

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

May 9, 2016

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, May 9, 2016, 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 #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. Warden Morrison advised that Cathy Lamey, BABTA, will be provided a few minutes on the agenda with regard to Municipal representation from all districts on a Committee regarding the operation of the VIC.

DESTINATION CAPE BRETON ASSOCIATION

Courtesy of Council was extended to Mary Tulle, CEO, Destination Cape Breton Association (DCBA), who was in attendance to make a presentation on Destination Cape Breton Association's 2016 Strategy (copy attached).

Ms. Tulle indicated that Tourism Nova Scotia (TNS) is a crown corporation under the scope of the Department of Business. Tourism Nova Scotia's four pillars are:

- Invest in markets of highest return
- Focus on world class experiences
- Attract first-time visitors to Nova Scotia
- Build Nova Scotia's Tourism confidence

It is projected that tourism revenues will reach \$4 Billion by 2024. TNS's adoption of a explore quotient was outlined. The short term focus is marketing to attract authentic

experiencers and cultural explorers, with the medium term focus on product development for the free spirit tourist.

Cape Breton Island's portion of the projected tourism revenues is expected to be \$642 Million by 2024, with projected non-resident visitation of 411,000 by that date.

Ms. Tulle indicated that from 2011 to 2015, there has been a 4% increase in total room nights sold on Cape Breton Island. She outlined DCBA's 2016 goals and guiding principles in aligning with TNS.

Ms. Tulle advised on the type of tourists that are coming to Cape Breton and the top motivators why tourists come to Cape Breton.

Cape Breton Island's product development and market readiness were outlined. 2015 focused on assessment for market readiness of product clubs and niche markets. Operators are market ready. Forthcoming initiatives include winter product assessment, outdoor product assessment and performing arts assessment.

Ms. Tulle indicated that five of Nova Scotia's seven "Destination Canada: Signature Experiences" take place on Cape Breton Island. The 2016 Strategy for product development includes:

- Collaborating with TNS to develop world class experiences (complimenting DCBA's Signature Experiences)
- Developing market-ready packages, experiences and itineraries
- Executing next steps with niche product inventories and assessments

Ms. Tulle outlined how DCBA aligned with TNS in terms of marketing. TNS's 2016 campaign was explained and six short videos – ocean, history, culture, food and drink, adventure and natural beauty were shown to Council. DCBA will maintain their creative videos of 2015 in 2016.

Website content and visitation on novascotia.com and cbisland.com were discussed and reaching out to the audience was outlined in terms of continued alignment with TNS and regional marketing. The new cbisland.com website was launched on April 7, 2016.

Ms. Tulle outlined the TNS Partnership Agreement changes and the 2016 marketing strategy in regard to advertising.

Council were provided with a copy of the Experience Cape Breton Island 2016 edition. 300,000 copies of this publication were printed and the targeted distribution was outlined.

The highlights for 2016 include the Travel Media Association of Canada's visits - June 22-25, 2016. Approximately 100 members of the national travel media and 120 industry and destination representatives will be coming. There are 22 media tours, including pre and post Fam Tours. A total of 220 rooms are booked in Victoria County. In terms of food and beverage, there will be 441 total media visits. 221 total media visits are booked for experiences in Victoria County.

2016 marks the 75th anniversary of the Keltic Lodge and Highland Links. Ms. Tulle indicated that DCBA will continue with the 16in16 – Authentic Cape Breton Events.

The effect of the "Trump Bump" was explained. There has been a significant increase in website visits, with 599,809 to April 30, 2016. There has been unprecedented media coverage and international exposure that was never expected. DCBA recognized the opportunity and Ms. Tulle explained how they took the lead to capitalize on the "Trump Bump". A group of engaged stakeholders are collectively determining the next steps in this regard. The "Trump Bump" is real.

Ms. Tulle advised that welcometocapebreton.ca was launched on March 29, 2016 and she provided statistics of the site visits to date. This site outlines how you can move here, visit here, invest here and study here. Ms. Tulle indicated that last year there was one US resident enrolled at CBU and to date this, 27 applications have been received for next year.

DCBA today will continue to promote Golf Cape Breton, Events Cape Breton, Boating Cape Breton and the 2016 Race the Cape.

Deputy Warden Patterson questioned on feedback received with regard to the Trump Bump". Ms. Tulle indicated that the greatest feedback is through Facebook and has been mainly positive. He outlined a recent restaurant visit and the length of time it took to receive service. This is an area that requires improvement.

Councillor Dauphinee indicated he was happy to see the DCBA will not be aligning with the TNS video campaign and maintaining their creative video campaign for 2016. He brought up the issue of the condition of the Cabot Trail in terms of roads, viewscapes, etc. He requested that any push or influence that could be made on the province and federal infrastructure to upgrade is required.

Whether the VIC was still located on Keltic Drive was questioned and Ms. Tulle indicated that the Joan Harris Cruise Pavilion serves this function. Whether TNS is attempting to download VIC operations on the municipalities was discussed.

