

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

May 6, 2019

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, May 6, 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 #7 – Wayne Budge
District #8 – Norman MacDonald

Also present were:

Leanne MacEachen, CAO
Heather MacLean, Recorder

Absent was:

District #6 – Larry Dauphinee (for personal reasons)

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

It was moved and seconded that the agenda be approved as presented. Motion carried.

NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH AUTHORITY (NSHA) PRESENTATION

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Brett MacDougall, Executive Director, Eastern Zone Operations, NSHA.

Mr. MacDougall provided a presentation on Victoria County Health Services (copy attached)

The first topic was emergency services. He indicated that there is a seasonal increase in patient visits to the Emergency Department at both hospitals in Victoria County in the summer and the temporary closures of the Northside General Hospital Emergency Department also puts an increased strain on the Victoria County Memorial Hospital Emergency Department. Community based family physicians, physicians visiting from other locations and retired physicians all help to support Emergency Department coverage.

The NSHA is constantly working to recruit doctors. Mr. MacDougall thanked Council for their role and contributions to recruitment. Council's support in having a Victoria County booth at the Toronto event last fall and the Rural and Remote event in Halifax this spring is an example of ongoing collaboration and the priority Council gives to recruitment.

The NSHA are currently recruiting for two family physician vacancies in Baddeck and one in Neil's Harbour. Dr. Jacobs has recently joined the team in Neil's Harbour.

Mr. MacDougall outlined the Collaborative Practice approach. This model is part of the provincial initiative to enhance access to Primary Health Care. In Victoria County there are three teams - Wagmatcook, Baddeck and Neil's Harbour. Overall there are 8 family physicians, 2 Nurse Practitioners, 2 Family Practice Nurses and 2 Registered Dieticians.

In the Eastern Region of NSHA there are still in excess of 4,000 people who still need a family doctor.

Mr. MacDougall provided snapshots on both Buchanan Memorial Hospital and the Victoria County Memorial Hospital.

NSHA is an Integrated Health System. They plan provincially and deliver locally. Mr. MacDougall indicated there are opportunities to strengthen our working relationship and share information. They are aware of the main concerns regarding healthcare in Victoria County.

Councillor MacNeil questioned on whether the allotment of doctors would change once Dr. Genge retires in a couple of years. The long serving physicians like Dr. Genge have a larger workload than the newer physicians and more than one physician will be required to cover his workload.

Mr. MacDougall indicated this would be a dialogue to have with Dr. Dale Miller, Executive Medical Director for the Eastern Zone and Dr. Rick Gibson, Senior Medical Director, Primary Health Care.

Councillor MacLeod questioned if there were any strategies in place for the increase in the visitors to the VCMH Emergency Department. Christine Hines, Facility Manager, VCMH, has been advised to increase the nursing component to meet the demands. This does not address the physician piece.

The new recruiter began work this week and will be invited to come to Council when he is settled in the new job. His name is Bill O'Brien and his contact information will be provided.

Councillor MacInnis advised of a good news story regarding health care that he was present for this winter. The negative aspects get a lot more media coverage than the positive.

The new Transit system in Victoria County which will commence in July will transport Victoria County residents anywhere in Victoria County for \$5.00. This could have an effect on the residents from District #5 travelling to Baddeck instead of the Northside.

Mr. MacDougall was requested to come back to Council with regular updates.

The Medical Laboratory Technologist position at Buchanan Memorial Hospital was discussed. The fact that it was advertised as no on call, weekends or evening was questioned. Mr. MacDougall indicated he was unaware if there were any applications. The other possibilities to support this position were outlined. The job posting will stay up if no applications are received. The CAO suggested that if the line no overtime was removed, there may be more applications.

Physician recruitment was again discussed. It is not something new and there are challenges all across the County. The work/life balance is important to today's doctors.

The ER visits to VCMH were brought forward and it was questioned whether the workload was deterring applicants from coming to Baddeck.

The impact of the expansion of the Cape Breton Regional Hospital on Victoria County was questioned. Mr. MacDougall indicated there would be a cascading effect. There will be an increase in ICU, CCU, Cardiac and intermediate care beds and the ER will have the ability to

transfer patients to these specialty units, thus taking pressure of the ER. There should be an improved flow in critical care overall and would also assist with the offload times in the ER for Emergency Health Services (EHS).

Warden Morrison mentioned that the lower parking lot at the Victoria County Memorial Hospital requires attention.

An audience member brought up 811 and felt this needs to be promoted more. Also there should be some type of tele-health system for prescription renewals that would not require an office appointment.

The status of Dr. Jacobs at Buchanan Memorial Hospital was questioned. He was on a locum position but has signed on to a full-time position. There is another physician prospect for this area.

Long term care and the need for more long term care beds were addressed. There will be more long term care beds after the redevelopment of the Northside General and New Waterford hospitals.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Brett MacDougall for his presentation to Council and asked that he come back and report to Council on a regular basis.

