

**VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL**  
**March 23, 2015**

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, March 23, 2015, 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 #6 – Larry Dauphinee  
District #7 – Wayne Budge  
District #8 – Johnny Buchanan

Also present was:

Heather MacLean, Recording Secretary

Absent were:

Sandy Hudson, CAO (Out of Town)  
District #5 – Fraser Patterson, Deputy Warden (Out of Town)

**CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Warden Morrison called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval. The order of the two presentations will be reversed to allow Mary Tulle, Destination Cape Breton Association to present first. A brief In Camera meeting is to be added to the agenda.

**It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that the agenda be approved with the noted change and addition. Motion carried.**

**MARY TULLE, DESTINATION CAPE BRETON ASSOCIATION**

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Mary Tulle, CEO, Destination Cape Breton Association (DCBA).

Mary Tulle then provided a presentation on the status of tourism in Cape Breton, recapping DCBA's plans and the results achieved in 2014, and an overview of the plans for 2015 (copy attached).

In terms of product development, Ms. Tulle advised that a Training Needs Assessment, Accelerated Market Readiness and Industry Relations Study were undertaken. Two WorldHost workshops were held in Victoria County – one in Ingonish with 10 participants and one in Baddeck with 14 participants. Another WorldHost workshop will be held in Baddeck in April, 2015. A Social Media and database workshop was held in Baddeck on March 12, 2015, and she outlined some of the businesses who have participated in the Accelerated Market Readiness process. Work has been undertaken with municipal partners to create a “Locals Know” weblink on cbisland.com. that includes hidden gems, the best of within each municipality and itinerary development support.

The development goals for 2015-2016 including Niche Ports; L’Experience Acadie; continuing to build the culinary product as an economic driver within Cape Breton; and develop a product inventory of market-ready festivals and events, packages, and experiences, including resources and tools.

Ms. Tulle provided statistics on the 2014 marketing objectives which resulted in a 1% increase in room nights over 2013, a 5% increase in average spending per visitor over 2013 and 4% increase in the average length of stay over 2013.

The top Canadian and US markets were outlined, as were the age range, employment status and household income for both the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency (NSTA) and DCBA.

Ms. Tulle indicated that moving into 2015, DCBA will better align with the NSTA in four key areas and she outlined how this would be achieved.

- Marketing
- Research
- Creative
- Website

Ms. Tulle outlined the mobilization and growth of Niche markets such as cruise, golf, meetings and conventions and product clubs such as the Celtic Heart, Unama’ki, Cabot Trail and L’Experience Acadie. Municipalities, communities and other groups that influence Cape Breton as a vibrant and growing tourism destination were outlined.

The Ivany Report Goal 14; Tourism Expansion was discussed. The development of an integrated plan, which draws from our respective tourism/development plans, was outlined. This document will tell the story of tourism of Cape Breton Island, and allow for one integrated funding proposal. DCBA is proposing to take the lead on the creation/accumulation of information in the coming 6 months. It is time for our industry to speak as one unified voice.

Ms. Tulle requested that the Municipality maintain the \$10,000 that is provided annually to DCBA for industry development.

It was indicated that a big part of our culture is the availability to talk to people. This means a lot to tourists and is part of the whole tourism program.

Envisioning Cape Breton Island as a year around destination was discussed. The availability of infrastructure that is open for business year around is imperative to year around tourism. The abundance of hiking trails in Victoria County and the significant impact hiking has on tourism in the County was discussed. Small ports and what is happening in other areas with small ports was also reviewed.

The fact that Cape Breton Island has recently been named the #3 island in the world and #1 in North America was mentioned.

The government's announced of cuts to staffing at provincial parks and VIC's was brought up. There was a rally in Whycocomagh on Saturday, March 21, 2015, in regard to the Whycocomagh Parks. Seven jobs are being lost from this park. The impact this will have on tourism was discussed.

The VIC matter was also discussed and Ms. Tulle indicated they are looking at a new approach for the VIC's and this matter will be investigated further. The Cape Breton Island VIC in Halifax remains in operation and is a great success. DCBA also have a partnership with Marine Atlantic which she outlined.

The cutbacks at the Keltic Lodge were discussed. The resort will have a later season opening and some staff have been laid off and others not returning.