Discussion took place on the winter tourism project and Ms. Tulle indicated that this should definitely be in place for the 2016/17 winter season. An incentive to have tourism facilities remain open in the winter was discussed.

The Chinese tourism market was discussed and how this could we captured. Golf and lobster are two important aspects of this initiative.

Councillor Grant brought up winter tourism and felt that a push should be made to form the stakeholder group to partner and move forward on this matter.

The required infrastructure improvements to the Cabot Trail were again brought up. Tom Wilson updated on the proposal for viewscapes, streetscapes and façade that is presently being drafted and almost finished. This is a \$1.8 Million project mostly on the Cabot Trail.

Whether the price of gas would have an effect tourism was discussed and this was not considered to have an impact on tourism this year or in years to come.

Cathy Lamey indicated that her business has seen tremendous growth last year and reservations this year have been strong to date. She indicated that she was thrilled with the information on the free spirit market and Ms. Tulle outlined the age category client and how this is anticipated to work in terms of operator bookings.

Warden Morrison indicated that the buy in costs for small business operators for some initiatives are too high, making it difficult for small business to buy into these initiatives independently.

The future of welcome centres was discussed. It appears that the operation of these centres is being downloaded from the Province. These centres are an important part of the visitor experience. We have to work together on this initiative island wide.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Mary Tulle for her update on Cape Breton Island tourism.

BABTA

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Cathy Lamey, President, BABTA.

Cathy Lamey indicated that sometime ago, it was agreed to put a team together regarding the Baddeck VIC and she requested each Council member to provide the name of their representative on the Committee by May 20, 2016. This group will need to work together on the long term sustainability of the VIC. A name for the VIC will be a function of this Committee also.

NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURAL LAND POLICY

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Chris van den Heuvel, President, Inverness/Victoria Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. van den Heuvel thanked Council for the opportunity to appear. He advised that he is currently President of the Inverness/Victoria Federation of Agriculture, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and President/Chair of the Atlantic Federation of Agriculture. He operates a dairy farm in the Mabou/Port Hood area.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture was formed in 1895 and represents over 2400 farm families in Nova Scotia. There are 27 commodity groups and 13 agriculture federations, including the Inverness/Victoria and Cape Breton/Richmond Federations of Agriculture.

The Inverness/Victoria Federation is very strong. They have 45 pieces of farm equipment worth close to \$1 million and a machinery rental program that is a model for community sharing. Last year a round baler and bale wagon was purchased at the request of Victoria County farmers.

Mr. van den Heuvel outlined agricultural facts and figures. In particular in Victoria County, there are 19 registered farms, with 4 new entrants in 2015. A total of 2900 (7200 acres) hectares are farmed in Victoria County.

The standing policies of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture were outlined and in particular, a policy regarding agriculture land was outlined. Agriculture land is necessary for all farm operations and is a major capital cost for new and expanding farms. It is less expensive to keep agriculture land in operation, than to redevelop it once it is out of production.

The Agriculture Land Policy would include:

- Access to Crown land
- Zero taxation on land
- Land bank
- Funding to develop land for agriculture

Mr. van den Heuvel provided Victoria County land statistics. There are 24,000 hectares of Class 2, 3, 4 agricultural lands – 12.3% of the total County land base and 2.2% of provincial agricultural land. 325 hectares are Class 2 soils.

He requested Council's continued support for community agriculture organizations such as the Inverness/Victoria Federation of Agriculture, Mabou Community Pasture Coop and the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub. He also requested municipal support and representation on an Agricultural Land Use Policy Workgroup Committee.

Mr. van den Heuvel provided information on the Land Bank Program, scenarios where the program could be used and the benefits of the program.

Councillor MacNeil mentioned that the Cape Breton Partnership are undertaking an asset management inventory and one of the first steps is a land database and he questioned if this would be of any benefit for the agriculture sector. A discussion will be held with the Cape Breton Partnership in this regard.

The four new farm operations opened in Victoria County in 2015 were discussed. Mr. van den Heuvel indicated that these figures were provided by the Department of Agriculture.

Councillor Grant indicated that the land bank program and lease possibilities would be a great asset.

Councillor MacInnis congratulated Mr. van den Heuvel on his accomplishments. The PEI initiative regarding Mennonite farmers was discussed. Whether this could also apply here was questioned.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that there is no working farm land in his district and there is tremendous potential in this area.

Mr. van den Heuvel indicated his dairy farm has 110 head of cattle. Deputy Warden Patterson indicated he grew up on a farm with 25 to 30 head of cattle. He questioned how new farmers can access quota. Mr. van den Heuvel indicated that there is a new entrant program through the Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia.

Deputy Warden Patterson indicated that there are a couple of farms in his district that have been retired, but the possibility of keeping the farm land in play was discussed.

Further discussion was held on the continued support of the Federation and Council representation on the Agricultural Land Use Policy Workgroup/Committee.