TAXATION STRATEGY

Courtesy of Council was extended to Alix Redden, Chief Financial Officer, and Pauline Davis, Director of Taxation, who were in attendance to provide a Taxation Strategy update.

Ms. Redden then presented a PowerPoint presentation “Applying a Strategic Lens to Victoria County’s Tax Collections (copy attached). She provided graphs which afforded Council with a visual on current collected/outstanding and arrears collected/outstanding. She provided a graph outlining the collected and outstanding as of April 23, 2019.

As of April 23, 2-019, the total of all accounts is \$1,307,295.00. The balance on accounts \$100.00 and over is \$732,762 (938 accounts) in current and \$544,984 (419 accounts) in arrears. The 2019 tax bills will go out in mid-June with a due date of August 1.

The Tax Department will be using a collection “buckets” focus and will be targeting collection efforts toward the highest dollar areas. She presented graphic visuals on the number of accounts with arrears balance and the value of these accounts.

The current outstanding will also be sorted into the bucket approach. It is easier to flag outstanding current balances and calls are being made to accounts that may have been missed before because of the arrears focus. The highest dollar amounts will be targeted in the current collection also.

Pauline Davis, Director of Taxation, outlined Tax Sale changes. The frequency of Tax Sales will be increased to three per year and the dates of September 24, 2019, December 10, 2019, and March 24, 2020, have been set. Future Tax Sales dates will be planned on the three per year basis. She outlined that she will be seeking Council approval for minimum bids for properties that repeatedly go to Tax Sale and are not sold.

Proposed administrative enhancements were outlined. The Tax Collection Policy will be updated and a draft policy will be brought to Council in the near future for approval. The Tax Department will be regularly seeking direction or approval of Council on “anomaly” accounts, i.e. write-offs, when legal work is required, etc. The Tax Department will continue to work with the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) to resolve outstanding issues.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that there are properties in his community that are abandoned and the owner is unknown. These properties are to be brought to the attention of the Tax Department.

Council indicated that they would like to see the Tax Collection Policy by June, 2019, for approval and the anomaly accounts update by July, 2019.

Having a Tax Collection Policy will take the legal ownership of Council. The rules for Tax Sale are outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*.

Discussion took place on properties on Tax Sale and the risk Council is willing to take in putting properties on Tax Sale that have issues. Council requested a list of the “anomaly” accounts for their review.

The interest rate charged was brought up. It is currently 10% per annum and the possibility of increasing the rate was discussed. This is something that can be considered at a later date.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to the CFO and Director of Taxation for their presentation and look forward to the efforts to decrease taxes outstanding.

RECESS

Warden Morrison announced that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 23, 2019

The minutes of the April 23, 2019, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of April 23, 2019, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

The CAO indicated she checked on the solar energy retrofit program and found nothing only rebates through Efficiency Nova Scotia.

NEW BUSINESS

Leanne MacEachen updated on the solid waste rejection numbers for April 23-26, 2019 and April 29-May 3, 2019.

Councillors are to advise if they are interested in having bathroom portables in their districts again this year. Two were allotted per district last year and the same will apply this year.

The One Cape Breton Unama'ki is looking for a representative from Victoria County Municipal Council.

The CAO advised that she is still working on the Maskell's Harbour issue.

There have been numerous bear sightings at the Baddeck Solid Waste Facility and the public drop-off area has been removed due to the danger. Solid waste staff will escort the public to where they should take their materials.

Heavy garbage collection commenced today and will be ongoing until complete. Public Works are working with a skeleton staff at the Baddeck site and the CAO offered kudos to all staff, those undertaking the heavy garbage pickup and the minimal staff remaining at the facility.

The Baddeck Re-use Centre was operated by the Knox Presbyterian Church and they collected \$1,124.00 during the past four Saturdays.

The Nova Scotia Planning Directors Association is hosting their conference at the Westin Nova Scotian, Halifax, on May 29-30, 2019.

It was moved and seconded that Leanne MacEachen, CAO, and Councillor Paul MacNeil, register to attend the NSPDA Conference. Motion carried.

The CAO attended an Experiences/Innovations Workshop at the AG Bell Museum last week and saw some new and exciting ideas. There were in excess of 50 people who attended the workshop.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #7

It was moved and seconded that \$300.00 be approved from the District #7 budget for Cabot Junior-Senior High School, Neil's Harbour. Motion carried.

The Guidance Counsellor at Memorial High School, Sydney Mines and Sydney Academy, Sydney, are to be advised of the \$500 scholarship for graduating students from Victoria County attending these schools.

