

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
January 23, 2017

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, January 23, 2017, beginning at 5:15 p.m. with Warden Bruce Morrison in the Chair.

Present were:

District #1 – Paul MacNeil
District #2 – Perla MacLeod
District #3 – Bruce Morrison, Warden
District #4 – Merrill MacInnis
District #5 – Fraser Patterson
District #6 – Larry Dauphinee, Deputy Warden
District #7 – Wayne Budge
District #8 – Norman MacDonald

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. He indicated that the Aquaculture presentation will be moved to the first agenda item, followed by the BLUE DOT presentation and the Victoria County Visitor Guide proposal.

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

Warden Morrison welcomed Councillor Patterson back to Council after his two month absence due to illness.

AQUACULTURE PRESENTATION

Courtesy of Council was extended to Bruce Hancock, Director, Aquaculture; and Brennan Goreham, Manager, Licensing & Leasing, Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Hancock advised that in 2015, a Regulatory Advisory Committee was established comprised of community, First Nations, industry and municipal government representatives. The mandate was to give advice on aquaculture regulations in Nova Scotia. Warden Morrison is a member of this Committee and he invited Mr. Hancock to present to Council on Nova Scotia Aquaculture.

Mr. Hancock distributed copies of the Aquaculture License and Lease Regulations and Aquaculture Management Regulations. Warden Morrison provided a copy of the Aquaculture Compliance Guide.

Mr. Hancock then provided a power point presentation on *Nova Scotia Aquaculture – Creating an Environment for Sustainable Growth* (copy attached).

He provided background information from the release of the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Strategy in May, 2012, to the implementation of the new regulations and amendments to the Act in October, 2015.

Mr. Hancock outlined the new direction and the new regulatory framework. Licensing and leasing is now a transparent and predictable process that provides public and investor confidence. He outlined factors to be considered.

Comparative graphs of the old lease application process and the new process were outlined.

Aquaculture management includes:

- Fish health management
- Environmental monitoring
- Farm operations
- Containment management

Mr. Hancock indicated that the three requirements for growth include:

- Public trust and Investor confidence
- Access to productive sites
- Industry support

Research and development is ongoing, with attention to environmental interactions, enhanced data collection and advanced planning and technical challenges and innovation.

Advanced planning identifies areas for aquaculture development, a focus on areas where there is interest in proactive development and several potential outcomes.

Mr. Hancock outlined the next steps which include:

- Further development of policy and guidance documents to support the new regulations
- Educate the industry regarding the new regulatory framework
- Select and appoint the independent Aquaculture Review Board
- Process new applications

Councillor MacInnis questioned on the potential for the cultivation of seaweed. Acadian Sea Plants in Woods Harbour are a large producer of seaweed. The bulk of seaweed production in the world is in China. He also questioned on sea cucumber. There is interest, but sea cucumbers grow faster in areas where there is warmer water temperature.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans have identified the Bras d'Or Lakes as a Marine Protected Area. Councillor MacNeil questioned how this would affect aquaculture. Mr. Hancock indicated he was unsure what it can preclude or include.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee mentioned the enforcement now under Department of Environment and whether it will have impact on how quickly issues will be responded to.

Warden Morrison questioned on the potential Victoria County has with regard to aquaculture. Who determines what kind of aquaculture would be best.

Mr. Hancock indicated that an exercise on identifying opportunities, reaching out to industry and seeing what happens in other parts of the world would be beneficial.

An office has been created – Nova Scotia Centre for Aquaculture Management. Mr. Hancock indicated that Victoria County could be the first one to access this centre and come up with a project.

Councillor MacInnis questioned on China's aquaculture industry. Mr. Hancock indicated that China is the biggest player in the world. One thing we have that China doesn't is clean water.

Mr. Hancock indicated that Norway is #1 in oil and gas and #2 in salmon farming. This is a country with 5 million people, the second greenest in the world. This is what the new Nova Scotia regulations are all about.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Mr. Hancock and Mr. Goreham for their attendance and the information provided.

BLUE DOT CAMPAIGN

Courtesy of Council was extended to Paul Strome, David Suzuki Elder, who was in attendance to present on the BLUE DOT Campaign.

Mr. Strome indicated that the BLUE DOT Campaign evolved from a cross Canada tour Dr. David Suzuki undertook on the right to a healthy environment. The BLUE DOT campaign outlines the right of all Canadians to live in a healthy environment including the right to breathe clean air; drink and access clean water; eat safe and healthy food; access nature; and participate in decision-making that will affect the environment.

He presented a video entitled “*Today is the Day We Decide*”.

This growing movement calls upon the local government to pass municipal declarations respecting people’s rights to live in a healthy environment. Little by little, this movement will inspire decision makers to follow suit and when the provincial/federal decision-makers have recognized the right to a healthy environment, then we can look toward the ultimate goal of amending the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Recognition in the Charter is the final step in protecting every person in Canada’s rights.

Mr. Strome presented sample declarations for Council’s review – one from the City of Hamilton, Ontario, and one from Inverness County. Warden Morrison indicated that Inverness County’s declaration would be most relevant to Victoria County.

