

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
June 23, 2014

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, June 23, 2014, at 5:00 p.m. with Warden Bruce Morrison in the Chair.

Present were:

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

Also present were:

Sandy Hudson, CAO
Heather MacLean, Recording Secretary

Absent were:

District #1 – Paul MacNeil
District #8 – Johnny Buchanan

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

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

Gaelic College Presentation

Courtesy of Council was extended to Honourable Rodney MacDonald, Chief Executive Officer, Colaisde na Gàidhlig – Gaelic College.

Mr. MacDonald thanked Council for the opportunity to appear. He presented Council with gifts. He indicated that the Gaelic College is now 76 years old and he extended appreciation to Council for the assistance provided in the past with the 75th anniversary celebrations and the road signage. The road signage has made a difference to the college and the community and it is an important asset to the college's branding. He also thanked Council for other commitments such as exercise equipment that will be set up on site and the assistance with Kitchen Fest. He recognized former Board Member, Deputy Warden Fraser Patterson, and current Board Member, Sandy Hudson, CAO.

The Gaelic College is first and foremost an educational institution. They offer year-around programming and have a \$1.2 million dollar operating budget. The College is a significant employer in Victoria County. A number of staff positions have become full-time and the goal as they move forward is to make additional staff positions full-time.

The plans for the Gaelic College to take it to a whole new level as an educational and cultural institution were outlined. An MOU has been signed with Cape Breton University to offer courses onsite and online in the next year. This is a very exciting venture.

The summer programs were outlined. Mr. MacDonald indicated that there are programs for youth, adults and families in traditional arts, including fiddle, piano, guitar, step-dancing, piping, highland dancing, weaving and Gaelic. A full summer is planned for this summer. There were 300 student weeks last summer and it is anticipated that this will grow. There are new online lessons available – 180 lessons in 6 different disciplines.

KitchenFest is one big Cape Breton kitchen ceilidh that is planned for June 29-July 5, 2014. It is a spinoff from last year's 75th anniversary celebrations and takes the College beyond its own boundaries. KitchenFest will have 12 different venues, with 80 plus events and 100 plus performers. It is an island-wide event that has a huge opportunity for growth in future years. The dates chosen for this event were chosen for a reason and it is hoped that visitors will come to the area earlier to participate and as it becomes known as an annual event, it will grow to be another Celtic Colours.

Mr. MacDonald also made mention of working with Council on an EMO Centre.

Councillor Grant expressed an interest in trails of all kinds and the desire to get a trail directly to the Gaelic College. He questioned on the land sold to the Province by the Gaelic College and who to talk to in this regard. The Department of Natural Resources would be the department with jurisdiction over this land.

Councillor Grant also made mention of a concern with regard to the Gaelic College competing with local hotels/motels. Mr. MacDonald indicated that he appreciated this concern but indicated they are not interested in competition. Most of their overnight stays are the result of group or special events.

Councillor Grant questioned on the courses to be offered through CBU. Courses such as language, history and music are possibilities but they are still in the discussion stage. The courses can be credit or non-credit courses.

Councillor MacInnis questioned on changes in the student enrollment over the past 20 years. Mr. MacDonald indicated he could not speak to that far back, but in recent years there has been an increase annually. He indicated that he was an instructor at the College 20 years ago and

there were probably more youth students at that time, but there has been an increase in adult students in recent years. The decline in the local youth population has also been a challenge.

The Small Halls Festival that was recently held in PEI was discussed. Over 50% of the events were sold out and tourists came to the area. The KitchenFest has the same potential and will be a great asset for the area. A 50/50 split between residents and tourists would be ideal as if the percentage swings too much one way, it will not have the same effect.

Deputy Warden Patterson indicated that the changes made at the Gaelic College over the past few years have made this facility second to none. It does not serve the same purpose as a hotel and is not in competition with them. He also indicated that getting into the schools and getting interest there is a great thing to do. He congratulated Mr. MacDonald and staff on a job well done.

Mr. MacDonald indicated that the support and time and effort put in by volunteers has been an asset and this support is needed to continue to achieve success.

Councillor Dauphinee indicated that he is hearing more positive comments in his area about the College and he is impressed with the upcoming KitchenFest.

Councillor Budge echoed Councillor Dauphinee's comments and offered congratulations to Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. MacDonald indicated that as CEO he wants the Gaelic College to be a year around facility, allowing people to stay in, work in and raise families in Victoria County.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Mr. MacDonald for his presentation and the positive changes that have occurred at the Gaelic College. He then called on Councillor MacInnis to present Mr. MacDonald with a cheque for \$10,000.00 to assist with KitchenFest.