Ian Green indicated that Victoria County should develop a Tourism Economic Development Strategy for the County, where tourism is of such vital importance to the County.

Whether Ms. Tulle's presentation was available to the public was questioned and she advised that the presentation would be available through the Municipality or on the Destination Cape Breton site.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Mary Tulle for her optimistic report on tourism.

**It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that Destination Cape Breton's request for financial assistance be referred to budget deliberations. Motion carried.**

**ENGLISHTOWN FERRY BRIDGE REPLACEMENT OPTION**

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, and Bruce Fitzner, Chief Engineer, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (TIR).

Warden Morrison outlined that the Deputy Minister would be providing opening remarks, followed by the presentation by Bruce Fitzner. The meeting will then be opened to questions from Council and then the public. The public are to address their questions through the Chair.

It was indicated that representatives from TIR are available to meet with the larger community at a later date if it is requested.

Deputy Minister LeFleche outlined Minister MacLellan's regrets on not being in attendance. He has a previously scheduled meeting in Lunenburg tomorrow at 8:00 a.m. He also indicated that MLA Pam Eyking and Chief Engineer Bruce Fitzner were in attendance.

Mr. Fitzner then began the presentation (copy attached) indicating that TIR was requested by Victoria County Municipal Council to explore the feasibility of replacing the existing Englishtown Ferry with a permanent bridge structure.

A preliminary study determined that if a bridge is to be built, the preferred option would be a bridge with a lift span.

The Englishtown Ferry site contains many physical constraints – the deep inlet, short approach on the Englishtown side, and the Jersey Cove approach is on a sandy shoal that is a marginal elevation above sea-level. The site also has important details currently unknown.

The current ferry is the *Torquil MacLean*. The annual operating cost of the ferry operation is \$1,254,923.00 and the crossing fees collected amount to \$477,200.00. The voyage is 185 meters, with a crossing time of 90 seconds. Total voyages are 45,000, with vehicle traffic of 226,000 (470,000 passengers). The ferry service sails on demand.

The type of bridge that will work at this location was outlined. Mr. Fitzner indicated that the bridge needs to be high or have the ability to open to allow boats to sail into St. Ann's Harbour. A lift bridge was felt to be the best solution. There is a bridge of a comparative structure being built in Placentia, Newfoundland, at a cost of \$40.67 million. Taking this cost, and determining the requirements at Englishtown, it is estimated that the cost at a minimum would be \$45 million.

The comparative costs of a bridge vs a ferry operation were outlined. The costing factors used were also provided. The conclusion of the study indicates that the yearly cost of the bridge is more expensive until year 22-23 when the ferry requires replacement. At year 44-45 the overall costs of either option are equal. At year 53 the bridge shows a positive cost comparison due to the new ferry acquisition. By year 75, a new bridge would be required.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that they went through this process in Iona 25 years ago by replacing the ferry at the Barra Strait with a bridge. It is convenient; however, jobs were lost in the area. He questioned on undertaking such a study for a bridge at Little Narrows.

Mr. LaFleche indicated a study could be done at the Little Narrows Ferry site if requested and Councillor MacNeil indicated he would like to see one completed for this location.

The Department's point of view on their preference with regard to bridge vs ferry was questioned. The Department have 4,100 bridges to look after province-wide with \$30 to \$40 million spent annually on the bridges. A new bridge would double this budget and capital funding would have to be increased. Such decisions are made on the priority of government politicians.

Councillor MacInnis advised that one obvious omission in the presentation is the reliability factor. There is no ferry service now. The service over the past 40 years has deteriorated and this is an obstacle for everyone living north of the ferry.

Councillor Buchanan also mentioned the reliability factor. The Englishtown Ferry is the highest returning, highest traffic ferry in the system. Whether a toll bridge was considered was questioned and the gentlemen indicated they had not looked into that option.

Councillor Budge indicated he would not be opposed to a toll bridge if it meant keeping jobs. The current ferry operation is a frustration for everyone. It might help the economy to have a bridge.

There is a renewed interest in the ferry operations by Transport Canada and this has led to significant changes for TIR.

Councillor Dauphinee indicated that the unreliability of the ferry operation prevents people from coming to northern Victoria County and this has a detrimental impact on the economy of the area. The condition of the alternate route is also a concern.