Council approved a motion at their December 5, 2016, session that Victoria County Municipal Council adopt the BLUE DOT Campaign. The declaration would be the next step.

The Island-wide Municipal Summit will be held in February/March and the BLUE DOT Campaign could be an agenda item for consideration.

The recent CEPI Conference was an excellent event and this topic was addressed at the conference.

Further discussion took place and Warden Morrison indicated that once Council has had an opportunity, they would work on adopting a declaration and Mr. Strome would be provided with a copy when approved.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Mr. Strome for his presentation to Council.

VICTORIA COUNTY VISITOR GUIDE PROPOSAL

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Andrew Brooks, President, Bellwether Media Inc.

Mr. Brooks indicated that Bellwether Media Inc. is currently working on producing a print and digital Visitor’s Guide for Victoria County for the 2017 summer/fall tourist season.

The past two years were record years for visitors and with the celebration of Canada’s 150th birthday numbers are expected to be similar in the 2017 year.

A comprehensive visitors guide for Victoria County does not currently exist. The guide proposed will be professionally produced in full colour and distributed to VIC’s across the province and locally throughout the County.

Mr. Brooks indicated that he met with Tom Wilson, Director of Recreation and Tourism, and received verbal support for the project. He has also reached out to local tourist associations for their support, input and feedback. Mary Tulle, DCBA, has been contacted for her input but she is currently out of the Country.

Bellwether Media Inc. is approaching the Municipality to be a partial sponsor of the guide. He presented three areas in which he is seeking Council support.

1. A letter from Municipal Council that states support for the Visitors Guide and preferably acknowledging it as "The Official Visitor's Guide for Victoria County".
2. An agreement that a prominent link to the guide will be made available on municipal websites.
3. Cost-sharing of the printing of the guide in the amount of \$7,500.00.

Mr. Brooks indicated that 20,000 copies will be produced and the cost is estimated to be approximately \$20,000.00.

Warden Morrison advised that no financial decision would be made this evening. The financial request would be referred to budget.

Councillor Patterson indicated that he, and a number of travellers, like to have a paper guide when travelling.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that he prefers the digital format as opposed to print, and would like to talk to residents/business in his district before deciding. He questioned whether there would be a charge to businesses and Mr. Brooks advised that there would be a nominal advertising fee.

Councillor MacDonald indicated that he also would lean toward the digital format.

Councillor MacInnis questioned on how the Cabot Trail would be captured in this publication. Mr. Brooks indicated that he will consult to see how it should be captured but anticipated the Victoria County portion would be emphasized, but the complete map of the Cabot Trail would be included.

The size of the publication was questioned, but a final format has not been decided.

It was indicated that there are two different types of tourists, those who like a printed document and those who access documents digitally.

Possible collaboration with the *Inverness Oran* who already does such a publication for Inverness County was questioned. Mr. Brooks indicated that the Inverness Oran is well on their way with their 2107 guide, but he would be open to collaboration in the future.

With the beginning of the Tourism Strategy for Victoria County, it was felt this would be a good time to do this publication.

Further discussion took place.

It was moved and seconded that Bellwether Media Inc.'s request for financial assistance be referred to budget. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that a letter of support for the Victoria County Visitor Guide be provided. Motion carried.

Council also agreed that a prominent link to the guide will be made available of www.victoriacounty.com and www.visitvictoriacounty.com.

RECESS

Warden Morrison advised that Council would recess for 5 minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JANUARY 9, 2017

The minutes of the January 9, 2017, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of January 9, 2017, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Councillor Patterson questioned on the posting of Council expenses and public tenders on the County website and changes to the procurement policy.

The CAO indicated that they are presently working on an update to the procurement policy which should be presented in February/March, 2017. A direction is required from Council as to the paying of Council stipends and the posting of expenses on the website will be undertaken as soon as possible.

Warden Morrison indicated that he sits on and is the Chair of the UNSM Transparency/Accountability Committee. The Committee will be meeting on February 2, 2017,

with regard to website posting and code of conduct. A document should be available after the February meeting, for review and comment. He indicated that it is a good initiative.

The SABDA letter concerning transit was discussed. Councillor Patterson indicated a volunteer transit system has been established in Albert County, New Brunswick, that could be a fit in Victoria County.

The SABDA letter was tabled at the last meeting and it was indicated that if SABDA wishes to undertake a survey on this issue, Council would be willing to discuss same.

A question was raised on the recent Tax Sale. The CAO advised that the Tax Sale was held on January 17, 2017. One property was sold, six properties were paid in full prior to the Tax Sale and the remaining properties received no bids.

NEW BUSINESS

ALIAN T

A concern brought up by the Middle River Volunteer Fire Department with regard to the battery packs at the Aliant stations was discussed. Battery packs only have a 12 hour life and in the event of a power outage, if the battery packs are not charged, then the entire phone system and 911 is down.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Aliant concerning the battery pack issue at their stations requesting that the batteries be maintained and accessible. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL INDICATORS

The Financial Condition Index for the Municipality of the County of Victoria for 2015/16 was received. The index was developed jointly by the Province, UNSM, and AMA for all municipalities in the Province.