District #8

It was moved that a letter be forwarded to the Department of TIR with regard to:

- **A resident complaint about the culvert located at 3131 Bay St. Lawrence Road. Three tires have been lost to date at this location.**
- **A resident at 424 Shore Road, Dingwall, has concerns for children's safety playing in the area. There are businesses on the road that are dependent on tourism and the area has an inadequate turning area at the end. No Exit signs are required and the present turning spot is not properly levelled.**
- **The increase in truck traffic and excessive speed in the Cape North area has residents concerned and would like to see compliance or signage erected by the Department of TIR.**

District #4

The issue of trees in the ditches of the roadsides in District #4 and the two culvert failures on the Red Head Road, Beinn Bhreagh are to be added to the letter to the Department of TIR.

Councillor MacInnis brought up the issue of abandoned cemeteries. He has 39 documented cemeteries in District #4 and a large number of them have been abandoned for several years. There is an incredible history in these cemeteries and he feels that society owes them respect.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage to investigate if there is any funding available for cemeteries. Motion carried.

District #2

The addition of the Big Farm Road to the Department of TIR's five-year plan; the pothole at MacKay Drive and 660 Big Farm Road be repaired; the potholes in the area of Polytech Products to 8565 Highway 105 be patched; and the gravel roads in Westside Middle River, Big Baddeck and Zion Road be graded as soon as possible are to be added to the letter to be forwarded to the Department of TIR.

District #1

It was moved and seconded that a street light order be placed for location at the intersection of Route 223 and a common driveway shared by Civic Addresses 2068, 2070 and 2072 at Ottawa Brook. Motion carried.

Councillor MacNeil advised that Keith Bain, MLA, and Stephen MacDonald, Area Manager of TIR, toured the roads in District #1 last Friday and they are aware of the concerns and will look into them.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that another successful Cancer Centre Appreciation Dinner was held on Saturday past and to date, although the total is not final, \$5,400.00 was collected. This dinner began to help former Councillor, Dan E. MacNeil, and he wished all proceeds to go to the Cape Breton Cancer Centre. In the 15 years the dinner has taken place, approximately \$70,000.00 has been raised.

It was moved and seconded to send a letter to the Minister of TIR, requesting that work be done on the South Cove Road, Little Narrows, to address the flooding issues to prevent the increase in water levels and the recurring flooding in the area as a result. Motion carried.

District #8

The condition of the Dingwall Road in the area of the Markland Inn is to be included in the letter to the Department of TIR requesting an update on when work will be started on this road and questioning whether there is any coastal erosion funding available to assist with the necessary repairs.

District #2

An update on the “Share the Road” signs for the Big Baddeck Loop is to be included in the letter to the Department of TIR.

As this was the last item to be brought to the Department of TIR, the motion was seconded and carried.

District #3

The Planning Advisory Committee for the Baddeck and Area Planning District requires the addition of a citizen member. An advertisement is to be placed seeking interest in a lay member to serve on the PAC.

District #6

It was moved and seconded that \$1,000.00 be approved from the District #6 budget for the Ingonish Development Society. Motion carried.

District #3

It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to the Minister of the Department of Business questioning if there is any opportunity for funding for a study on the impact the multi-purpose bridge and trail system would have on southern Victoria County. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison presented a map showing the potential trail from the multi-purpose bridge. They would like to have a staging area and trail parking on municipal property just as you enter into the Baddeck Waste Management Facility. This information was brought up for discussion purposes.

2019-2020 COMMUNITY GRANTS

The community grants were reviewed at an April 23, 2019, Budget meeting and there were some applications that needed further clarification.

This clarification is to be obtained and another Budget Meeting will be held on May 21, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. to review these applications.

Once all grants are approved, the funding will be released to the successful organizations.

Councillors are to come up with after school programs for funding through the Department of Health and Wellness.

SENIORS' SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

It was moved and seconded that the Seniors' Safety Advisory Committee membership be accepted as recommended. Motion carried.

The Municipality will cover mileage costs for members attending these meetings. The first meeting of the Seniors' Safety Advisory Committee is tentatively scheduled for May 17, 2019.

EDPC STAFF APPOINTMENTS

It was moved and seconded to approve the following staff appointments.

Administrator – Dangerous and Unightly Premises – Jonathan Martin

Alternate – John Bain

Building Inspector – David MacKenzie

Alternates – Cyril LeBlanc, Harry Martell, Jonathan Martin, Sean Donovan

Special Constable – Sean Donovan, Jonathon Martin

Development Officer – Wanda Ryan

Alternates – John Bain, Paul Dec, Andrew Jones

Fire Inspector – Leon LeBlanc

Alternates – David MacKenzie, Cyril LeBlanc, Harry Martell, Jonathan Martin, Sean Donovan

Motion carried.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

Councillor MacInnis questioned on the status of the Tourism Development Coordinator. Mary Tulle, Tulle Contracting, has been contracted to assist with leading a Selection Committee and also giving direction to the new employee hired.

The CAO advised that she received 47 applications and Mary Tulle has pared this number down to 3 to 5 interviews. A tentative date for the interviews is May 17, 2019. It is anticipated that a new employee will be in place in early June.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved to adjourn at 7:15 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO