

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
March 13, 2017

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, March 13, 2017, beginning at 5:00 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.

It was moved and seconded that the agenda be approved as presented. Motion carried.

PARKS CANADA PRESENTATION

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Eric Le Bel, Superintendent, Cape Breton Highlands National Park; and Maria O’Hearn, External Relations Officer, Parks Canada.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee declared a Conflict of Interest as he is an employee of Parks Canada. He left the meeting at this time.

Mr Le Bel then provided a presentation on Parks Canada – Cape Breton Highlands National Park (copy attached).

The Cape Breton Highlands National Park is comprised of 948 sq. km. made up of freshwater lakes, beaches, and Acadian and boreal forest. 1/3 of the Cabot Trail intersects the Park and is managed by Parks Canada. There is a network of trails, campsites and beaches that provide experience for visitors. The Park works closely with partners and stakeholders to achieve their mandate.

Mr. Le Bel presented statistics on visitor trends from 2008-2009 to present. The visitor patterns seen in 2016 were outlined. 80% were first time visitors and the majority of visitors were travelling without children.

What the Park has to offer to visitors was outlined. Victoria County events hosted within the CBHNP include the Cabot Trail Relay, Three Peaks Challenge and the Hike the Highlands Festival.

Mr. Le Bel outlined the natural resource conservation conducted within the CBHNP. \$42.5 million was invested in infrastructure in 2016, with 7 projects completed. There will be a total of 12 infrastructure projects completed in 2017. He outlined the road infrastructure projects to be completed in 2017.

Mr. Le Bel outlined the plan in place for minimizing disruptions during road construction projects.

The Middle Head Trail revitalization project was outlined. Trail improvements are scheduled for the fall of 2018.

The CBHNP is celebrating the 150th anniversary of Canada with key themes:

- Engaging and inspiring youth
- Promoting diversity and inclusion
- Promoting national reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples
- Connecting Canadians with their natural environment

Free entry to Parks Canada places will be in effect in 2017. Mr. Le Bel outlined the opportunities, challenges and approach for Canada 150. A free Parks Canada Discovery Pass was provided to all Council members.

An outline of Parks Canada signature events and activities for 2017 include:

- Landmarks 2017
- Learn to camp
- Bioblitz 150
- Outreach 150

Mr. Le Bel concluded his presentation by providing social media and contact information.

Councillor Budge brought up the issue of reconciliation. Communities and residents surrounding the Park have been affected by the Park over the years and hard feelings have

ensued. He felt that part of this was misinformation more than anything else, but moving forward reconciliation would be beneficial.

Councillor Budge also indicated that a number of trails, i.e. Branch Pond being one, were closed and the culverts were removed. He felt this was done to keep the local people from accessing same.

Mr. Le Bel indicated he grew up on the Gaspé Peninsula in a similar situation. He indicated that the CBHNP has lived through cuts and have focused on sites where visitors are visiting. The numbers were not there to justify trail work. He admitted he did travel Branch Pond and enjoyed it, but it could have been better.

Councillor MacDonald indicated that with the emphasis being placed on winter tourism, access to the Cape Breton Highlands is required. The only access in northern Victoria is through the Park and he questioned if this could happen.

Mr. Le Bel indicated that they are starting to discuss this matter and it will be on the agenda of their meeting next week. The Park has no capacity to ensure safety and this is an issue that will be discussed and he advised he would keep Council posted.

The reliability of the visitor numbers was questioned. The numbers are tracked through permits and counters on trails and at kiosks. The numbers as compared to other areas of the Country was questioned and numbers are much lower than visitor numbers in western Canada.

The statistics on youth and child visitors was questioned. Councillor MacLeod questioned whether they could talk to the school board re camping, etc. There is the potential for more youth involvement in an education nature. Work has to be done.

The future of the Park was questioned and Mr. Le Bel indicated that the future looks very positive.

The plan for the operation of the Ingonish Beach Campground was questioned to which Mr. Le Bel replied.

The delays visitors have encountered for construction within the Park was questioned and Mr. Le Bel indicated that there were very few complaints. Keeping visitors well informed on infrastructure projects within the Park has proven to be beneficial.

Dick Grubb, Heritage House B & B, advised that the feedback he received from his guests was positive with regard to their Park experiences.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Eric Le Bel and Maria O'Hearn for their attendance and the information provided.

RETURN TO MEETING

Deputy Warden Dauphinee re-entered the meeting.

