATION**

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Mary Tulle, CEO, Destination Cape Breton Association (DCBA).

Mary Tulle expressed her pleasure on appearing before Council to update on the happenings at DCBA. She then provided Council with a presentation on DCBA's 2011 Plan (copy attached) outlining their structure and guiding principles and a summary of research, product development, visitor services and marketing.

Deputy Warden Patterson stated that having a Cape Breton Island Visitor Information Centre on the Halifax waterfront is an excellent idea and should make a significant difference in marketing the area.

Deputy Warden Patterson also indicated that training is essential for front line staff at hotels, restaurants, etc. Ms. Tulle indicated that training is critical to the success of the tourism industry.

Councillor Dauphinee brought up the matter of the Keltic Lodge which had a disastrous season last year. Although only open for one week, the turn around seen this season under new management is significant and should bode well for the reputation of the facility.

The condition of the roadways throughout Cape Breton, and in particular the Cabot Trail, was discussed and Councillor Dauphinee questioned whether DCBA has placed any pressure on the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Ms. Tulle indicated that at this time they have not.

The Right Some Good event which will be held throughout Cape Breton from August 25-September 4, 2011, was discussed. This event will feature ten world-class chefs who will create world-class culinary experiences throughout the Island, including three Victoria County venues – Little River, Ingonish Beach and the Gaelic College.

Councillor Donovan also brought up the road issue. He indicated that he operates a gift shop and the number one complaint received from customers is the condition of the roads and he felt it would be prudent for DCBA to begin asserting pressure on the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

The topic of the possibility of cruise ships disembarking in Ingonish to travel the trail was discussed. It was indicated that arrangements with regard to cruise ships are made through the Atlantic Canada Cruise Association of which Victoria County is a member.

Councillor Buchanan questioned on whether there was any movement with regard to expanding signage off the Cabot Trail. Ms. Tulle agreed that she agreed on the signage issue and she was aware of two other areas in Cape Breton where signage will be enhanced. The entire signage issue needs to be addressed.

Councillor MacInnis expressed his pleasure on the Right Some Good event coming to Little River and indicated that he was advised that two 50 foot self-contained trailers will be brought in to the area to achieve this event.

Councillor MacInnis questioned on whether DCBA has looked at winter activities. The Cape Breton Highlands is a prime area for snowmobiling and it should be promoted as a destination area for winter tourism. At this point, Ms. Tulle indicated that they are looking at the current season.

Councillor MacNeil brought up the matter of training for Visitor Information Centre (VIC) staff. Ms. Tulle indicated that the best training available at this point is the one-day Superhost training session. It was indicated that April MacLean from Baddeck is presently undertaking training to become a nationally certified Superhost trainer.

Warden Morrison mentioned two recent DCBA events – the Industry Day and the Savour Food Show – which received positive comments. He thanked Ms. Tulle for her presentation and the positive message she has portrayed about tourism for Cape Breton Island.

### **RECESS**

Warden Morrison advised that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

### **BADDECK ACADEMY ISSUE**

Warden Morrison addressed the gallery and outlined the process that will be followed when Lorne Green, Chairman of the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, appears before Council. The Baddeck Academy issue is only one of several issues to be discussed and will be addressed first to allow the public wishing to leave to do so after the discussion. The public will be limited in their questioning and time allotted for same.

### **DISTRICT CONCERNS**

#### **District #1**

Councillor MacNeil brought up the matter of the condition of the back roads in his district. They have not been graded as yet and one road in particular is impassable. Council felt that the same could be said for all the gravel roads throughout the County.

**It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Donovan, that a letter be forwarded to Stephen MacDonald, Area Manager, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, expressing concern on the condition of all the gravel roads throughout the Municipality and requesting that they be graded as soon as possible. Motion carried.**

#### **District #4**

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the heavy garbage collection in his district went quite well.

