

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
April 13, 2015

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, April 13, 2015, beginning at 5:20 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 approval. Deputy Warden Patterson requested that an In Camera meeting be added at the end of the agenda.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that the agenda be approved with the noted addition. Motion carried.

CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Dr. David Wheeler, President and Vice-Chancellor, Cape Breton University; Dr. David Rae, Dean, Shannon School of Business, Cape Breton University; and Amanda MacDougall, Manager, Immigration Partnerships, Cape Breton University.

Dr. Wheeler provided a strategic update for Cape Breton Island's University. CBU's new draft mission is: *“CBU is a multicultural, sustainable and entrepreneurial academic institution committed to teaching excellence, world changing research and deep engagement with social, economic and cultural aspirations of every community and individual we serve”*.

Dr. Wheeler indicated that CBU is the Island University and provided updates on CBU's economics, social and cultural, academics and future. CBU has the highest student services spending in the province and the lowest average upper-class size in the province.

Dr. Wheeler indicated that CBU is uniquely placed to help coordinate and drive the entrepreneurial renaissance of Cape Breton Island; to help drive immigration in both urban and rural Cape Breton; and is leading on a range of clean tech commercialization opportunities for Nova Scotia.

Dr. Rae outlined the rationale for entrepreneurship and indicated that entrepreneurship is open – open to everyone, open for business, open-minded to new ideas, open innovations connect actors, open markets to new players, open data and information available and open government is accountable.

Dr. Rae provided an update on the strategic entrepreneurship action plan. The vision is to make Cape Breton and Mulgrave the leading entrepreneurial hub in Atlantic Canada. The proposed Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship was outlined. A proposal has been submitted to ACOA for a centre hosted by CBU and NSCC. It will have an island-side reach to engage partners and communities and build educational capacity. There will be a research-led open data approach to make information and knowledge accessible and connect with key business sectors. It will build on what works and fill in the gaps.

Dr. Rae outlined the desired outcomes by 2020. The role of CBU in this process is to provide leadership to make it happen, connect education and community partners with business, research power to ensure better data for better decision making, provide excellent entrepreneurial development programs and attract home and international students, innovators, investors and partners.

Amanda MacDougall updated Council on the rural-urban immigration strategy for Cape Breton. The project is funded by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration via the Settlement Fund. CBU will work with Island-side partners to assess the needs and issues around immigration in Cape Breton. International students will be surveyed to determine their interests and needs which must be satisfied to encourage settlement on Cape Breton. Student and community based research will provide the necessary data to produce a report which will detail recommendations and the next steps.

Ms. MacDougall provided an update on the Immigration Task Force. CBU has invited members of the private sector, community leaders and municipal representatives to form a high level Task Force on Immigration. The Task Force will review the effectiveness of current immigration attraction and settlement services in Cape Breton Island; make recommendations to enhance these services in all municipalities in Cape Breton; ensure deep linkages with universities, the community college and ICEAP; explore relevant labour market opportunities and growth sectors in Cape Breton and monitor, deliver and report.

Ms. MacDougall outlined the next steps for engaging the Island, including the development of a project website; writing a report from the data collected through the survey and Task Force meetings; hosting a “Next Steps in Cape Breton Immigration” event; and continuing on with the Task Force and new activities based around community outreach and awareness in Phase II of the pilot.

Councillor MacNeil mentioned the MOU with Central Cape Breton Community Ventures for tidal power in the Barra Strait. This is fantastic example of what can be developed here.

Councillor Grant mentioned succession planning for businesses and the fact that this is not developed to the point it should be. He knows of ½ dozen business owners who are ready to retire, but have no plan in place to pass their business on.

Councillor MacInnis brought up a recent article in the media last week of a group of Mennonite/Amish farmers who are looking to set up business in PEI. There is lots of land available in Cape Breton for this use and he felt we should be encouraging these communities to come here.

Councillor Dauphinee mentioned the statistic regarding no opportunity for political partnership. This may be a result of lack of knowledge and the fact they felt they could not get involved.

Discussion took place on overcoming the barrier for assisting overseas residents with Visas.

