

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
September 25, 2017

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, September 25, 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:

Leanne MacEachen, Acting 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.

RCMP UPDATE

Courtesy of Council was extended to Staff Sgt. Darren Waidson, Victoria County District Commander, RCMP, who was in attendance to provide a policing update to Council (copy attached).

Staff Sgt. Waidson outlined the annual performance plan priorities that included contributing to safer highways through education and enforcement and reducing crime by targeting repeat offenders.

He outlined the staff complement in the Victoria County District. He is the District Commander and there are two district assistants, one in Baddeck and one in Ingonish. Baddeck has one Cpl. Supervisor position that is currently vacant but will be identified within the next week. There are four Constable Investigators, with one position vacant that will be filled in November from Depot.

The Ingonish Office has a full complement of one Cpl. Supervisor and four Constable Investigators.

There is also a Community Safety Officer for the Victoria County District. This Constable is responsible for the 7 schools in Victoria County, along with safe plans. He works closely with teachers and is also engaged in community events.

Staff Sgt. Waidson provided statistics on prisoners held in the Baddeck and Ingonish cells and also provided crime statistics for Victoria County for the period April 1, 2017, to September 18, 2017. The statistics for the Meat Cove area of Inverness County, covered by the Ingonish Office, for this time period were provided.

Arsons have been a topic of discussion over the years for the Ingonish policing areas. Staff Sgt. Waidson outlined an arson that took place at the Freshwater Lake change room and also 3 garbage boxes in the area. Two individuals were charged.

Offences associated with youth in the Baddeck service area were outlined and Staff Sgt. Waidson indicated that the Detachment, health services, and family services are working with a young person identified on multiple calls for service.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that since the Ingonish Detachment has moved from Ingonish Beach the RCMP are not as visible in that area. There are four wheelers and motorbikes driving on the sidewalks, and speeders in the Ingonish Beach area. He requested that the members be reminded to be more visible in this area.

The status of the Court services at Wagmatcook was questioned. Staff Sgt. Waidson indicated the Court is going ahead but the timeframe is unknown as yet. He will share any information in this regard with Council when it is known.

The work Staff Sgt. Waidson is doing with a youth in the area was outlined and commended by Council.

Councillor Patterson expressed thanks for the increase in patrols in the Boularderie area. He also outlined that ATV's are an issue in his area and the increased visibility of the RCMP should assist with this issue.

The dangerous situation at the Irving/Tim Hortons was discussed. Council has requested that the speed limit in this area be decreased to 60 km per hour. Anything the RCMP can do to assist with this request would be welcomed. Staff Sgt. Waidson indicated he would obtain statistical information to support this request.

Council also requested that the fine in that area be increased from \$60.00 to \$250.00. The RCMP supporting this request would be of assistance.

Increased patrols in the Village of Baddeck and the District #1 area were requested. There have been some break and enters in the Iona area and whether a camera could be mounted on the Barra Strait Bridge was questioned. Who would monitor it was also a consideration.

Leanne MacEachen questioned whether the RCMP could assist with security recommendations for the Court House building and was advised that they could assist.

Warden Morrison echoed previous comments with regard to the Irving/Tim Horton's situation and indicated that any assistance the RCMP can provide prior to Council's meeting with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal on October 3, 2017, would be appreciated.

Staff Sgt. Waidson provided his email address to Council – darren.waidson@rcmp-grc.gc.ca.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you, on behalf of Council, for the update on policing in the Victoria County District and presented Staff Sgt. Waidson with a County golf shirt.

VICTORIA COUNTY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL PARKING UPDATE

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Darrell MacKinnon, P. Eng., Project Manager, NSHA, and Rose Surette, Facility Manager, Victoria County Memorial Hospital, who were in attendance to update on the parking lot upgrade at the Victoria County Memorial Hospital.

Victoria County Municipal Council has contributed \$91,034.00 for the parking lot upgrade. Mr. MacKinnon thanked Council for their support and indicated that they are requesting that the funding be deferred until next spring.

Mr. MacKinnon updated Council on the design options and indicated that the best option, with the best transition, is a parking area connected to MacDermid Street. The approval permit has been received from the Department of TIR. The parking area will have an additional 25 spots with a concrete stairway and new LED lighting.

There have been issues that are delaying the upgrade and it is now recommended that to protect the quality and value of the project, the work be delayed until next spring. The Municipality is being requested to defer their funding for another year.

Whether there would be additional handicap parking spaces was questioned and will be a consideration. Also whether the water flow issues and freezing in the VCMH driveway would be addressed was discussed.

It was moved and seconded that the municipal funding for the Victoria County Memorial Hospital upgrade be deferred for another year. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to the NSHA representatives for their update.

TAX COLLECTION UPDATE

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Pauline Davis, Director of Taxation, who was in attendance to update on tax collections.

Mrs. Davis provided Council with a collection strategy summary – outlining the plan goals, process to meet the goals and implementation of the collection strategy.

As of June 23, 2017, there was \$10 million in taxes owing and of today's date the balance owing is \$3 million. \$1.6 million is current taxes, \$587,000 is 2016 taxes and the remainder is prior.

The concern Council has with regard to the red mark on the Financial Condition Index for tax receivables was discussed,

Discussion took place on regular Tax Sales and the question was raised as to when the next Tax Sale was scheduled. Mrs. Davis indicated that she hopes to have one in February, 2018. The Tax Sale procedure was explained to Council.

Mrs. Davis indicated that the focal point of the Tax Office is collections. Beginning on October 1, 2017, staff will start making phone calls to a list of delinquent taxpayers. The staff will own the accounts they are calling and the taxpayers will receive reminders every 30 days. The Director of Taxation will continue to report to Council regularly on a once per month basis.