Mr. MacDonald thanked Council for their support and indicated that he left his business card and was available to be contacted at any time.

CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD

Courtesy of Council was extended to Beth MacIsaac, recently appointed Superintendent, and Paul Oldford, Director of Operations, Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board.

Council provided introductions and Ms. MacIsaac indicated that she will be officially commence her duties as Superintendent on August 1, 2014.

The representatives were in attendance to speak to the "*Looking Inward – Disposition of Scenarios to Family of Schools Suggested Solutions – April 2014*" document. Mr. Oldford

indicated that this document is a planning framework for long-term facility provision and system sustainability in a time of changing demographics.

Mr. Oldford indicated he would provide an outline on this document and how it evolved to where we are today. The document was drafted in 2012 and brought to the School Board in the winter of 2013. Public information sessions were held to introduce the document and outline the problem the CBVRSB was facing with declining enrollment.

The decline in enrollment is significant and Mr. Oldford advised that in 1996 there were in excess of 24,000 students in the CBVRSB, where today there are 13,500, with projections seeing a drop in total student enrollment to 13,000 in the near future.

The public information sessions were also to engage the community in the decision process. Mr. Oldford indicated that the Board is spending \$1.8 million more in terms of facility maintenance and this money is being diverted from the students' education.

The document is a discussion document and reflects the feedback received as to what could work. Every school in the Board has a representative on the Committee to deal with the solutions and there are pros and cons to the solutions.

The Department of Education are tabling new legislation with regard to the school review process which should be completed this fall and the effect this will have on the CBRVSB will be determined at that time.

Mr. Oldford indicated that the document is a working document and not cast in stone. They realize that things can change and there needs to be flexibility to change with the circumstances.

Mr. Oldford indicated that another thing that comes into play is the fact that capital funding comes from the Province and this happens later on the government timeline, so there has to be a plan in place.

Mr. Oldford then outlined what this document means to Victoria County. Not much will change in the Victoria South area. A decision has been made to retain the Middle River School and should small school funding be withdrawn, this will be revisited. There may be a grade level reconfiguration that will see P-5 elementary, 6-8 middle school, and 9-12 high school. This would affect the Middle River School in that the school would be a P-5 school, with Grade 6 students being moved to Baddeck Academy.

In terms of Victoria North, it is being suggested that the two P3 schools – Cape Smokey and North Highlands, be retained and reconfigured to be P-8 schools and Cabot High would be changed to a 9-12 school. The cost to purchase the P3 schools would be \$2.5 to \$3 million. There is support in the community to retain the two schools.

The last one Mr. Oldford touched on was the Boularderie School which is included in the northside family of schools. It is being suggested that this school close and the students be sent to Bras d'Or Elementary. There will be a reconfiguration of schools to accommodate this change. Mr. Oldford indicated that Boularderie School is a fairly new, beautiful building and it is anticipated that there will be a great number of comments on this scenario and rightfully so.

Mr. Oldford advised that at the end of the day something has to be done to achieve significant change and the status quo is not an option.

Warden Morrison indicated that the document was a somewhat confusing document to follow and the presentation made the issues much clearer.

Councillor Budge indicated he attended the Ingonish meeting and felt it was a no win situation. There are going to be some happy, but the majority will be unhappy. The negative talk about Cabot High is unwarranted. It is a great school and has problems like every school. Keeping the two P3 schools and making them P-8, would result in necessary changes at Cabot.

Mr. Oldford indicated he appreciated the comments and indicated that no decisions will be made until the outcome of the next round of discussions is heard.

Councillor Dauphinee offered congratulations to Ms. MacIsaac on her appointment as Superintendent. He also felt, like Councillor Budge, that it is a no win situation and comes down to the business plan and dollars. One positive would be improved facilities at Cabot High.

Deputy Warden Patterson congratulated Ms. MacIsaac on her appointment and indicated that she is the first female Superintendent in this Board's history. He questioned on the Boularderie School option. Boularderie is a feeder school to Memorial and is in the northside family of schools. The strategy put forward would have all Grade 9 students going to Memorial, Dr. TL Sullivan would be restructured to a 6 to 8 middle school and it is proposed that Florence Elementary and Boularderie Elementary would close and the students would be placed in a P-5 school at Bras d'Or Elementary. It is anticipated that there will be a great deal of feedback and pushback on this option.

A question was raised on the small school funding that Boularderie, Middle River and Marion Bridge schools receive at present. This is for schools below 100 students. The effect of the possible loss of this funding was discussed.

