

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
April 7, 2014

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, April 7, 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 #5 – Fraser Patterson, Deputy Warden
District #7 – Wayne Budge
District #8 – Johnny Buchanan

Also present were:

Sandy Hudson, CAO
Heather MacLean, Recording Secretary

Absent were:

District #4 – Merrill MacInnis (Out of Province)
District #6 – Larry Dauphinee (Out of Province)

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

A brief In Camera meeting is to be added at the end of the agenda and Councillor Grant advised that he would like to provide a brief update on the Trans Canada Trail. This will be provided under Committee reports.

It was moved by Councillor Budge, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that the agenda be approved with the noted additions. Motion carried.

LOW INCOME HOMEOWNER PROGRAM

Courtesy of council was extended to Kevin McCormack, a consultant with Efficiency Nova Scotia, who was in attendance concerning the Low Income Homeowner Program.

Mr. McCormack advised that the Low Income Homeowner Program is designed to help homeowners with low or fixed income and is designed to overcome a major barrier ... the investment required in the traditional rebate programs.

Mr. McCormack advised that this program focuses primarily on insulating basements, walls and attics, as well as a general tightening of the house. The extent of the retrofit is at the discretion of Efficiency Nova Scotia. The goal is to reduce energy consumption and improve home comfort for people who qualify. These projects provide thousands of dollars in home efficiency upgrades.

The requirements for the program were outlined. The applicant must be the homeowner and the household income must fall below the established thresholds:

- 1 occupant – Net income of less than \$20,366.00
- 2 – 4 occupants – Net income of less than \$37,843.00
- 5 or more occupants – Net income of less than \$53,894.00

The homeowner must complete the application and provide evidence that they meet the requirements. The application is reviewed by Efficiency Nova Scotia and if approved, a letter of approval is sent to the homeowner. A Home Energy Audit is conducted at no charge to the homeowner. A proposal is submitted to Efficiency Nova Scotia after the Energy Audit. This proposal is reviewed and retrofit work is approved.

Mr. McCormack advised that MJM Energy is the approved contractor for Efficiency Nova Scotia on Cape Breton. They have seven crews working in Cape Breton. They contact the homeowner and schedule a time and complete the approved work. The work is inspected and there is a follow-up energy audit conducted. Efficiency Nova Scotia pays the contractor directly for the work completed.

The only cost to the homeowner is the cost of the stamp to mail the application to Efficiency Nova Scotia.

Mr. McCormack indicated that he met with Richmond County Council to outline the program and since that time 30 applications have been accepted from that area.

Councillor MacNeil questioned on the income thresholds and if there was any leniency on these thresholds. The income levels, especially for a one occupant household, were felt to be low.

Mr. McCormack indicated that there have been some discussions on the income thresholds.

Councillor Grant indicated that he had a resident who was ineligible because her income was just over \$1,000.00 over the single family threshold. It is the net income (Line 236 on Income Tax) that is used for the thresholds.

If Council feel the income thresholds are low, they can share this position with Efficiency Nova Scotia.

Councillor Buchanan questioned whether any Victoria County residents are taking advantage of this program.

Mr. McCormack indicated that there is new data available indicating where the projects are undertaken. There are not as many participants in Victoria County as he would like to see.

Deputy Warden Morrison again brought up the one occupant income threshold. Discussion took place on other housing rebate programs.

Warden Morrison questioned on whether MJM Energy buy their materials locally. Mr. McCormack indicated that MJM sources both locally and out of Sydney, depending on the project. It was felt local sourcing would also assist in promoting this program.

Whether this program applied to community halls was questioned and Mr. McCormack advised that community halls cannot apply for this program, but there are some rebate programs that they could possibly qualify for.

Warden Morrison indicated that Victoria County's Affordable Housing Committee will be holding public sessions throughout the County in the coming months, and he questioned if Mr. McCormack would be interested in attending these sessions to provide information on the Low Income Homeowner Program. He indicated he would be very happy to attend these open house sessions.

Councillor MacNeil questioned if mini-homes qualified for the low income program and he was advised that mini-homes do qualify.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Grant, that a letter be forwarded to Efficiency Nova Scotia requesting that they look at the one occupant income threshold and consider raising the income level to \$25,000.00. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Mr. McCormack for his presentation and he was excused at this time.

2014-15 OPERATING BUDGET

Sandy Hudson presented Draft #3 of the 2014-15 budget, showing both maintaining the current tax rates and decreasing the residential tax rate by one cent and the commercial tax rate by five cents.