Leanne MacEachen advised that the Tax Office staff will be sent to Guysborough and/or Antigonish to shadow what they do with regard to tax collections and bring the best practices back to the Municipality.

Discussion took place and various questions were answered.

Warden Morrison indicated that Council wants to see collections go from the bottom to the top and any efforts to achieve this will be supported.

Mrs. Davis will provide a further update on October.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Pauline Davis for the tax update.

RECESS

Warden Morrison announced that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 12, 2017

The minutes of the September 12, 2017, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of September 12, 2017, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

DEED TRANSFER TAX

At the previous meeting, investigation was to be undertaken on whether the Municipality could consider the elimination of the Deed Transfer Tax on the purchase of farms within the County to encourage investment in this sector.

Leanne MacEachen advised that she raised this question on the Association of Municipal Administrators list serve, but received no replies.

Under the *Municipal Government Act*, deed transfer tax is optional. All Councils set the rate at any level up to 1.5% of the sale price. The purchaser is responsible for payment of this tax. Victoria County has set the rate of 1%.

The only exemptions for the payment of this rate are transfers between family members for no consideration, correcting deeds, tax sale deeds, deeds from the NS Farm Loan Board to the original borrower and charities.

Once the rate is approved, it is to be charged on all properties transferred, with only the aforementioned exemptions.

A list of Deed Transfer Tax rates charged in municipalities throughout the Province was presented. There are a few municipalities that do not have a Deed Transfer Tax.

Leanne MacEachen indicated that the revenue collected from Deed Transfer Tax fluctuates with sales, but is in the vicinity of \$140,000.00 annually.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

Councillor MacDonald brought up the navigational light at the Bay St. Lawrence Wharf that is presently not operational.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to the Coast Guard and the Bay St. Lawrence Harbour Authority requesting that the navigational light be repaired/replaced. Motion carried.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis suggested that Councillors that are able to should make an effort to volunteer for the Celtic Colours International Festival from October 6 to 14, 2017.

Councillor MacInnis presented a suggestion, made by his wife that Council purchase 100 reusable bags with the Victoria County Logo to be placed in grocery stores throughout the Municipality to motivate residents to fill and provide to the food bank.

Jocelyn Bethune is to look into purchasing reusable bags and the cost for same.

District #2

Elayne Saul is Baddeck Academy's Senior High Soccer Coach, Assistant Coach of the Track and Field Team and Head Coach of the U8-U10 Victoria County Football Club.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to Elayne Saul on being recognized during National Coaches Week (September 23-30, 2017). Motion carried.

An Asset Management Awareness and Training Workshop will be held at the Inverary Resort, on October 20, 2017. Councillors interested in attending are authorized to do so.

Councillor MacLeod indicated that November 20-26, 2017, is Municipal Awareness Week in Nova Scotia. She suggested that the Municipality plan some activities for this week; such as tours of our facilities, Council/staff speak to schools, etc.

Consideration will be given to planning activities for Municipal Awareness Week.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil advised that he was approached by a resident concerning the historical records that were removed from the Court House. He felt an effort should be made to get some of these records back.

District #3

Warden Morrison again brought up the matter of physician recruitment and the lack of response from the Municipality's request to have the NSHA Recruitment Consultant come to Council.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Health requesting that the Physician Recruitment Consultant be requested to meet with Council and express Council's dissatisfaction with the lack of response to previous requests as the Municipality has assisted with physician recruitment in the past and feel disrespected with the lack of response to Council's request to meet with the recruiter. Motion carried.

The proposed federal tax changes that can affect physicians and small businesses were discussed.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Mark Eyking, MP, indicating Council's opposition to any tax changes that would be a detriment to physicians and small business. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison commended Councillor Patterson on his excellent chairing for the Minister of Seniors visit to Victoria County on Saturday past to launch the Age-Friendly Plan for the Municipality. A meeting will be held in the near future to begin the implementation of the plan.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence was received from the Department of TIR regarding a three year cost-sharing agreement for the paving of subdivision streets.

The County does not have a requirement for this agreement.

Information was received from the Cape Breton Partnership regarding their Investor Summit which will be held at the Keltic Lodge on Thursday, October 5, 2017. Council members interested in attending were authorized to register for this event.

There are also sponsorship opportunities for the Investor Summit ranging from \$500.00 to \$5,000.00.

It was moved and seconded that as this event is held in Victoria County, the County sponsor the welcome reception for the Investor Summit. Motion carried.

Correspondence was received from the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association requesting support for their ACOA funding application to implement their signage plan.

It was moved and seconded that the Municipality provide a letter of support for the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association's application to ACOA for funding to implement their signage plan. Motion carried.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS – EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT SERVICE

Warden Morrison advised that three executive recruitment proposals were received to assist in the selection of a candidate for CAO for the Municipality.

Contact has been made with Mark Peck, Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA), to see if he or a DMA representative can assist in the review of these proposals. Warden Morrison also suggested that one additional Councillor sit on the Selection Committee with him and the DMA representative. Councillor MacNeil requested to serve on the review committee. The proposals will be scored and rated.

It was moved and seconded to approve the recommendation of the Selection Committee with regard to review of the executive recruitment proposals for the CAO position. Motion carried.

CAPE BRETON LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Councillor Perla MacLeod will serve as Council's representative on the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership Council.

WORKPLACE WELLNESS AWARD

The Municipality will be receiving the Gold Workplace Wellness Award at this week's Association of Municipal Administrators Conference.

Staff is to be congratulated on this achievement.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held on Tuesday, October 17, 2017, at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Leanne MacEachen, Acting CAO

Bruce Morrison, Warden