It was moved and seconded that Councillor Merrill MacInnis be appointed to the Agricultural Land Use Policy Workgroup/Committee. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Chris van den Heuvel for his presentation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 25, 2016/BUDGET MINUTES – MAY 3, 2016

The minutes of the April 25, 2016, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

The Budget Committee minutes of May 3, 2016, were also presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of April 25, 2016, and the Budget Committee minutes of May 3, 2016, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

The Ross Ferry community road signs have been requested from the Department of TIR.

Minister Hines has advised that he will meet with Council in Halifax and has referred the Protected Areas issue to his colleague, Minister Miller, Department of Environment. The CAO will work on arranging meetings with both in Halifax.

2016-2017 OPERATING BUDGET

Leanne MacEachen, Director of Finance, indicated that the 2016-2017 budget revenue is \$12,142,281.00, with expenditures of \$12,137,252.00, for a small surplus of \$4,966.00.

It was moved and seconded that the 2016-2017 operating budget for the Municipality of the County of Victoria be approved. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that the tax rates for 2016-2017 be \$1.20 residential and \$2.10 commercial. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that the interest rate be set at 10% per annum and the due date for taxes be August 1, 2016. Motion carried.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #1

Councillor MacNeil again brought up the condition of the roads in his district. There is inadequate funding for maintenance this year and it was felt that more pressure has to happen, from not just Council, but the public, to get the Minister's attention on this matter.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that the email received from Eileen Oldford, Business Cape Breton, needs further explanation and he felt she should be requested to come to Council to explain the figures outlined.

It was moved and seconded that Eileen Oldford, Business Cape Breton, be requested to come to Council. Motion carried.

District #2

Councillor Grant indicated that Hardy Thurber has recently received a Volunteer of the Year Award from the All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Nova Scotia (ATVANS).

It was moved and seconded that a letter of congratulations be forwarded to Hardy Thurber for winning the Volunteer of the Year Award from ATVANS. Motion carried.

Councillor Grant advised that a retirement dinner is being planned for Jim Morrow. The dinner will be held on June 3, 2016, at 6:00 p.m. at the Wagmatcook Culture and Heritage Centre. Tickets are \$25.00 and all Council are invited to attend.

He expressed appreciation to Jim Morrow for his years of service to the Municipality and welcomed Andrew Brooks who has officially taken over the business,

District #4

A meeting will be held with Honourable Geoff MacLellan, Minister of TIR, on Monday, May 16, 2016. Councillor MacInnis will be unable to attend due to the first day of fishing season, but wanted the Englishtown Ferry situation stressed to the Minister. The ferry is presently out of service for repairs in a busy time where approximately 500 fishermen are getting ready to begin their season. The status of the Englishtown Bridge study will be addressed. Councillor Buchanan also extended his regrets on not being able to attend the meeting and reiterated Councillor MacInnis' concerns.

District #6

It was moved and seconded that \$5,000.00 be approved from the District #6 budget for Ski Cape Smokey. Motion carried.

District #7

Councillor Budge advised that the Beginners License Testing and Driver testing are no longer being done in the Ingonish area. The service used to be provided once per month. Residents now have to travel to Baddeck or Cheticamp to access this service.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Registry of Motor Vehicles requesting that the Beginner License and Driver testing service be reinstated in the Ingonish area on a once per month basis. Motion carried.

Whether any information was received on when the lines would be painted on the roadways in Victoria County was questioned. It was indicated the painting is to begin the end of May on the 100 Series highway and then work out from there.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated he was contacted by LFA27 Management with regard to the loss of funding from ACOA to survey the lobster larvae floats this year. Previous years funding was provided. This is a concern.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil questioned whether a reply was received from the NSUARB on a rate for bulk water sales.

Sandy Hudson advised that nothing has been received to date.

District #3

The proposed closure of the chronic pain clinic at the Northside General Hospital was discussed. This clinic is accessed by a number of Victoria County residents.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Nova Scotia Health Authority requesting that the chronic pain clinic at the Northside General Hospital remain open. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that a \$5,000.00 donation be made to the Canadian Red Cross for the Fort McMurray Fire Relief Fund. Motion carried.

Names for the VIC Committee are to be submitted to the Municipal Office prior to May 20, 2016.

Heavy garbage pickup will be held beginning the week of June 6, 2016. Public service announcements, the website and social media sites will provide an update on this matter.

There is already heavy garbage placed at the roadsides in some areas and whether it would be removed prior to the Cabot Trail Relay, especially in the area where the race travels, was questioned. The CAO will check with Robert Dauphinee in this regard.

CORRESPONDENCE

A thank you was received from Heather MacInnis, the Provincial Volunteer Award recipient for Victoria County, who attended the Provincial ceremony in Halifax and the local ceremony at the Gaelic College, St. Ann's.

Terry Murray questioned whether a reply was received on the bridge repairs below the AG Bell Museum.

Warden Morrison indicated that he was informed by TIR staff that there would be one way traffic allowed during the repairs.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved to adjourn at 7:30 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Sandy Hudson, CAO