BADDECK & AREA ATV CLUB

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Graham Menzies, President; Hardie Thurber, Treasurer; and Ray Asaph, Vice-President/Secretary; Baddeck & Area ATV Club.

Mr. Menzies indicated that they are a 50 plus member club under the ATVANS (All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Nova Scotia). The club is five years old and they cover the area south of Smokey, from Kelly's Mountain to the County line and over to the Iona area.

As a point of interest, Mr. Menzies advised that there are 35,000 ATV's registered in Nova Scotia, in comparison to 2,000 snowmobiles. ATV trails cannot be built fast enough.

Mr. Menzies outlined the trail development that has taken place in the last few years, with the assistance of funding from the Municipality. Approximately 40 km of trail have been developed.

Council was advised that there is \$189 million spent by ATV's and snowmobiles in the Province and we, in Victoria County, need to corner this market. This cannot be accomplished without access to the Village of Baddeck.

Hardie Thurber presented a map outlining the trails completed and ones presently being worked on. \$15,000.00 has been approved over the past three years and he outlined where this money has been spent. The trails are multi-purpose trails that can be used by ATVs, snowmobiles, skiers, hikers, etc. One goal is to develop a trail from Baddeck to the Gaelic College. The Gaelic College are excited about this possibility.

The fact that ATV's are not permitted access of the ferry system is a deterrent. If they were allowed to do so, it would open up access to many more trails.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that there were recently 20 ATV's at Darby's Kitchen in his district. The bad reputation ATV's have of travelling on private land was discussed. There are initiatives undertaken to ensure ATV drivers are responsible, and have the proper safety and training programs. If there are trails, the riders will stay on the trails.

Councillor MacInnis brought up a recent trail ride from Wreck Cove to Cheticamp. 250 machines participated in the ride, with a total of 307 participants.

Access to the Village of Baddeck was discussed and Warden Morrison indicated that obtaining a letter from the Baddeck & Area ATV Club in support of the County's attempt to obtain access to Baddeck would be beneficial.

Whether user statistics are kept on the trails was questioned and Mr. Asaph indicated that there is work to be done in this regard.

The trails developed are being used by non-ATV users. Safety to all users is of utmost importance and it was indicated that all users are courteous of one another on these trails.

Mr. Menzies advised that the Baddeck & Area ATV Club would be submitting an application for funding to the Municipality prior to the March 31, 2017, deadline.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to the gentlemen for their attendance and the information provided.

RECESS

Warden Morrison advised that Council would recess for 10 minutes. A birthday cake in honour of Councillor Patterson's 65th birthday was presented.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Leanne MacEachen, Director of Finance, who was in attendance to provide a financial update to February 28, 2017 (copy attached). The surplus of revenue over expenditures is \$1,249,601, but with year-end adjustments and expenditures, Ms. MacEachen indicated it would be a break even budget.

She also presented the first draft of the 2017-2018 budget maintaining the existing tax rates. Total revenue is anticipated to be \$12,653,020, with total expenditures being relatively the same amount. The revenue increase includes Gas Tax which will be used on capital projects.

Ms. MacEachen advised that in terms of expenditures, the hospital funding was completed in 2016/17 and this is the last year for the Water Loan. Highland Manor loan is also paid off and \$420,000 of Gas Tax money is being spent on capital items. \$500,000.00 has been budgeted for capital work at the Baddeck Transfer Station and REN6 funding is consistent at \$100,000.00. District budget funding will remain at \$9,000.00 per district.

A Budget meeting to review community grant applications will be held on March 27, 2017, prior to Council at 4:00 p.m.

Ms. MacEachen indicated that she would like to see a 5 year capital budget developed.

The posting of Council expenses on the County website was discussed. This has not been done as yet.

Warden Morrison advised that the Joint Municipal Accountability and Transparency Committee are developing a standardized form for all municipalities. The Municipality can use this form or if they wish to be more transparent than the Committee standardized form, they may do so.

It was moved and seconded to accept the financial update to the end of February, 2017. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 27, 2017

The minutes of the February 27, 2017, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of February 27, 2017, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES – FEBRUARY 27, 2017

The letter was forwarded to Paul Strome, BLUE DOT Campaign, requesting that he limit the use of referencing Victoria County in his communications and endorsements. Warden Morrison also indicated he had an opportunity to speak with Mr. Strome and going forward he will concur with Council's wishes.

