

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
August 29, 2016

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre, Bay St. Lawrence, on Monday, August 29, 2016, 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 #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. He extended a thank you to Councillor Buchanan for inviting Council to his district and welcomed those in attendance.

The agenda was presented for approval and an addition of a presentation to the Bay St. Lawrence Volunteer Fire Department was included on the agenda.

It was moved and seconded that the agenda be approved with the noted addition. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION – BAY ST. LAWRENCE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Councillor Buchanan made a presentation to a representative from the Bay St. Lawrence Volunteer Fire Department, in recognition of the 25th anniversary of the Bay St. Lawrence Crab Fest and Fishing Derby.

CAPE BRETON ISLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

Courtesy of Council was extended to Joan McKeough, Director, Cape Breton Island Housing Authority.

Council provided introductions and Warden Morrison mentioned that today was Councillor MacNeil's 51st Birthday.

Ms. McKeough thanked Council for the opportunity to appear to provide an update on the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority (copy attached).

There are five Housing Authorities province-wide and they are responsible for the administration, operation and maintenance of Nova Scotia's rental properties. Each Housing Authority has a board responsible for tenant issues.

Ms. McKeough indicated that the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority covers CBRM, Richmond, Inverness, Victoria and the Town of Port Hawkesbury. The housing portfolio for this area is a total of 3467 housing units – 1366 family and 2101 senior. Of these totals, Victoria County has 26 family units and 49 senior units for a total of 75. She outlined accessibility in Victoria Seniors Housing.

The public housing program eligibility was outlined. It is based on income, age and residency criteria. Household income limits were outlined. Those 58 year of age and over are eligible for seniors housing. You must be a permanent resident of Canada or have landed immigrant status and also have municipal residency to qualify. Residency requirements may be waived for priority reasons such as employment, education/training, medical or supportive services. Board approval and Housing Nova Scotia approval is required to waive residency.

Ms. McKeough also outlined the rent supplement program. This is done in partnership with private sector landlords. The Housing Authority pays a portion of the tenant's rent directly to the landlord. This creates more affordable housing units in the community and is another affordable housing option for senior and family renters.

The applicant waiting list was outlined. At present there are 14 applications for seniors, 4 for family and 1 under the age of 58 which can only be selected when there are no eligible senior applicants on file. She also outlined vacancy information to year end March 31, 2016.

Municipal units share in the deficit of public housing by providing a percentage of the operating loss determined for each project in the handover agreement signed at the time of construction. The municipal share of the net operating loss is 10.7% for a total of \$43,025.00 this past fiscal year. The Cape Breton Island Housing Authority also pays property and water/sewer costs to the Municipality. The amount paid to March 31, 2016 was \$50,940.00.

Ms. McKeough presented Council with contact information for staff of the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority.

Deputy Warden Patterson questioned on the rent supplement program and whether it was income based and Ms. McKeough indicated it is, with the same thresholds.

Whether there was any flexibility with the threshold limits was questioned. There can be exceptions but individuals under the threshold limits are targeted first.

Councillor Dauphinee requested clarification that the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority administers the rental programs and Housing Nova Scotia handles the grant programs for homes. Ms. McKeough indicated that this is correct.

Councillor Buchanan indicated that it is good to see that the rental homes in his district will be put on the market for sale; however, a cleanup of the property is required. Ms. McKeough advised she would look into this and arrange cleanup. She will keep Councillor Buchanan informed.

Whether vacancies could be advertised on the County website was questioned and can be arranged.

Councillor MacInnis questioned whether the rent supplement program could be utilized to move seniors into one residence for the winter months. There are a number of large homes in his district with one person residing in them and for safety and security he felt it would be best to have these residents in one home. This could be investigated further as a possibility under the rent supplement program.

Councillor Grant indicated that Victoria County has approximately ½ of the number of housing units than any other unit in Cape Breton. He questioned why Victoria County cannot obtain more housing units.

Ms. McKeough indicated that the Province has just completed a housing strategy and there will be funding provincially in the next couple of years. A letter from the Municipality requesting additional units could be an asset in this regard.

The two units that are being listed for sale were discussed and whether the monies received could be set aside for new construction in Victoria County was questioned. At present, the money realized from the sale of property goes into the general coffers.

Ms. McKeough indicated that they are hopeful that the Federal Housing Strategy will include new programs.

Whether background checks are completed on applicants for housing was questioned. Ms. McKeough indicated that landlord reference checks are completed across the board and when there are red flags, additional checks are made. Nothing is fool proof though and it is a difficult process to evict tenants.

The waiting list for Capstick Manor was questioned and there are presently two on the list.

Councillor Grant indicated that there are residents who do not apply for housing as they know the wait list for units in Baddeck is long. There are presently 13 applicants on the waitlist for Baddeck. Ms. McKeough indicated it is beneficial to apply and build up the list and this would show the case for additional units.

Whether a relationship with MacLeod House could be a possibility and whether assistance could be provided with rental in his building was questioned. Ms. McKeough indicated that contact could be made between the organizations.

Whether there was a way for the public to access the wait list was questioned. This information could be shared on a quarterly basis for posting on the County website.