Deputy Warden Patterson indicated that there needs to be a shift in teaching methods to a more entrepreneurial, creative thinking teaching.

Ms. MacIsaac indicated that this is an excellent comment and if the island is to survive it will be through entrepreneurs. NSCC and CBU are both looking into this aspect.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that access to school facilities has been a problem and was one of the reasons the school was closed in his district.

Mr. Oldford indicated that there is a current community use of school policy in effect and he explained the policy to Council.

Councillor Grant indicated that the Middle River School is in his district and questioned on what the \$150,000 small school funding is used for. The Middle River group are a passionate group and the closure of the school would be great loss.

Mr. Oldford advised that the funding goes to general revenue and is used as it is required. The CBVRSB attempt to house all their students in reasonably similar accommodations that are conducive to learning but there are a lot of needs in the 52 school buildings within the Board. There is a need to reduce the number of buildings as they have too much real estate to maintain at present.

Sandy Hudson questioned if there were any plans or hopes of having a municipal civics program offered in schools. The 125th Anniversary of the Court House was held last Friday and 4 classes from Baddeck Academy attended. They were for the most part unaware of what municipal government is about.

Warden Morrison questioned on the status of the Baddeck Academy renovations and when it might be expected that they will be completed. Mr. Oldford indicated that the funding has not been approved and is before the Treasury Board and until funding is received their hands are tied.

Warden Morrison indicated that conditions of having four seasons in one day – cold to hot, etc. are not conducive to learning. Mr. Oldford indicated that they are aware of the situation and are attempting to resolve this issue. He indicated that every building in the system is unique and with limited resources, only so much can be accomplished.

Council indicated their willingness to work with the Board. More engagement will occur before changes are instituted and Mr. Oldford indicated that there will be tough times ahead. He encouraged Council to contact them at any time should other issues arise.

Warden Morrison thanked the CBVRSB representatives and indicated that when Ms. MacIsaac is settled into her new position, they would again be invited back to Council for further discussion.

RECESS

Warden Morrison announced that Council would recess for 20 minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 9, 2014

The minutes of the June 9, 2014, session of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved by Councillor Budge, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of June 9, 2014, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Physician Recruitment/Facilities

Patricia MacDonald, Facility Manager of Victoria County Memorial and Buchanan Memorial Hospitals, has been in contact regarding scheduling meetings concerning physician recruitment/facilities for both areas of the Municipality. These meetings will be scheduled in the near future and Council will be notified.

NEW BUSINESS

Municipal Services Emergency Management Mutual Aid Agreement

Sandy Hudson presented a Municipal Services Emergency Management Mutual Aid Agreement between the municipalities of Antigonish, Richmond, Inverness, Victoria, Guysborough, St. Mary's, CBRM; the Towns of Antigonish, Mulgrave, and Port Hawkesbury; and Eskasoni, Membertou and Potlotek First Nations.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Deputy Warden Patterson, that that the Municipal Services Emergency Management Mutual Aid Agreement be approved and the Warden and CAO be authorized to sign this agreement. Motion carried.

Deputy Warden Patterson brought up the matter of 72 hour family preparedness and it was indicated that a meeting will be held with Lyle Donovan before the end of the July with regarding to emergency management and preparedness.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #2

Councillor Grant indicated that he spoke with David Swan, Wind Turbine Specialist, with regard to changes in the COMFIT Program that only up to 500 kW turbines come under this program now and how this would affect the 800 kW turbine proposed for the Wreck Cove area.

Mr. Swan agreed that an 800 kW turbine would make more sense for this location and he felt the Municipality should continue to proceed in obtaining the land from DNR in this area and there will be other opportunities and programs available to access in the future.

Councillor Grant indicated that an application was submitted today, the deadline for applying, for a design layout plan for an ATV trail from Aberdeen to Seal Island Bridge under the Nova Scotia Moves Active Transportation Plan.

Councillor Grant brought up the proposed Department of Environment's Wilderness Areas and that the mapping is being prepared and they are taking in public highways. This will prevent private land being accessed without agreement from the Department of Environment. He indicated that this is a concern in the survey community and he felt the Department of Environment should be contacted regarding the Municipality's concern.

It was moved by Councillor Grant, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that a letter be forwarded to the Department of the Environment requesting that Victoria County Council have the opportunity to review the proposed limits of wilderness area designations in Inverness and Victoria Counties before a final determination is made. Motion carried.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis questioned on the status of the student employment with regard to identifying abandoned graveyards in the Municipality.