The possibility of a private/public partnership was discussed. This would not be on the governments books. It was indicated that there are a number of ways to do things and TIR are prepared to be flexible and innovative with the options.

Warden Morrison indicated that the ferry and roads are not a municipal responsibility. The municipality brings the issues forward and advocates to the province. The resources belong to the province. He indicated that there is rarely a more discussed issue in Council than the Englishtown Ferry. It is not a new issue and everyone knows it is an issue and something must be done.

Pam Eyking, MLA, indicated that she would like to see the \$500,000.00 in fees collected included in the study and would like a review done of the ferry services to determine why and when it is being pulled out of service.

The public in attendance were then given the opportunity to ask questions which were addressed by Mr. LeFleche and Mr. Fitzner.

**It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that the Englishtown Ferry Bridge Replacement Option report be accepted. Motion carried.**

Copies of the presentation are available and Warden Morrison indicated that the role of municipal government is to work with the province on provincial issues.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Mr. LaFleche and Mr. Fitzner for their presentation.

**RECESS**

Warden Morrison advised that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 9, 2015**

The minutes of the March 9, 2015, meeting 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 March 9, 2015, be approved as presented. Motion carried.**

**BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

**Welcome Event – District #1**

Councillor MacNeil indicated that a Welcome Event was held in his district recently with approximately 80 to 90 people in attendance. He indicated another such event will be hosted next year.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Eric Thomas Whitty – Quit Claim Deed Request**

A request was received from Dan Chaisson that the Municipality issue a quit claim deed to Eric Thomas Whitty, Ingonish Beach.

Solicitor MacDowell has reviewed the request and has indicated that a quit claim deed can be issued conditional on a Release & Indemnity Agreement being executed.

**It was moved by Councillor Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that a quit claim deed be issued to Eric Thomas Whitty conditional on a Release and Indemnity Agreement be executed upon confirmation by the Solicitor. Motion carried.**

**Surplus Property – Big Harbour**

Council passed a motion on September 8, 2015, that the Municipality advise the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal of the Municipality's interest in acquiring the surplus property identified at Big Harbour.

It is the County's policy to obtain waterfront access for future use whenever possible.

A letter was received from Denise Allen, on behalf of Judy and David Allen, who feels this parcel of land, has been in their ownership for years and are requesting Council to rescind their motion to acquire the property.

Council indicated they were not prepared to rescind the motion and the Allen's can come to Council to make a presentation on this matter.

**Public Works**

Council was advised that all Public Works facilities will be closed on Wednesday, March 25, 2015, and garbage collection scheduled for that day has been rescheduled to Friday, March 27, 2015, to enable the staff to attend an all-day training session.

**Deputy Warden Patterson**

Warden Morrison indicated that he neglected to advise Council that Deputy Warden Patterson is in Halifax, today and tomorrow, attending meetings on Community Engagement on Ageing Issues.

**DISTRICT CONCERNS**

**District #6**

Councillor Dauphinee brought up the concern with regard to the Keltic Lodge. To date, one person has been laid off and there are more cutbacks to come. A letter was forwarded to the Minister, with no response, and contact is to be made in this regard again.

**District #7**

Councillor Budge brought up the issue of changes to the school bus routes. This is a concern county-wide.

**It was moved by Councillor Budge, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that Colleen MacMullin and Paul Oldford, CBVRSB, be requested to come to Council to discuss changes to school bus routes throughout Victoria County. Motion carried.**

**District #4**

Councillor MacInnis indicated he was contacted by the owners of the Wreck Cove General Store with regard to an agency liquor outlet for that location.

**It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Budge, that the County provide a letter of support to the Wreck Cove General Store for their application for an agency liquor outlet. Motion carried.**

**District #2**

Councillor Grant indicated that in order to promote winter tourism and economic development in Victoria County, he would like a letter forwarded to the Minister of TIR requesting consideration be given to changes to access and the controlled highway designation on the TCH 105.