The Municipality received two scores that do not meet the rural municipality threshold. The first score for uncollected taxes is at 19.5%. The rural municipality threshold is below 10.0%. The second is the commercial property assessment which is 9.7%, where the rural municipality threshold is above 10.0%.

Uncollected taxes have improved from the previous year, but remain over the threshold. Until the commercial property assessment increases, there is not much that can be done in that regard.

Sandy Hudson advised that the Municipality has 4,883 dwelling units, where the provincial average is 8,091. Victoria County also has a larger geographic area – 2,878 sq. km., with the rural municipality average being 2,031 sq. km. Our operating budget of \$11.8 million is significantly lower than the average of \$17 million and taxable property assessment is \$640,696,200.00, compared to the rural municipality average of \$1,081,116,545.00.

Work will continue on decreasing uncollected taxes, but it is difficult to increase the commercial property assessment indicator.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

Councillor MacDonald brought up the derelict pump house on the Dingwall Water system. This building was to be torn down, but the waterline runs underneath the building. Sandy Hudson will check to see what can be done and if the building can be removed and the base retained.

Councillor MacDonald indicated that he received a few phone calls with regard to the poor placement of guardrail in the Bay Road Valley area. There were a couple of accidents in this area lately and he extended kudos to the Bay St. Lawrence Volunteer Fire Departments for their efforts during these incidents.

This matter can be addressed with the Department of TIR representatives when the meeting is held. Sandy Hudson advised that he contacted Stephen MacDonald, Area Manager, TIR, and he felt a meeting in the northern area and one in the southern area would be appropriate. He will contact the local supervisor, Gerard Jessome and Darren Blunden to arrange these meetings and will get back to Sandy Hudson when these meetings can be held. It was also felt that Pam Eyking, MLA, should be invited to attend these meetings.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee acknowledged Keith Bain who was in attendance and thanked him for providing information on the sessions regarding highway twinning, including potential use of tolls. These meetings will be held on February 21, at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre, on February 22, 2017, in River Bourgeois and February 23, 2017, at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre. All sessions are from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Council is to determine the direction they wish to proceed in this regard.

District #5

Councillor Patterson questioned whether any other Council members participate in the federal/provincial student grant programs. There are none at present.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the Victoria County Fire Chiefs Association recently met. He expressed concern that the fire services review never met with the fire services. This was a provincial initiative.

Councillor MacInnis advised that the fire departments are requesting a 10% increase in funding for the 2017/18 fiscal year and also want a Fire Services Coordinator position filled.

The requests from the Fire Chiefs Association are to be submitted in writing to the Municipality. It was suggested that all fire departments come to Council.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod indicated that the residents on the Westside Middle River Road want to have the road repaved and will be submitting a petition.

When the petition is completed, it can be sent to Council for endorsement and then submitted to the Province and be tabled in the Legislature. Once tabled in the Legislature, the government will have to respond.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil requested that the Superintendent of the CBVRSB be invited to come to Council with regard to the fees associated with community use of schools.

It was moved and seconded that Beth MacIsaac, Superintendent of the CBVRSB, be requested to come to Council. Motion carried.

District #3

Wagmatcook Band Council will be meeting jointly with Victoria County Municipal Council on Monday, January 30, 2017, at 5:00 p.m. at the Court House, Baddeck.

Warden Morrison advised that there will be an open house held at the Inverary Resort, Baddeck, on Saturday, February 11, 2017, at 10:30 a.m. with regard to CEDIF for the Baddeck Wind Turbine project. Shares are still available for this wind turbine.

Warden Morrison encouraged Council members to attend one of the sessions on the Victoria County Tourism Strategy.

Warden Morrison advised that Port Hawkesbury will be hosting the island-wide Municipal Conference at the Gaelic College, St. Ann's, the last Thursday and Friday in March, 2017.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

The Solid Waste Committee met prior to Council today and a recommendation was made that the Water Committee and Solid Waste Committee be combined into one Public Works Committee. This Committee will include all Council.

The proposed new Water Rate Study is ready for review and a meeting of the Public Works Committee will be held on Monday, February 13, 2017, prior to Council.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be the joint meeting with the Wagmatcook Band Council on Monday, January 30, 2017, at 5:00 p.m.

Warden Morrison and Councillors MacInnis and MacNeil attended the good news announcement with regard to funding for a second cruise ship berth for Sydney Harbour. The \$20 million project will be equally funded by the three levels of government.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councillor Patterson indicated that he wishes to reactivate the Age-Friendly Communities Committee.

The Economic Development Committee recently met and Councillor Patterson, Chairman of the Committee, indicated he circulated the minutes to the Committee and felt there should be an approval process through Council.

The lay members on the Committee are to be re-appointed. Tracey Campbell has resigned. Alicia Lake and Amy MacKinnon are in agreement to re-offer and Councillor MacLeod submitted the name of Jeremy White as a possible member.

It was moved and seconded that Amy MacKinnon, Alicia Lake and Jeremy White be appointed as members of the Victoria County Economic Development Committee. Motion carried.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Sandy Hudson, CAO

Bruce Morrison, Warden