Sandy Hudson advised that application was made for 7 Canada Summer Jobs student grants and one was approved. Allena MacLeod has been hired for a 10 week period to work on this initiative.

Councillor MacInnis questioned whether action was taken on his request under the dangerous and unsightly premises with regard to Plaster Park in the North Shore. This matter will be investigated.

The status of the policy with regard to a grant in lieu of taxes to community halls was questioned. Sandy Hudson advised that these bills have been pulled at the time of tax billing and a letter will be forwarded to the community halls with regard to the status of their taxation.

District #7

Councillor Budge brought up concern that the tenders for paving in the North Shore and Neil's Harbour have not been issued as yet. Councillor MacInnis indicated that he was advised that the estimates are not complete and these estimates are required before the projects are tendered.

This will delay these projects into the fall season.

Councillor Budge questioned on the status of the new Enviro-Depot for the northern area of the County.

Sandy Hudson advised that Strait Engineering Ltd. is currently doing cost estimates for this project.

District #6

Councillor Dauphinee requested that the tender for snow removal for the Ingonish sidewalks be issued in July to ensure something is in place for the upcoming winter season.

Councillor Dauphinee indicated his desire to have Gerard Jessome, District Director, and Steve MacDonald, Area Manager, TIR, travel to his district to drive his district with him. Councillor Budge requested the same for his district.

It was moved by Councillor Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Budge, that a letter be forwarded to Gerard Jessome, District Director and Steve MacDonald, Area Manager, Department of TIR, requesting that they come to District #6 and #7 to travel the area with the Council members concerning the condition of the roadways in these districts. Motion carried.

Councillor Dauphinee indicated he would be bringing forward information on an unsightly premise in his district at a future meeting.

District #5

Deputy Warden Patterson brought up the matter of private road signs and indicated he would provide information on a signage request for his district.

District #3

Deputy Warden Patterson assumed the Chair.

Warden Morrison brought up the public discussion paper about solid waste regulation in Nova Scotia and the proposed additional bans suggested that will result in additional costs to municipalities. He expressed concern on the further downloading on municipalities and the short duration of the consultation period.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor Grant, that a letter be forwarded to Honourable Randy Delorey, Minister of Environment, with a copy to Honourable Mark Furey, Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Pam Eyking, MLA, indicating

that Council are not in favour of any additional solid waste bans being approved until funding is in place to support these bans and expressing concern on the short consultation period with regard to the public discussion paper about solid waste regulation in Nova Scotia. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison expressed his displeasure with NSPI concerning the response received to a request to switch a street light from the Baddeck Library to Baddeck Academy. He will contact Milo Paruch concerning this matter.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Joan MacInnis and staff who dressed in periodic costume and hosted the successful 125th Anniversary celebrations of the Court House on Friday past.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor Grant, that a letter be forwarded to Steve MacDonald, Area Manager, Department of TIR, requesting that a catch basin be installed in the area of upper Queen Street while the water line project in that area is being completed. Motion carried.

It was moved by Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that a letter of support be forwarded to the Minister of Education requesting that the renovations to Baddeck Academy be completed in a proper and timely manner. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison indicated that there is a vacancy on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Board and he is interested in applying for this vacancy. He requires a letter of consent.

It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Grant, that Warden Morrison be provided with a letter of support for his application to serve on the Board of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison returned to the Chair.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Letter from Harold Carroll, Director, Parks & Recreation, Department of Natural Resources, in reply to Council's letter concerning the former Plaster Provincial Park.
2. Copy of a letter to Ernest Roberts, Chief of the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department, from the Cape Breton Regional Library, concerning an occupational health and safety concern about the building in which the Baddeck Public Library is housed.

TAX SALE

A tax sale was held on Tuesday past. Only one property remained on the tax sale and it was not sold at the sale.

Council requested an update on the tax sale searches completed and outstanding for a future meeting.

Another tax sale will be scheduled in the near future.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Leanne MacLellan, Director of Finance, will be providing a first quarter financial update for the next meeting.

MEETINGS

A meeting on Investment Readiness will be held at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre, Port Hawkesbury, tomorrow at 9:30 a.m.

A meeting on the future of the rail service in Cape Breton will be held at CBRM's Civic Centre on Thursday morning.

The next session of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, July 21, 2014, beginning at 5:00 p.m. Presentations include Transit Business Plan, Outdoor Smoke Free Places and Pam Eyking, MLA.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, on motion of Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Budge, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Sandy Hudson, CAO

Bruce Morrison, Warden

