

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
November 24, 2014

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, November 24, 2014, beginning at 5:00 p.m. with Warden Bruce Morrison in the Chair.

Present were:

District #1 – Paul MacNeil
District #2 – Athol Grant
District #3 – Bruce Morrison, Warden
District #4 – Merrill MacInnis
District #5 – Fraser Patterson, Deputy Warden
District #6 – Larry Dauphinee
District #7 – Wayne Budge
District #8 – Johnny Buchanan

Also present were:

Sandy Hudson, CAO
Heather MacLean, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

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

BRAS D'OR LAKE BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Courtesy of Council was extended to Jim Foulds, Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve.

Jim Foulds presented an introduction and update on the Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve (copy attached).

The Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve comprises an area of 3600 km². 33% of the designation is in Victoria County. The UNESCO designation of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve was approved in June, 2011.

Mr. Foulds indicated that a UNESCO video states that "Biosphere Reserves are not about nature conservation, they are about people.

The benefits of the UNESCO designation and the current projects being worked on were outlined to Council.

Mr. Foulds outlined how the County can capitalize on the designation and indicated that the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve designation logo could be used on branding of the County. The possibility of including the logo on signage was discussed and Mr. Foulds presented some artist renditions of possible signage.

Mr. Foulds indicated that they have a signage master plan and the costs for signage, but do not have funds for signage. The possibility of attaching signage to the two Victoria County highway signs was discussed.

Whether the Biosphere Reserve works with the Trans Canada Trail organization was questioned and Mr. Foulds indicated that both groups attend each other's meeting when possible.

Mr. Foulds indicated that they are now in discussions with Richmond County, who are in the process of rebranding, with regard to incorporating the Biosphere Reserve logo on their signage.

The possibility of a meeting between the Municipality and the Biosphere Reserve Board to coordinate ways to use the Biosphere Reserve logo was discussed. Deputy Warden Patterson is a member of the Biosphere Reserve Board.

The number of visits to the Biosphere Reserve website was questioned and Mr. Foulds indicated that the most activity is on their Facebook page and it easier to track that site, than the website.

Whether discussion has been held with Destination Cape Breton Association was questioned. The four municipalities on Cape Breton Island are in the process of working on a Cape Breton Tourism Strategy and the possibility of including the logo on a universal sign was discussion. Warden Morrison will bring this matter to Destination Cape Breton.

Mr. Foulds indicated that the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association must reapply every 10 years and this will be completed in 2021.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Jim Foulds for his presentation.

CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS COMMITTEE

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Scott MacKinnon, Chair of the Victoria County Chief Officers Committee, who provided a presentation to Council on behalf of the fire service in Victoria County.

Mr. MacKinnon indicated that there are 11 fire departments in the County with a varying number of firefighters. In total, there are approximately 250 volunteer fire fighters in the County. Fire Departments provide around the clock service – 24/7.

Mr. MacKinnon indicated that firefighting is not just fires. They provide medical first response; attend motor vehicle accidents, high angle rescue, other technical rescue, structural and other types of fires. Fire departments can't be everything, but are they good enough.

Mr. MacKinnon indicated that they have to free up more time and money to get better. The creation of a Fire Services Coordinator position for Victoria County was one of the 23 recommendations contained in the Victoria County Fire Services Study. This position is vital to the implementation of the other recommendations contained in the study.

Help is needed to get the fire service to the next level and he requested Council give consideration to their request.

Mr. MacKinnon advised that in attendance with him tonight were:

- David MacKenzie, Chief, Middle River Volunteer Fire Department
- Colin MacNeil, Chief, Iona Volunteer Fire Department
- Gregory MacNeil, Deputy Chief, Iona Volunteer Fire Department
- Michelle Symes, Ross Ferry Volunteer Fire Department
- Merrill MacInnis, Chief, North Shore & District Volunteer Fire Department

Councillor MacNeil questioned whether the Fire Services Coordinator position would make a difference in the training and Mr. MacKinnon indicated that it would make a difference to the Chief Fire Officers Committee to free up time for them to do what they should be doing.