Deputy Warden Patterson brought up the tidal power possibilities at the Seal Island Bridge area also.

Deputy Warden Patterson advised that it is refreshing to have the working relationships with CBU for all Cape Breton. This allows for better leadership and decision making. The partnerships that have been developed are progressive.

The possibility of the proposed Centre for Sustainable Immigration which is being hosted by CBU/NSCC being located in Victoria County, in central Cape Breton, was discussed. Working on immigration is the way to revitalize Cape Breton. A letter of support from the Municipality for this initiative would be welcome.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to the representatives for their presentation and discussion.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 23, 2015

The minutes of the March 23, 2015, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved by Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of March 23, 2015, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

There was no business arising from the minutes.

NEW BUSINESS

HEAVY GARBAGE COLLECTION

Discussion took place on the heavy garbage collection for Victoria County. It was agreed that the week of June 8th be the targeted date for this collection. Arrangements will be made and notices posted as soon as possible.

WATERFRONT PROPERTY – LITTLE NARROWS

Notification was received from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal with regard to surplus waterfront property at Little Narrows off the unmaintained road, Yetman Lane.

It is the policy of the Municipality to obtain waterfront property for future public use whenever possible.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that the Municipality advise the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal of the Municipality's interest in acquiring the surplus property identified at Little Narrows. Motion carried.

ELECTRONIC VOTING

The next municipal election will be held in October, 2016, and the CAO questioned on Council's interest in electronic voting. The advance poll was conducted electronically in the 2012 election.

It was felt that statistics should be provided on the results of the last election, compared to 2008 election to determine if the electronic voting increased voting. This matter will be included on the next Council agenda.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #1

Councillor MacNeil brought up the matter of drainage issues at the former Rankin School property. There is piping remaining on the property that is causing issues on adjacent properties.

The School Board is to be contacted in this regard.

The increase in ferry rate fees is a big topic of discussion in District #1. Councillor MacNeil indicated he has spoken to the MLA about it, and she has brought it to Caucus and the Premier. The effect this will have on tourism to area businesses was discussed. Something has to be done in this regard.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that the Ministers of TIR and Finance, the Premier, and MLA be requested to meet with Council as soon as possible. Motion carried.

Council will travel to Halifax for this meeting as it is of utmost importance.

The condition of the Gillis Point Road is getting worse by the day and if nothing is done, this road will have to be closed.

The effect the ferry fee increases have in other areas of the province is to be investigated.

District #2

Councillor Grant brought up the funding request for the PAN Cape Breton Local Food Hub Pilot Project.

It was moved by Councillor Grant, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that \$2,834.00 be approved for the PAN Cape Breton Local Food Hub Pilot Project. Motion carried.

Councillor Grant brought up the issue of doctor recruitment. Neil's Harbour has been successful in attracting two doctors, but due to the lack of office space in the Victoria County Memorial Hospital, it has been difficult to attract doctors to this area. This issue is racing toward a crisis as Dr. Chow is to retire in December.

The proposed expansion to the Victoria County Memorial Hospital is at least five years away, and parking and office space is needed now. He questioned whether the \$100,000.00 over five years that Council was considering for the hospital expansion could be used to assist in getting the hospital doctor ready now.

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

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that he felt the meeting with TIR officials (Paul LaFleche and Bruce Fitzner) was unsatisfactory. He felt the presentation they provided was very disrespectful. Council was told that the feasibility study would be based on indepth research and this was not the case.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of TIR stating Council's displeasure on the way the Englishtown Bridge Feasibility Study was handled and that Council was owed more in this regard. Motion carried.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the ice breaking that the mussel farm is undertaking is impeding the operation of the Englishtown Ferry. He felt a review should be conducted of the mussel farm agreement, to see that the conditions outlined in the agreement are being met.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Budge, that Louisbourg Seafoods, new owners of the mussel farm, be requested to meet with a Committee of Council to discuss the mussel farm operation. Motion carried.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that a letter be sent to the Minister of Aquaculture or Fisheries questioning if the mussel farm operation is in compliance with the conditions outlined in their operating agreement. Motion carried.