Mr. Hudson reviewed the budget with Council. The applications for financial assistance from community organizations are to be reviewed. Deputy Warden Patterson also requested that an amount of \$50,000 to \$60,000 be referred to budget for the establishment of some type of transit program.

It was decided that Council would meet as Committee of the Whole on April 24, 2014, to review the budget. A meeting on investment readiness will be held for Council on that day and once a time is determined, Council will be advised.

Sandy Hudson advised that if Council had any questions or concerns with regard to the budget, they can contact him or Leanne MacLellan at any time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 24, 2014

The minutes of the March 24, 2014, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of March 24, 2014, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Electric Car Stations

Sandy Hudson advised that a presentation on the Electric Car Station will be made at the April 28, 2014, Council meeting in Middle River.

Englishtown Ferry

Sandy Hudson advised that he spoke with John Majchrowicz concerning the Scotian and was advised that this vessel will have to be passed by both the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and Transport Canada before it is put in service.

Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

Whether a response was received from the Minister of TIR with regard to meeting with Council was questioned.

A response has not been received to date.

NEW BUSINESS

VILLAGE OF BADDECK GUARANTEE

Sandy Hudson presented a guarantee resolution for the Village of Baddeck for a public works truck in the amount of \$26,200.00.

It was moved by Councillor Budge, seconded by Deputy Warden Patterson, to approve a guarantee resolution in the amount of \$26,200.00 for the Village of Baddeck's purchase of a public works truck. Motion carried.

BUILDING CANADA FUND

Honourable Denis Lebel, Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs, announced the launch of the New Building Canada Fund.

The current infrastructure priority list for the Municipality was discussed. The number one priority on this list is Bay St. Lawrence/St. Margaret's Village Water, followed by extension of the Dingwall Water to Cape North. Other projects identified, but not prioritized include:

- Extension of Neil's Harbour Water to the New Haven Subdivision
- Extension of Little Narrows Water to both Hazeldale and Red Point
- Extension of Dingwall Water line
- Water for Ingonish and Ingonish Centre area

Sandy Hudson advised that the New Building Canada fund is now "open for business" and the Municipality will have to prioritize the next projects. Whether a number of smaller water projects can be done as one project under the Victoria County Water Utility was questioned.

It was felt that Council should dedicate some time to investigating and prioritizing projects. A further discussion on infrastructure projects will be held at the Committee of the Whole meeting on April 24, 2014.

FINANCIAL CONDITION INDEX

Sandy Hudson that in the next month and one-half the financial condition index for the Municipality will be provided by the Province and from what he understands, the ratings will be done in three bars: red, green and yellow. He anticipates that the Municipality will receive three red bars – taxes outstanding, having one deficit in a 5 year period and not having a capital reserve account.

He indicated that these items are being addressed. Work is being done on outstanding taxes; the deficit incurred will be addressed when there are five reporting years without a deficit; and a capital reserve account has been established. This action will be conveyed to the Province.

The remaining financial condition index should be fine.

PROSPERITY FRAMEWORK

The Prosperity Framework for Cape Breton/Mulgrave is conducting an investment readiness project with all municipalities.

The Municipality provided requested information a couple of weeks ago and Sandy Hudson advised that in the next week or so, the County will be provided with an RFP to accommodate the creation of a small manufacturing facility. The consultants from McSweeney & Associates will be the potential investor and will be meeting with staff on April 23, 2014 and Council on April 24, 2014.

This project will see how the Municipality deals with requests for information from potential investors and developers and will detect the Municipality's gaps and limitations and provide feedback to the Municipality.

The involvement of the Economic Development Committee in this exercise will be determined by the CAO, Warden and Chairman of the Economic Development Committee.

Council will be advised of the time of the meeting on April 24, 2014, when it is determined.

HEAVY GARBAGE COLLECTION

Discussion took place on a heavy garbage collection for the Municipality and the timing of the collection.

Tenders are to be issued for the heavy garbage collection to begin the week of June 9, 2014.

RECESS

Warden Morrison announced that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

Councillor Buchanan advised that he received correspondence from Claudia Gahlinger concerning the Green Cove Memorial that he has forwarded to Council for information.

Receipt of this correspondence will be acknowledged.

A water source for the Bay St. Lawrence/St. Margaret's Village water project was discussed.

It was moved by Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor Budge, that application be made for funding to identify a water source for Bay St. Lawrence/St.

Margaret's Village through the Provincial Capital Assistance Program (PCAP). Motion carried.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil indicated that the dirt roads in his district are in bad shape and at the meeting held in Washabuck a few weeks ago, one of the suggestions for the Gillis Point Road was reverting it to a well maintained gravel road. This is a concern because gravel roads are not well maintained.