**District #8**

**It was moved by Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor Donovan, that \$1,000.00 be approved from the District #8 budget for both the Cabot Volunteer Fire Department and the Bay St. Lawrence Volunteer Fire Department. Motion carried.**

**District #7**

Councillor Donovan indicated that the bush cutter has done work in his district. It was also indicated that the bridge at the bottom of Smokey has been repaired.

**District #6**

**It was moved by Councillor Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Donovan, that a letter be forwarded to Kathy Edwards, Canada Post Corporation, expressing concern with the postal lock boxes that were recently located at Ingonish Centre as they are the existing ones that were just repainted and are still not secure or water tight and also requesting that a light be installed at the Post Office in Ingonish. Motion carried.**

Councillor Dauphinee indicated that with the upcoming Cabot Trail Relay, there are a couple of areas in District #4 that require, at least, the placement of pylons in areas where the road is washed out. The locations will be provided to Stephen MacDonald by email tomorrow requesting action be taken prior to the Cabot Trail Relay.

**District #4**

Councillor MacInnis indicated that as a point of interest, an “open house” will be held at the Gaelic College, St. Ann’s from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 26, 2011, to officially open the Norman MacLeod Exhibit.

**District #2**

Deputy Warden Patterson assumed the Chair.

Warden Morrison, on behalf of Councillor MacCuspic who was absent on work related business, brought up a district concern.

**It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councilor MacNeil, that a letter be forwarded to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal requesting that a sign be erected on the Shore Road prior to the Exit 8 intersection indicating that the Shore Road highway ends and fluorescent paint/tape be installed on the island at the Exit 8 intersection. Motion carried.**

**District #3**

Warden Morrison indicated that he attended the DCBA's Industry Day where two Victoria County organizations received awards – BABTA and Cape Breton Resorts. He felt a letter of congratulations should be forwarded and also to Lyn Duchesney who received a Women In Business Award recently.

**It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that letters of congratulations be forwarded to BABTA, Cape Breton Resorts and Lyn Duchesney on their recent achievements. Motion carried.**

Warden Morrison returned to the Chair.

**LORNE GREEN, CHAIRMAN, CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD**

Courtesy of Council was extended to Lorne Green, Chairman, Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board.

Warden Morrison welcomed Mr. Green to Baddeck and indicated that the number one issue is the Baddeck Academy retrofit project and there were a number of people in the audience concerning this issue. As a result, this will be the first item addressed.

Councillor MacNeil requested an explanation as to why the original plan approved for Baddeck Academy has been now cutback.

Mr. Green indicated that the funding committed in 2007 does no longer equate to the same in 2011. The costs, etc. have increased in the 4 year period and the money does not go as far as it would have in 2007 dollars. From the Board perspective, nothing has changed. The Board received a presentation from the Baddeck School Advisory Committee at a recent meeting and is supportive of the school receiving the original space promised. The Board will continue to push forward on this issue.

Councillor MacInnis questioned on what Mr. Green felt would be the outcome of this issue. Mr. Green indicated it is difficult to predict what the outcome will be when bureaucrats and politicians get together, but the Board intends to push the issue to get the space required.

Warden Morrison indicated that not only is this an education issue, it is also a development issue. If the school is downsized, it will have a ripple effect. People will not be interested in coming to an area that they consider does not have adequate educational facilities. This will be a detriment to the entire County.

The schools throughout the Board were discussed and Mr. Green indicated that the goal of the Board is to keep all schools equal throughout the Board.

Mr. Green indicated that he was told sometime ago by a wise person that “we can all sing together, but we can’t all talk together. Delivering the same message to the Province will go farther than working separately. This issue reaches deeply in the community.

Warden Morrison then opened the floor to the public in attendance.

Lynn Myers, Chair of the Baddeck Academy School Advisory Committee, advised that what is being requested is two additional classrooms and a drama stage. The space to accommodate these three areas is 900 square feet per classroom – 2,700 square feet.