The cost of a Fire Services Coordinator position was questioned. The cost would depend on whether it was a full-time, part-time or contract position.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the presentation was a good overview of the challenges facing fire departments in recruiting members. Years ago in his department there would be 25 members at meetings, whereas today they are lucky to get 6 or 7. The average age of their fire fighters is now approximately 59 years of age. There are challenging days ahead.

Deputy Warden Patterson indicated that the Ross Ferry Volunteer Fire Department was in a crisis situation a few years ago and were able to recruit some good people to bolster the department. He indicated that there is some discussion right now with regard to tax credits for firefighters.

Discussion took place on the firefighter license plates and the fact that in the province there are 7000 active firefighters, but 9000 license plates issued.

Councillor Dauphinee questioned if the fire departments would consider giving up some of their funding to assist in funding the coordinator position. Mr. MacKinnon indicated he could not speak for the departments, but felt it would not be an issue to his department if they could see the benefit. Coordinating insurance costs, equipment purchases, etc. may make this doable.

Councillor Budge questioned on whether the EMO Coordinator could take on these duties and Mr. MacKinnon felt initially there is too much work to be done, but once established this could be a possibility three or so years down the road.

Councillor Buchanan questioned if other municipalities had a Fire Services Coordinator position and he was advised that most municipalities do. Whether all 11 departments are in agreement with this position was questioned and it was indicated that this is not known. There are some fire departments who do not participate in the Chief Fire Officers Committee.

Warden Morrison indicated that the Municipality would be willing to work with the Fire Services Committee to determine the best approach. He suggested a meeting be held between the Municipality and the Chief Fire Officers to discuss this matter.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Mr. MacKinnon and the delegation for attending.

RECESS

Warden Morrison advised that Council would recess for 10 minutes

UNSIGHTLY PREMISES UPDATE

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Sean Donovan, Dangerous and Unsightly Premises Administrator, Eastern District Planning Commission, who was in attendance to present an update on the Isadora Feigin property.

A 90 day Demolition Order was posted on the property on June 10, 2014. The Order contained a number of deficiencies that if corrected, the building would not be demolished.

Mr. Donovan indicated that as of October 14, 2014, all the fuels tanks have been removed. All the fuel lines from the storage tanks and pumps were removed. The perimeter of the building has been cleaned and is ready for interior renovation. Repairs have been made to the roof and the outside of the building has been cleaned and made ready for finishing. Work on replacing the windows and doors has begun.

Mr. Donovan provided pictures of the building showing the changes to the premises since June, 2014. The property has taken a great step forward and he is recommending that the Demolition Order be extended.

Discussion took place as to the length of the extension. It was felt that the windows and doors should be secured prior to the winter and all other work could be completed in the spring.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that the building be made weather tight within 90 days and the Demolition Order be extended to June 10, 2015. Motion carried.

Councillor Dauphinee indicated that it appears to take a long time to hear back on reported unsightly premises. Mr. Donovan explained the procedure followed.

There are a couple of open files that are in the process of being investigated and recommendations will be forthcoming.

Mr. Donovan advised that dangerous and unsightly premises complaints aren't to come from Councillors or municipal officials. Councillors who receive complaints are to provide the complainant with Sean Donovan's contact information. The properties will be investigated when the official complaint is received.

Sean Donovan has been qualified as a special constable and can issue summary offence tickets as a means of getting compliance with the National Building Code and the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations. This is an extra tool to ensure compliance and if approved, the Municipality of the County of Victoria will be the model to start this process.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Sean Donovan for his update.

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY/NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS REVIEW

Sandy Hudson provided maps outlining the five options for consideration in the Municipal Boundary/Number of Councillors review.

The public information process was outlined and the attendance and written submissions received were summarized.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that in speaking with some residents in his area, they all wanted the status quo. He realizes that this is not an option that will be looked on favourably by the Utility and Review Board and indicated he would like to see Option 2, which retains 8 Councillors, but realigns the district to more adequate representation per district.