The Dog Control issue was discussed. Sandy Hudson advised that he is investigating having our Dog Control Officers being trained as Peace Officers with the capability of issuing Summary Offence Tickets.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 28, 2017

The February 28, 2017, minutes of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of February 28, 2017, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES – FEBRUARY 28, 2017

Paul Oldford, Director of Operations, CBVRSB, is to be invited to attend a meeting of Council with regards to concerns addressed at the February 28, 2017, meeting with Beth MacIsaac, Superintendent, CBVRSB.

NEW BUSINESS

PROCUREMENT POLICY

A draft Procurement Policy was provided to Council for review and comment at the next session of Council.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT BY-LAW

Council are to review the draft Solid Waste Management By-Law and provide comments for the next meeting.

The next meeting of Council will be held on March 27, 2017. Presentations on the agenda include Lyle Donovan on EMO; "Raising the Villages" with Jim Mustard; and an update on the Victoria County Tourism Strategy.

Warden Morrison advised that the Island-wide Municipal Conference will be deferred until the fall. The Town of Port Hawkesbury will be the host for this event.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #6

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Stephen MacDonald, Area Manager, DTIR, thanking him for the armour stone work completed on the Beach Crossing Road. Motion carried.

District #7

It was moved and seconded that \$500.00 be approved from the District #7 budget for the Ingonish United Church to assist with their food bank. Motion carried.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald indicated that along with calls regarding the North Harbour Channel blockage, he is now receiving calls with regard to South Harbour. He questioned if the Municipality could write a letter to the appropriate agency to have something put in place with regard to South Harbour.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Departments of Natural Resources and Fisheries and Aquaculture with regard to South Harbour Channel. Motion carried.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that he attended a meeting at Dalhousie University recently with Ocean Tracking Network.

The Municipality provided funding for trackers through the Ocean Tracking Network a couple of years ago to monitor snow crab in Victoria County. Councillor MacInnis indicated they were very appreciative of the Municipality for the funding and indicated we were the only Municipality to fund this tracking equipment.

Councillor MacInnis felt it would be beneficial to invite representatives from the Ocean Tracking Network to Council in the spring.

District #1

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Central Cape Breton Community Ventures in support of World Oceans Day. Motion carried.

Councillor MacNeil indicated his concern with regard to a recent power outage where NSPI arrived but had to wait for traffic control to arrive before they could conduct the repairs. They waited for 1 to 1 ½ hours for traffic control and the repair took approximately 10 minutes. He questioned why local flaggers could not have been used.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to NSPI concerning the wait issue for traffic control. Motion carried.

District #5

Councillor Patterson advised that he was contacted by a senior in his area with regard to 5 or 6 books of poetry he has by Donald Ross, Baddeck. He questioned if Victoria County could appoint a Poet Laureate. He has referred this information on to Joan MacInnes to investigate further and a discussion will be held at a future time.

District #3

Warden Morrison brought up the issue of Cabot Trail Façade signage. The Cabot Trail signage is directing you to either Exit 7 or Exit 11, with no signage between these points to Baddeck.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of TIR concerning no signage indicating Cabot Trail between Exit 8 and 10 under the Cabot Trail Façade Program. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councillor Patterson updated on the Age-Friendly Committee. David Harrison is currently working on an Age-Friendly Community Plan for Victoria County. He would like to come to Council in May or June to present the plan for Council approval.

Each Council member is to think about a business in their district and go through a check list as an awareness piece. The business could be given a certificate of participation. It was felt it would be beneficial to have a mix of businesses identified.

Councillor MacLeod distributed information on “Raising the Villages” which will be the subject of a presentation by Jim Mustard at the next Council meeting on March 27, 2017.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that he was nominated by Senator Dan Christmas as Co-Chair of the CEPI Management Committee. He accepted the nomination.

CELTIC COLOURS ANNOUNCEMENT

Warden Morrison advised that he attended a good news announcement for Celtic Colours today.

MP’s Rodger Cuzner and Mark Eyking announced the federal money, with \$1.2 million from ACOA’s Innovative Communities Fund and \$200,000.00 from Canadian Heritage’s Canada Arts Presentation Fund. The provincial funding, through the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage includes \$375,000.00 over the next three years and an additional \$45,000.00 this year for Canada 150 through the 150 Forward Fund.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded to adjourn at 7:05 pm.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Sandy Hudson, CAO