Ms. Myers also questioned whether the School Board had direct contact with Minister Jennex. Mr. Green indicated that they have, but the Deputy Minister always intervenes. He again indicated that the Board intends to push the issue for the original space. He advised that the push is and has always been for the original plan. You never give the government the option for an alternate plan.

Cathi Pierrard, School Board Member, advised that there will be a sponsorship meeting held on June 15, 2011, concerning this issue.

Jennifer Morrison questioned whether there was a way to get a meeting the Minister Jennex. Mr. Green indicated that there are 8 school boards throughout the province and to date; Minister Jennex has not met with any of the boards. He also advised that there is a Nova Scotia School Boards Association meeting later this week and he is hopeful the Minister will be in attendance and he will have an opportunity to speak to her at that time.

It was indicated that Council has met with Minister Jennex on a couple occasions when she was in the Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations portfolio and found her to be receptive to the issues. If Council can assist in arranging a meeting, they will do so, but it was felt that the School Board should first make this request.

Mr. Green indicated that the School Board would request a meeting with the Minister. He mentioned that a request was submitted some time ago for the Minister to

cut the ribbons to open two new schools within the Board. The schools have been opened for the entire school year and as yet there has been no word from the Minister as to when the official opening and ribbon cutting will be held.

Patti Garland questioned if the cutbacks do happen and in a few years the school does not meet their public school programs (psps), is it possible that in the future the school will change to a P-9 school and the high school students will be bussed to another school within the Board. Mr. Green indicated that the province takes the lead from the Board and he did not foresee this action happening.

Orlynn Somerville, a teacher at Baddeck Academy, brought up the issue of a loss of a teacher at Baddeck Academy for next year, which will see a loss of the pre-calculus program. Along with pre-cal, this teacher also taught five other subjects which will have to be distributed within the remaining staff.

The loss of teachers within Victoria County was discussed and Mr. Green indicated that the affected schools included:

Baddeck Academy – 1 position  
Cape Smokey Elementary – 1 position  
North Highlands Elementary – 1 position  
Cabot High School – 3 positions

Mr. Green indicated that the teacher cutbacks are a result of declining enrollment and budget constraints. 85% of the budget is staffing and when you look at a decrease of \$5 million in a \$131 million dollar budget, you have to look at staffing.

The issue of a Department of Education pilot project that was introduced for rural schools in other areas of the province and questioned whether it could be introduced here. This initiative would assist in the sustainability of rural communities. Mr. Green indicated that the Board has not been included in that initiative.

Councillor MacNeil questioned on the 2007 dollars and what they equate to in terms of 2011 and even with inflation is there that much of a reduction required. Mr. Green indicated that he is in the process of retrofitting a home and as a comparison a square of vinyl siding in 2007 was \$38 as compared to \$79 in 2011. Dollars do not go as far as they used to and he indicated as building code changes are introduced, so goes the increase in costs. Jocelyn Bethune stated that the project when announced was underfunded.

A question was raised on the program cuts at Baddeck Academy and that the program cut (pre-calculus) is a result of reduction in staffing. Mr. Green indicated that

this is the first time he has heard that a program will be cut at Baddeck Academy. He advised that he would check into this matter and reply on his findings.

It was indicated that the loss of 1 teacher at Baddeck Academy means the loss of pre-cal and 5 other subjects taught will be affected. The Vice-Principal position will now be a 40% teaching position also. Parents voiced their concerns with regard to the loss of an important university preparatory course and how that will affect their children's futures.

Warden Morrison advised that this would conclude the Baddeck Academy portion and the comments from the gallery.

Councillor MacNeil also advised that Rankin School of the Narrows has never had a pre-calculus program offered at their school and he would like to see this addressed when the Baddeck Academy pre-cal program loss is reviewed. Mr. Green stated he would talk to the Director of Program Services in regard to this issue as it has never come to the Board level.

Councillor MacInnis brought up the issue of the former North Shore School and the fact that if this facility had been more accessible when it was open; it might still be in the community and could have been used as a nucleus for all community events. Instead there are 3 former one room school houses in use by the community, when this newer building could have been retained and used as a community centre. He felt there were too many stumbling blocks with regard to accessibility of the schools after school hours and this issue, especially in the rural areas should be addressed by the School Board.