This topic will be addressed with the Minister of TIR when a meeting is arranged with him.

Councillor MacNeil questioned on the street light allotment for this budget year. He requested that pending budget approval, a street light be ordered for installation at 642 Highway 223, Little Narrows.

District #3

Deputy Warden Patterson assumed the Chair.

Warden Morrison advised that he has heard that the Department of Community Services will not be renewing their lease for office space at the East Coast Credit Union building.

Sandy Hudson advised that they are renewing for a period of one year, but are looking at alternate locations.

Concern was expressed on future staffing levels and the fact that the caseworker position in the Ingonish office was not permanently replaced.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor Budge, that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Community Services, with a copy to Pam Eyking, MLA, questioning on the future of Department of Community Services offices and staffing in Victoria County. Motion carried.

Destination Cape Breton's Industry Day will be held at the Inverary Resort, Baddeck, on Friday, April 11, 2014. Warden Morrison indicated he will not be available to attend and encouraged Councillors to attend if possible.

Warden Morrison indicated that a number of years ago a light surface repaving was carried out of a number of Village streets. There are now a number of streets within the Village that are in bad shape and have major potholes.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that a letter be forwarded to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal requesting

that they investigate the condition of the streets within the Village of Baddeck and undertake immediate repairs. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison returned to the Chair.

District #8

Councillor Buchanan distributed copies of the 2013 financial statement for the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre to be included in their funding request for budget consideration.

CORRESPONDENCE

ROAD NAME CHANGE – DUNDAS ROAD, INGONISH

Approval of the road name change from Roper's Road to Dundas Road, Ingonish, received approval from both the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and the Eastern District Planning Commission.

It was moved by Councillor Budge, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that the road name change from Roper's Road to Dundas Road, Ingonish, be approved. Motion carried.

CAPE BRETON ISLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

Victoria County does not currently have a representative on the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority Board. Advertisement for people interested in serving on the Board was published in the *Victoria Standard* and one submission was received from Gail Boudreau.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Grant, that Gail Boudreau's name be submitted to the Minister of Community Services as Victoria County's nominee to serve on the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority Board. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

TRANS CANADA TRAIL

At a previous meeting authorization was provided to investigate partners, etc., with regard to a land route in Victoria County for the Trans Canada Trail (TCT).

Councillor Grant updated on a meeting held of all counties on Cape Breton concerning the TCT. Inverness County's TCT will end in Whycocomagh and CBRM and Richmond County will have water routes.

Councillor Grant introduced the possibility of a land trail from Little Narrows to the Seal Island Bridge and received lukewarm support for this initiative at this meeting. He feels,

however, that it would be worthwhile to put this application in should there be additional funding for the TCT in the future.

The route would be 64 kilometers, of which 35 kilometers would be on constructed old roads. The remainder would involve approximately 30 landowners and the Crown.

Discussions have been held with the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association, Wagmatcook First Nations and the Department of Environment in this regard.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that the TCT will have a water route through Victoria County and launch areas will be located in his district and Baddeck, so the TCT is reaching Victoria County.

Councillor Grant requested permission to proceed to submit the application for the land route. This would involve some cost as legal advice would be required for any options for easement that would be forthcoming when negotiating with property owners. He indicated he would do a lot of the work himself.

It was moved by Councillor Grant, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, to pursue the submission of an application for a TCT land route from Little Narrows to the Seal Island Bridge. Motion carried.

CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY – RURAL URBAN IMMIGRATION PILOT PROGRAM

Deputy Warden Patterson advised of an email received from David Wheeler, President, CBU, concerning a Rural-Urban Immigration Pilot for Cape Breton Island. CBU is proposing to join with municipalities and the private sector to set up a Cape Breton Island Task Force on immigration.

This correspondence is to be acknowledged, indicating Council's support, and a copy of the correspondence is to be forwarded to Councillors.

AARON SCHNEIDER

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Aaron Schneider who was in attendance to request Council to reconsider the site for the Never Forgotten National Monument at Green Cove (copy attached).

Warden Morrison indicated that the Municipality has no control over the Cape Breton Highlands National Park and what is decided. He indicated the request will be taken under advisement.

IN CAMERA

It was moved by Councillor Budge, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that Council move In Camera. Motion carried.

It was moved by Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor Budge, to return to the regular session of Council. Motion carried.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, on motion of Deputy Warden Patterson, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Sandy Hudson, CAO

Bruce Morrison, Warden