**It was moved by Councillor Grant, seconded by Councillor Budge, that a letter be forwarded to the Honourable Geoff MacLellan, Minister of TIR, requesting that the overpass at Exit #9 be designated as a multi-purpose crossing from Baddeck which will allow motorized vehicles such as ATV's to legally cross the overpass to access existing trails in the County and also requesting that the non-access highway designation on the controlled access portion of the TCH 105 be removed at snowmobile crossing locations designated by the Snowmobile Association of Nova Scotia (SANS) to allow trail users to patronize the businesses in Baddeck for goods, services and accommodations. Motion carried.**

A provincial meeting will be held at the Inverary Resort tomorrow and Councillor Grant indicated that those interested in attending should come for 9:00 a.m. Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister; Bruce Fitzner, Chief Engineer, DTIR, and Pam Eyking, MLA, will be in attendance. The issue of trails will be discussed at this meeting, along with other issues.

**District #1**

Councillor MacNeil brought up the rally that was held in Whycocomagh on Saturday concerning the cutbacks at the provincial park in Whycocomagh.

**It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that a letter be forwarded to the Premier and Minister of DNR requesting they rescind their decision with regard to staff cutbacks and especially the use of automated machines at provincial parks. Motion carried.**

Councillor MacNeil brought up the condition of the Gillis Point Road. The road will be impassable in the spring.

**It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that a letter be forwarded to Honourable Geoff MacLellan, Minister of TIR, requesting he take a drive on the Gillis Point Road to see firsthand the condition of this road. Motion carried.**

Councillor MacNeil also expressed concern with regard to the operation of snow plows and the inexperience of some drivers where no winging is being done or turning spots created. He felt more training is required for the snow plow operators.

**It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by councillor MacInnis, that a letter be forwarded to Honourable Geoff MacLellan, Minister of TIR, concerning the snow plow operations and requesting that snow plow operators be provided with proper training. Motion carried.**

**District #4**

Councillor MacInnis indicated he received a number of calls on the Big Harbour surplus property decision of Council and he asked that Denise, Judy and David Allen be invited to Council to present on their behalf.

The Tim Horton's/Irving traffic situation was again brought forward. There was to have been a meeting concerning the dangerous traffic problems at this location but the Irving representative cancelled. It was felt that even traffic enforcement for speeders in this area would be an asset. There is a 90 km speed zone in this area. This matter will be addressed when the RCMP attend Council in April.

**THINK CAPE BRETON FIRST**

Warden Morrison brought up Business Cape Breton's Think Cape Breton First campaign and presented signs and posters that they would like the County to display. The launch of the campaign will be held on March 31, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. in the CBRM.

**It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that the Municipality endorse the Think Cape Breton First campaign. Motion carried.**

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Leanne MacEachen, Director of Finance, indicated that she would like to transfer money from the reserve account to operating if necessary by year end.

**It was moved by Councillor Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacInnis, that authorization be given to transfer money from the operating reserve account to the general operating account if needed. Motion carried.**

Ms. MacEachen requested Council to have their expenses to the end of March into the Finance Department for payment for year end.

Councillor Budge indicated that this has not been the policy and there is nothing in the Travel Expense Policy to indicate this is a requirement. The Travel Expense Policy requires an amendment and will be brought to Council for approval.

**IN CAMERA**

**It was moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, to move In Camera to deal with personnel issues. Motion carried.**

**It was moved by Councillor Buchanan, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee, that Council come out of In Camera and return to regular session. Motion carried.**

**MOTION ACCEPTING IN CAMERA RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It was moved by Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor Buchanan, that the recommendations of the In Camera meeting concerning personnel issues be accepted. Motion carried.**

**ENGLISHTOWN FERRY**

Warden Morrison again reiterated that the community consultation process regarding the Englishtown Ferry/Bridge issue is a responsibility of the province and they should lead these sessions and discussions. The Municipality will work with the province.

A letter is to be forwarded to the Minister of TIR clearly stating that the decision of a ferry/bridge for Englishtown and the proposed community consultations for same are a provincial responsibility.

**SUNDAY HUNTING**

The Department of Natural Resources is considering lifting the ban that prohibits Sunday hunting. The Department wants to input on lifting the ban and have developed an online questionnaire on the DNR website.

Council felt that individuals can fill out the form and provide their opinion on this matter. If it becomes more of a public issue, then Council can deal with the matter.

**ADJOURN**

**There being no further business, on motion of Councillor MacInnis, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, that meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.**

**Bruce Morrison, Warden**

**Sandy Hudson, CAO**