Councillor Grant advised that he has researched the number of districts and representation in other areas and his preference is Option 4, which decreases the districts and Councillors to 6.

Councillor MacInnis, Buchanan, Dauphinee, Budge and Deputy Warden Patterson also felt that Option 2 would be their preference.

Warden Morrison indicated that his preference would be Option 4, the reduction of Districts and Councillors to 6.

Further discussion took place on this matter.

It was moved by Councillor Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that Council recommend Option 2 for consideration to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board.

Those voting in favour of the motion were Councillors MacNeil, MacInnis, Buchanan, Dauphinee, Budge and Deputy Warden Patterson.

Councillor Grant and Warden Morrison voted against the motion.

Motion carried 6 – 2.

Sandy Hudson advised that Option 2 will be submitted to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board for their consideration.

OUTSTANDING TAX ARREARS

At the last Council meeting, the answers to questions with regard to taxation were presented to Council for review.

Councillor Grant indicated that the bottom line is there are 376 accounts in arrears. Twenty-eight searches were completed and he felt we will never get to the end of the outstanding tax issue. He spoke with Brad MacKinley, who handles the Tax Sales for CBRM. They have a full time person doing searches at \$200.00 per search and approximately 400 searches are completed each year. Only about 1 out of 100 of their properties is not recommended for sale.

This is a large disconnect from what we have in Victoria County. The possibility of hiring our own title searcher was discussed. The current process is slow and arduous.

The CAO indicated that the *Municipal Government Act* requires a title search of tax sale properties.

The CAO was requested to look at the tax sale procedure in other Counties to see how they compare.

The cost the Municipality is currently charged for tax sale searches is very high.

It was moved by Councillor Grant, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that Councillor Grant talk to Brad MacKinley, CBRM, with regard to their tax sale procedures and the CAO investigate other municipalities with regard to tax sale procedures. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 3, 2014

The minutes of the November 3, 2014, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that on Page 3, it should read North America, not Nova America and on Page 7, it should read Councillor Dauphinee instead of Donovan.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Deputy Warden Patterson, that the November 3, 2014, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council be approved with the noted corrections. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Wilderness Protected Areas Resolution

Councillor Grant advised that Wilderness Protected Areas Resolution he presented from the floor at the UNSM Conference was passed.

Surplus Equipment

Council were advised that 8 tenders were received for the surplus tractor located at the Baddeck Solid Waste Management Facility. Darren Baker, Baddeck Forks Golf Course, had the highest tender and will be accepted.

NEW BUSINESS

SEASIDE WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS

The following resolution was presented to Council for consideration from Parker Donham.

WHEREAS access to high speed internet service is as important to rural Canada today as rural electrification was in the 1940s and 1950s;

AND WHEREAS Seaside Wireless Communications Inc. was the contractor selected by the Province of Nova Scotia to provide internet access to unserved portions of Victoria County under the Broadband for Rural Nova Scotia program;

AND WHEREAS many Victoria County residents and businesses are now seeking internet speeds greater than the 1.5 megabit per second download standard established under the Broadband for Rural Nova Scotia program;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada has established the Connecting Canadians program to help provide Canadians with access to internet services at speeds of at least 5 Megabits per second download;

AND WHEREAS Seaside Wireless Communications Inc. intends to apply for funding from the Connecting Canadians program to increase internet speeds available to its customers in Victoria County;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Municipality of Victoria County supports Seaside's application to participate in the Connecting Canadians project.

It was moved by Deputy Warden Patterson, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that this resolution be adopted by Council. Motion carried.

MUNICIPAL SUMMIT

At the recent Municipal Summit held at the Gaelic College, St. Ann's, discussion was held on the oil pipeline from Alberta to Saint John, New Brunswick. It was questioned as to why it should stop there and the possibility of extending the pipeline to NuStar Energy at Point Tupper was discussed. The Premier has expressed his desire to see the pipeline extended to Point Tupper.

Richmond County presented a resolution (copy attached) supporting Premier MacNeil's efforts to work with the Province of Alberta and the Trans Canada Corporation.