Mr. Green indicated that when a school property is no longer in use for teaching purposes it is offered to the province and municipality and when turned over is no longer the responsibility of the School Board.

Councillor Buchanan indicated that he has been contacted by substitute teachers in the north of Smokey area concerning hiring. Some have been on the substitute list for 6 to 7 years and when jobs come up they never seem to get jobs.

Mr. Green indicated that staffing is done based on qualifications and the interview process. The Board does not wish to get involved in micro-managing.

Concern was expressed that many teachers are brought to the north of Smokey area and stay long enough to put in the time to get transferred to the more urban areas of the Board. This is a detriment as there is no consistency for the children as every year there appears to be a turnover. It is the students who suffer as a result.

Concern was also expressed on the lateness that substitutes are notified if they have a position for the year. It is late August when hiring is completed and this does not give much time for preparation or to look elsewhere for jobs. Mr. Green indicated that early hires are a thing of the past.

The loss of 5 teachers in the north of Smokey area was discussed and it was questioned whether this area was receiving the most teacher cuts and Mr. Green assured this was not the case.

Councillor Donovan again brought up the matter of course availability in rural schools. It is not the same as the programs offered in urban areas and this is unfair to the children. Mr. Green advised that there are specialty schools in the Board that offer programs that are accessible to all children in the Board. They will be bussed to these schools. Sydney Academy has the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program; Riverview has French Immersion; and Memorial is a composite high school. Mr. Green indicated that the Board cannot be all things to all people as they simply cannot afford to be.

Councillor Dauphinee felt that the teachers in the northern area of the County are not given a fair shake when receiving teaching positions. Two teachers who have been very involved with the youth in the area are leaving due to the uncertainty regarding jobs for the 2011-12 school year. He indicated that last year there were 13 jobs available in the north of Smokey area and of the 4 teachers from the area that applied; only 1 got an initial interview, while another was contacted for a later interview. There is no way for these teachers to get ahead.

Councillor Dauphinee outlined the results of a survey conducted with other school boards by a teacher from the north of Smokey area concerning their hiring policies. There is also a fear among the teachers who don't have positions to speak out as they are scared of the repercussions involved.

Deputy Warden Patterson advised that he is 2 years removed from a 35 year teaching career. One of the first statements made by the current government's Minister of Education is that retirements would cover the loss of positions. This is not so and back in 1981 when cutbacks were experienced by the former Northside-Victoria Regional School Board, a formula was put into the contract for the reduction of staff.

Deputy Warden Patterson also expressed concern with regard to the loss of Holy Angels as this was a special place and students thrived in this atmosphere.

Warden Morrison expressed concern on the teachers coming from the outside area to teach in our schools. This has always been a sore point. These teachers do not become involved in extra curricular activities and are not a part of the community. The school doors are basically locked down after 3:00 p.m. and in small areas where schools should

be the focal point of the community, other needs (insurance, janitorial, etc.) take precedence.

Kate Oland indicated that Middle River School is the only multi-age school and she questioned as to whether this school could be considered for special school status.

Further discussion took place and Mr. Green indicated that he would obtain answers on any of the questions or concerns he could not address at the meeting. He advised that he is always accessible and never runs away from an issue. He is the only Board Member elected by the whole district as he is the African Nova Scotian representative on the Board and he has visited the area during his campaign

Mr. Green indicated that along with cuts to staff, he indicated that he would be bringing the issue of cuts to the School Board itself to a future meeting to see if 15 Board members are required. He felt it was important as a Board to look at this matter.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a vote of thanks to Mr. Green for his attendance at Council and requested a follow up meeting in possibly September when a new school year has begun.

Mr. Green thanked Council for the opportunity and indicated he would reply to the concerns addressed at tonight's meeting.