Councillor MacInnis questioned whether anything happened in the new provincial budget with regard to homecare funding. The letter from Council was forwarded to the Minister.

District #8

Councillor Buchanan questioned whether the water tank at Dingwall would be painted this summer. Sandy Hudson indicated he would check on this matter.

Councillor Buchanan also felt that the old water building, no longer in use, should be dismantled.

Councillor Buchanan questioned on the status of the septic lagoon closure. An extension has been granted until the end of September to complete the closure.

District #6

Councillor Dauphinee brought up the matter of the condition of the Cabot Trail through the Ingonish. This road was to be included on the priority list, but it is not listed in the current five-year TIR plan.

It was moved by Councillor Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Budge, that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of TIR questioning on the status of the upgrading of the Cabot Trail from the Park boundary at Ingonish Beach through to Dino's where you again enter the park road. Motion carried.

Councillor Dauphinee indicated that he was of the opinion that the meeting scheduled with TIR officials and the MLA on Tuesday, March 24, 2015, was cancelled. He indicated he received an email saying as much. He was disappointed to learn it was held.

The email received will be provided and the CAO will investigate.

District #3

Deputy Warden Patterson assumed the Chair.

Warden Morrison brought up the issue of the Court leaving Baddeck and the huge impact this will have on the RCMP. Members will have to travel outside the County for Court and this may reflect in Victoria County's RCMP costs.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that a letter be forwarded to the Premier, Ministers of Justice, Finance, TIR and our MLA, expressing concern that the closure of services in Victoria County may result in the province achieving savings at the Municipality's cost and request they show the Municipality their business plan in this regard. Motion carried.

It was indicated that the Office of Gaelic Affairs in Mabou has also been closed.

Warden Morrison returned to the Chair.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

REN 6

Warden Morrison provided an update on the recent meeting with regard to REN 6. A one page document indicating the roles and responsibilities of the REN was distributed for review.

He indicated that he felt the process of hiring an Economic Development Officer (EDO) for Victoria County should begin. The filling of these positions will be done through Business Cape Breton.

The possibility of it being a joint effort with Inverness County because they have the same requirement was discussed.

It was moved by Deputy Warden Patterson, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, to begin the process of working out the details for hiring an Economic Development Officer for Victoria County. Motion carried.

POLICY REVIEW

Travel Expense Policy

Warden Morrison presented an addendum to the Travel Expense Policy with regard to the submission of expense accounts. It is suggested that the expense accounts be forwarded electronically or in paper form to the Finance Department within the first 10 days of the following month for which expenses are being claimed.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Grant, that the Travel Expense Policy be amended to include that monthly expense accounts be forwarded electronically or in paper form to the Finance Department within the first 10 days of the following month for which expenses are being claimed.

Discussion took place on the motion and a number felt the requirement for monthly submission was not necessary, and quarterly would be sufficient. They agreed that the claim for year end, March 31, should be submitted in a timely manner. What would happen if the claim was not submitted by the 10th of the following month was questioned.

The question was then called.

Those voting in favour of the motion were Warden Morrison and Councillor MacInnis.

Those voting against the motion were Councillors MacNeil, Grant, Dauphinee, Budge, Buchanan and Deputy Warden Patterson.

Motion defeated 6-2.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Grant, that the Travel Expense Policy be amended to include that quarterly expense accounts be forwarded electronically or in paper form to the Finance Department within the first 10 days of the month following the quarter and that year end expense accounts be submitted by the 10th of April. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 27, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. The tentative presentations are RCMP and the Victoria County Hospice Society.

Council was advised of a one-time only fundraising event for the Hospice Society at the Masonic Hall on Saturday, April 18, 2015. It is a meal with proceeds going to the Society.

IN CAMERA

It was moved by Deputy Warden Patterson, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, to move In Camera to deal with personnel issues. Motion carried.

It was moved by Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, to return to regular session.

The CAO will address the issues resulting from the In Camera meeting with the appropriate people.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, on motion of Councillor Buchanan, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Sandy Hudson, CAO