A member of the audience questioned on why rural areas have less and felt there should be a better focus/mechanism on getting information to the public.

Whether the Housing Authority used social media, i.e. Facebook Page, to get information out was questioned. Ms. McKeough indicated that work has to be done on web based information sites province-wide.

Further discussion took place and it was indicated that the need in rural areas is very different than the need in urban areas. Residents interested in rental units should get their name on the list to build up the list. This would assist in the case of additional units.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Ms. McKeough for the information provided.

RECESS

Warden Morrison advised that Council would recess to five minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – AUGUST 15, 2016

The minutes of August 15, 2016, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of August 15, 2016, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

STRAIT AREA TRANSIT

Deputy Warden Patterson questioned on whether any Council member received contact with regard to accessing the Strait Area Transit service from Victoria County.

Councillor MacNeil indicated he was contacted by one person initially, but no one since.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Councillor MacNeil brought up the continuing concern of no brush cutting or mowing in his district. He contacted the MLA and she had Gerard Jessome return a call to Paul. He indicated he would get back to Councillor MacNeil but it has been five days with no reply.

Councillor Buchanan questioned if a reply was received from Pam Eyking, MLA, to Council's request to come to Council. A reply has not been received.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #6

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Stephen Hines, Housing Nova Scotia, questioning on how many Victoria County residents received funding and how many are on the waitlist for housing programs. Motion carried.

District #8

Councillor Buchanan brought up concerns with regard to the side roads in District #8. In particular with regard to a ½ load of asphalt that was discarded along the Courtney Road. This asphalt could have been used to repair roads. He also indicated that the sides of the road need to be cut, as they are now touching high vehicles and are causing danger.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Transportation and MLA requesting action be taken to undertake cutting along the roadsides in District #8. Motion carried.

Councillor Buchanan questioned on the status of the pump house at Dingwall as to when it will be removed. The CAO will investigate this matter.

Councillor Buchanan requested an update on the Bay St. Lawrence/St. Margaret's Village water project. Sandy Hudson advised that a supply is required before an application can be submitted for funding under the Build Canada Fund.

Presently a groundwater source is being investigated for the Neil's Harbour/New Haven Water Supply and a PCAP application has been submitted for funding. A drill rig will be brought in to work in Neil's Harbour/New Haven and at the same time will go to Bay St. Lawrence to further investigate a source for water. Wells drilled in this area a couple of years ago proved to be insufficient or of high gypsum content.

The expansion of the Dingwall Water system to Cape North was questioned. The distance to the bottom of the hill at the Cape North TIR Garage is 1 km. This project is on the County's infrastructure priority list.

Councillor Buchanan requested a copy of the Municipality's infrastructure priority list.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis questioned on when the wind turbine in Baddeck Bay would be put into service. It was indicated that NSPI is not ready to proceed as yet.

The Aliant high-speed service in the North Shore area is inadequate. Complaints are being received.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that Seaside is looking at increasing their bandwidth soon and another meeting of the Broadband Committee will be held prior to Tom Wilson's vacation.

Sandy Hudson advised that Inverness/Richmond/Victoria/Guysborough/Antigonish Town and County/Port Hawkesbury and the District of St. Mary's have a working group looking into internet dead zones in the 8 units. They are hoping to access ACOA funding.

It was moved and seconded that both Aliant and Seaside be requested to come to Council. Motion carried.

District #2

Councillor Grant that he has signed up for Bell Mobility Internet and his download speed has increased to 4 to 5 Mbps. Other people on this service are obtaining incredible download speeds.

Councillor Grant thanked Warden Morrison his assistance in the temporary action undertaken at the Irving/Tim Hortons. A representative from Irving has come on board with proposed action and talks are ongoing with the Province with regard to long term improvements.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Housing Nova Scotia, with a copy to the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority, requesting additional seniors units in Victoria County, and in particular the Baddeck area, to increase Victoria County's percentage of housing in comparison to other areas in Cape Breton. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority requesting that the assets received from the two houses to be sold in the Northern area of the County be used to assist Victoria County seniors and low income individuals/families. Motion carried.

Councillor Grant felt that the next Council should review the current infrastructure priority list.

District #1

It was moved and seconded that \$1,000.00 be approved from the District #1 budget for the Washabuck Community Centre for assist with the cost of a cenotaph. Motion carried.

Councillor MacNeil brought up the bulk water issue in Little Narrows. A one inch line has been designated, but if it is seen to be inadequate, a larger line can be considered.

District #3

It was moved and seconded that a letter of thank you be forwarded to the Minister of TIR with regard to the temporary sign placement at Irving/Tim Hortons and request that the speed zone be reduced from 90 km to 70 km in this area. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison indicated that he was contacted by Francis Eyking who was going through Baddeck when there was a power outage. He required gas to get home and was provided with two gallons by the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department and wanted to thank the Chief and Deputy for their assistance.

THANK YOU

Warden Morrison thanked Councillor Buchanan for hosting Council and to the Community Centre for the supper provided.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved to adjourn at 6:45 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Sandy Hudson, CAO