### **RECESS**

Warden Morrison announced that Council would recess for 5 minutes.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MAY 9, 2011**

The minutes of the May 9, 2011, session of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

**It was moved by Deputy Warden Patterson, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of May 9, 2011, be approved as presented. Motion carried.**

Council felt that the Action Items listing provided and the follow up received is working quite well and should continue.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Deputy Warden Patterson indicated that a funding application has been forwarded to the Department of Seniors for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Age-Friendly Communities Program.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that he would like to convene a meeting of the Broadband Committee within the next couple of weeks to discuss areas within the County that still do not have high speed coverage. This could be done by Committee of the Whole and when necessary the former lay members on the Committee could be brought in to a future meeting.

Sandy Hudson distributed an invitation from the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia to take part in an event to be held at the Port Hawkesbury Fire Hall on Saturday, May 28, 2011, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and followed by a dinner and ceilidh at 6:00 p.m. Those wishing to attend are to advise the Municipal Office, so notification can be provided to the Gaelic Council.

Warden Morrison advised that an Alternate Transportation Conference will be held on June 9-10, 2011, at the Dundee Resort and Councillors interested in attending are to contact the Municipal Office to make arrangements for registration and hotel accommodations.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **2011-2012 TAX RATES**

Sandy Hudson advised that he would like to see the tax rate set tonight. Council have indicated previously that they do not wish to change the tax rates and if this is the case, the billing can be completed as soon as possible and the budget can be drafted accordingly.

**It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that the municipal tax rates for 2011-2012 be \$1.22 residential and \$2.19 commercial. Motion carried.**

#### **CANADA SUMMER JOBS 2011**

Sandy Hudson advised that verbal notification was received today that the Municipality has been successful in obtaining two student grant positions for the Municipality.

**It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that the two summer student positions be approved and one position be awarded to**

**the Baddeck Enviro-Depot facility and the other to the Neil's Harbour Enviro-Depot facility. Motion carried.**

**CAPE NORTH TRANSFER STATION**

Discussion took place on the vandalism problems at the Cape North facility. Sandy Hudson advised that two prices were obtained for chipping the wood at the site – one at \$160,000.00 and one at \$173,000. This work is required.

It was felt that in the future, a serious operational review of the Cape North site should be undertaken.

**UNSIGHTLY PREMISES**

Warden Morrison requested Council members to provide him with the unsightly premises in their district as soon as possible and he will compile a list to be forwarded to the Eastern District Planning Commission for action.

**NEXT MEETINGS**

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held at St. Andrew's Parish Hall, Neil's Harbour on Monday, June 13, 2011, at 5:00 p.m.

There will also be a meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council on Monday, June 27, 2011, at the Court House, Baddeck, at 5:00 p.m. John Malcom, Cape Breton District Health Authority, will be in attendance.

A date is also required for the Public Hearing on the application for an amendment to the Baddeck Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law to allow Tourist Commercial Uses (Cottages or Cabins) in the Residential Urban (R-1) zone.

**It was moved by Councillor Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that the date for the Public Hearing be set for Monday, June 27, 2011, at 4:30 p.m. Motion carried.**

There will be a Committee of the Whole meeting at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, June 20, 2011, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

**TAXES**

**It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Donovan, that that August 1, 2011, be the interest due date for taxes and the interest rate on outstanding taxes be 10% per annum. Motion carried.**

**WATER ARREARS**

Councillors indicated they would like to know ahead of time those notified regarding their water arrears, so when they get calls, they will be informed. An electronic list of arrears for the water utilities will be forwarded to Councillors.

**FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES**

The Annual Conference of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities will be held in Halifax from June 2-6, 2011.

**ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE WORKSHOP**

Gordon McIntosh, LGL Institute, will be facilitating an Organizational Excellence Workshop with staff on Tuesday, June 7, 2011. Council members interested are invited to attend.

**ADJOURN**

**There being no further business, on motion of Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.**

**Bruce Morrison, Warden**

**Sandy Hudson, CAO**