It was moved by Councillor Budge, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that the Municipality support Richmond County's resolution regarding the extension of the pipeline to Point Tupper. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Letter from the Honourable Michel Samson, Minister of ERDT, in reply to Council's letter related to the federal broadband expansion project – Connecting Canadians. This program will provide a total of \$310 Million nationally over 5 years to bring 98% of all Canadian households up to a minimum level of 5MBPS download and 1MBPS upload. A call for applications was issued last week and Industry Canada is asking for proposals which will cover every provincial jurisdiction.

2. Letter from Lloyd Michael MacInnes requesting he be provided with a load of gravel to fix the shoulders of the road north from the Little River Wharf Road as far as possible.

3. A request to proclaim November "Diabetes Awareness Month" in the Municipality of the County of Victoria.

It was moved by Councillor Budge, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, to proclaim the month of November as “Diabetes Awareness Month” in the Municipality of the County of Victoria. Motion carried.

4. Lyle Donovan, EMC, will be presenting a Business Continuity Plan for the Municipality as part of his CBU studies tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. at the Court House.

Warden Morrison, Councillor MacNeil and Councillor MacInnis indicated they would attend the presentation.

CHRISTMAS DADDIES

Sandy Hudson advised that the staff have taken up a collection for Christmas Daddies and are requesting that the money collected be matched by the Municipality. If Council members wish to contribute, it is welcomed.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that the Municipality match the funds collected by staff for Christmas Daddies. Motion carried.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #6

Councillor Dauphinee brought up a concern with regard to Roper’s Bridge.

It was moved by Councillor Dauphinee, seconded by Deputy Warden Patterson, that a letter be forwarded to the Department of TIR requesting a replacement bridge for Roper’s Bridge. Motion carried.

District #7

Councillor Budge brought up a concern with regard to plowing of the Neil’s Harbour Depot and Water Plant by our own sources. He wished to go on record that he does not agree with this action and feels it will not work.

District #8

Councillor Buchanan requested that two street light outages be reported for 78 Meat Cove Road and 103 Meat Cove Road.

The North Victoria Six Ports Harbour Authority wishes to make a presentation at the January session of Council.

Councillor Buchanan indicated that a contractor in his district has an issue with Bell Aliant phone lines that are too low for his equipment.

It was moved by Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that Kevin Hashem, Bell Aliant, be contacted with regard to repairs to the telephone lines in Big Interval, Victoria County. Motion carried.

The status of the illegal dumpsites at the two locations in District #8 was questioned. They have been reported to the Department of Environment and they are investigating.

Councillor Buchanan questioned on whether a reply has been received from ACOA with regard to the cell phone service project. Sandy Hudson advised that a reply has not been received as yet.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis advised that Nova Scotia Power will be hosting a meeting at the Holiday Inn, Sydney, on Friday, December 5, 2014, at 10:00 a.m.

Councillor MacInnis brought up the matter of a Youth Council. Kim Deveaux from CBRM was to have made a presentation to Council previously but had to cancel. She will be contacted to come to a future meeting.

Councillor MacInnis advised that the St. Ann's Bay Health Centre Group have been awarded a \$10,000.00 Community Arts and Culture Award.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that a letter of congratulations be forwarded to Ruth Schneider, St. Ann's Bay Health Centre, on the receipt of the Community Arts and Culture Award. Motion carried.

District #2

Scotian Windfields hosted a public information session on the proposed wind turbine project on November 18, 2014, with approximately 25 people in attendance.

Councillor Grant updated on this meeting and indicated that the Alternate Energy Committee met with Scotian Windfields prior to this meeting where a number of items were discussed.

Solar power was discussed at this meeting as a cost effective energy generator and there is a company that puts solar collectors on building roofs that can be contacted with regard to making a presentation to Council.

Councillor Grant indicated that a meeting was held with Dave Williams, Department of Environment, on Friday past with regard to the protected areas. A number of issues of concern with regard to access to protected areas were discussed.

Councillor Grant brought up the infrastructure priority list and indicated that he emailed his feelings on this matter to all Councillors to review.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil brought up concern with regard to the snow removal coverage in his district on the first snow this season. The plows didn't touch the road until the next day.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that a letter be forwarded to Darren Blundon, Area Manager, TIR, expressing concern on the snow removal service in District #1 during the first snowfall this season and requesting that in future, snow removal be carried out in a timelier manner. Motion carried.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that the beavers are again blocking an area on the Barra Glen Road. Sandy Hudson advised that DNR have been requested to assist TIR in this matter.

District #8

Councillor Buchanan indicated that he has obtained signatures of those interested in a water system for Bay St. Lawrence and Cape North. He will provide the signatures to the Municipality.

The status of the suitability of the wells dug for Neil's Harbour water was questioned. Information has been received from Rick Gagne, Earth Water Concepts, and it is presently being reviewed.

District #3

Deputy Warden Patterson took the Chair.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that a letter be forwarded to the Department of TIR requesting that the speed limit on Highway 205 from the Beinn Bhreagh turnoff to Baddeck be lowered to 60 km. Motion carried with Councillors Budge and Dauphinee voting against the motion.

Warden Morrison brought up the Provincial Municipal Fiscal Review and the section pertaining to Villages included in the review. The Village of Baddeck is not in agreement with regard to the recommendations on Villages and do not want to lose their Village status and incorporation.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that the Municipality support the Village of Baddeck with regard to their position on the Provincial Municipal Fiscal Review with regard to Villages. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison advised that the Economic Development Committee met prior to Council. The CAOs and Wardens/Mayor of the participating municipalities in REN 6 will be meeting on December 12, 2014, with provincial officials to go through the formal process.

The Cape Breton Small Business Development Centre is requesting some operating funding from the participating municipalities for the remainder of the current fiscal year and the period from April 1 to November 30, 2015. The amount anticipated from the Municipality is \$30,000.00.

Discussion took place on this matter and relationship of the REN, Small Business Development Centre and Cape Breton Partnership.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that the Municipality provide up to \$30,000.00 for the Cape Breton Small Business Development Centre to the period November 30, 2015. Motion carried with Councillor Grant casting a dissenting vote.

Warden Morrison recently attended the FCM Advocacy Days event in Ottawa where the group met with a number of Members of Parliament. Noticeably absent were MP's Peter MacKay, Mark Eyking and Rodger Cuzner.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that a letter be forwarded to MP's Peter MacKay, Mark Eyking and Rodger Cuzner stressing the importance of FCM Advocacy Days to municipalities and expressing disappointment that they did not accept the invitation to attend this event. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison reminded Council of the Baddeck Christmas Parade on November 29, 2014, at 1:00 p.m. Councillors are to participate in that parade if available.

Warden Morrison returned to the Chair.

BUILD CANADA FUND

Discussion took place on the Municipality's infrastructure priority list. The current list has Bay St. Lawrence/St. Margaret's Village as the #1 priority.

Councillor Buchanan questioned why the Bay St. Lawrence/St. Margaret's Village Water and Cape North Extension couldn't be looked at as one project. Cape North Extension is currently the #2 priority.

The importance in finding a ground water source for Neil's Harbour was discussed.

Now that there is one Victoria County Water Utility, it was questioned why water projects could not be combined as one project for one utility.

It was moved by Deputy Warden Patterson, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that the Bay St. Lawrence/St. Margaret's Village Water Supply project be the project submitted to the Build Canada Fund. Motion carried with Councillor Grant voting against the motion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Councillor MacNeil advised that a Request for Services was sent out to a number of firms to review the Victoria County Strategic Plan, ICSP and Victoria County Economic Development Strategy. No replies were received by the deadline.

There is one more firm that may possibly be interested in providing this service.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that contact be made with the firm to see if they are interested in providing the Request for Services. Motion carried.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, December 15, 2014, at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, on motion of Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Sandy Hudson, CAO

Bruce Morrison, Warden

