

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

September 30, 2019

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, September 30, 2019, 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, CAO
Alix Redden, CFO
Jocelyn Bethune, Communications Officer
Heather MacLean, Recorder

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Warden Morrison called the meeting to order and presented that agenda for approval. He noted that an In Camera meeting would be held at the end of the agenda.

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

DOCTOR'S PRESENTATION

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Dr. Jamie Tribo, Dr. Elena Garcia del busto, and Dr. Roland Genge.

Dr. Tribo advised that currently Victoria County Memorial Hospital, Baddeck, is seeing an increased number of patients from around Cape Breton Island and are doing so with fewer staff.

Dr. Beaton's position has yet to be filled and Dr. Genge is approaching retirement. Dr. Tribo indicated that they have ideas on how to better recruit practitioners to this area.

A large barrier for attracting residents, locums and permanent physicians is the lack of rental housing available in the area. The doctors are requesting assistance in establishing housing that would be set aside for this purpose. Dr. Tribo made mention of the NSHA house on 23 MacDermid Street that was purchased a number of years ago with the intention of using it for clinic space. Renovating this house to living quarters would assist as it will allow for locums and residents to come from farther distances. It would also assist foreign doctors who lack Canadian credit and documentation necessary to rent. Living in the Village and experiencing all it has to offer may convert temporary positions into permanent ones.

Dr. Tribo indicated that they would also like to see a private recruiter hired, over and above the NSHA recruitment. A private recruiter would focus on Victoria County and would look at both permanent positions and temporary locums.

The revival of the stand-alone recruitment committee was also requested. This would allow direct response to questions and allow for follow up with interested individuals. Individuals recruited would also have a local contact that could assist with community, housing and other issues.

Council was advised that Dr. Heughan is looking into a private recruiter and the cost involved. It was indicated that the cost of the private recruiter would come after a candidate is found.

Bill O'Brien, NSHA Recruiter, will be meeting with County and VCMH representatives on Thursday, October 3, 2019, at 12 noon. The urgency of recruitment for our area will be reinforced at that meeting.

Warden Morrison indicated that Council will discuss the requests received later in the meeting.

It was indicated that three doctors are required but two would be better than what they have currently. One change indicated is that recruitment can begin before a doctor retires, so recruitment can begin for Dr. Genge, where it couldn't when Dr. Chow retired.

In the past 18 months there has been little support from NSHA and these issues are a provincial responsibility.

Discussion took place on residency with regard to numbers graduating. The doctors indicated that more graduating students are now gearing towards a specialty.

Collaboration with the northern area of the County was discussed. Both facilities have attended recruitment sessions and have shared information. Buchanan Memorial Hospital has a different locum rate and has housing in the area that can be used for this purpose.

Christine Hines, VCMH Facility Manager, who was in attendance in the audience, indicated that Victoria County had two booths at the recent Dalhousie Resident Education Weekend in St. Andrew's, NB. Both areas worked together and Ms. Hines indicated that she will follow through in regard to this matter. She also indicated that it was exciting to see the second year residents navigating to County booths.

The current use of the 23 MacDermid Street property was outlined. There is also a property for sale adjacent to the hospital that could be a consideration and discussion took place on this.

Council met with Brett MacDougall, NSHA, and has written a letter of concern since the meeting, but has heard nothing back as yet.

The closure of emergency departments has become the new norm resulting in increased pressure on our physicians. There have never been closures of the VCMH emergency department until this past year.

Warden Morrison indicated that the County is considering hosting two public meetings, one north and one south, with a trained facilitator to lead the process. Ian McNeil was in attendance this evening.

A further discussion took place with the doctors and Warden Morrison advised that Council would give all the items addressed consideration.

Dr. Tribo, on behalf of the physicians, thanked Council for their effort and support.

Warden Morrison thanked the doctors for their time and indicated they would be in touch when a decision is made.

ISLAND-WIDE INTEGRATED APPROACH: GATEWAYS

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, Town of Port Hawkesbury, who was in attendance to present on an *Island-Wide Integrated Approach: Gateways*.

Mayor Chisholm-Beaton indicated that local leaders, stakeholders and citizens must play a vital role in determining Cape Breton Island's future. She indicated that the mission is collaboration. The Strait Area Chiefs, Mayors and Wardens Committee and the One Cape Breton/Unama'ki Leadership is strong.

Mayor Chisholm-Beaton provided some examples of our Gateways and indicated everyone has a stake in ensuring they are strong and sustainable. Now is the time to position Cape Breton Island for growth. We can explore our transportation assets like road, air, port, rail and subsidiary modes of transportation like helicopter, transit and marine transportation.

Mayor Chisholm-Beaton outlined the importance of the gateways and indicated if we work together in an integrated way to compliment our intermodal transportation assets and create island-wide benefits, then we are positioning our island to compete with the world. We can grow the number of visitors to Cape Breton by improving the quality and access to our roads and air gateways.

The two airports gateways in Cape Breton – JA Douglas McCurdy in CBRM and Allan J MacEachen Regional Airport in the Strait area are not utilized to their full potential. Consideration must be given to how these two airports can service Cape Breton and bring more visitors to our island and better serve industry and business.

The Canso Causeway is the only way on or off Cape Breton by vehicle. The province will be working on the rotary in Port Hastings as outlined in their 5 year plan. This could be an opportunity to create a more welcoming entrance to Cape Breton that showcases Cape Breton/Unama'ki culture and heritage.

Mayor Chisholm-Beaton requested the County of join the Island-wide Gateways initiative. She has presented to CBRM and now Victoria, and will make the same presentation to Richmond and Inverness County Councils. Chief Terry Paul will be presenting to the 5 First Nations communities.

The next steps were outlined beginning with mobilizing our entire Island's local governments and continue the conversation at the next One Cape Breton event. The participation of our stakeholders and citizens and engagement with other levels of government are also essential. This will lead to a stronger future for Cape Breton Island.

Further discussion took place and Council thanked Mayor Chisholm-Beaton for her leadership on this project. She in turn thanked Warden Morrison for his leadership also.

It was moved and seconded that the Municipality of the County of Victoria join the Island-wide Gateways Initiative. Motion carried.

RECESS

Warden Morrison advised that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

The minutes of the September 17, 2019, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of September 17, 2019, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

BADDECK WHARF – CRUISE SHIPS

Whether the Village of Baddeck had been contacted regarding the public being allowed on the wharf when cruise ships are visiting was questioned. The CAO will contact the Village for clarification.

NEW BUSINESS

CAO REPORT

The CAO report was sent to Council this morning for review prior to Council.

Leanne MacEachen indicated that since the summer residents have come to the County, an increase has been noticed in the number of solid waste rejections. A different approach for contacting non-resident summer cottagers will be investigated over the winter months to improve the rejections next summer season.

The CAO updated on the September 24, 2019, Tax Sale. Eight properties were on the Sale and two did not sell. Two properties sold for the \$1,000.00 minimum bid. A total of approximately \$24,000.00 was collected, but \$9,000.00 was written off from the minimum bid properties.

Leanne MacEachen provided an update on the public washroom issue. The Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre's washrooms are currently being renovated and a public washroom building is being erected at the Wreck Cove General Store. The location of washrooms at the XTR Service Station in Cape North is currently being tendered. All washrooms must be completed by March 31, 2020.

The CAO will attend a meeting with Bill O'Brien, NSHA Recruitment, on October 3, 2019, at the Victoria County Memorial Hospital.

Councillor MacNeil questioned on the operation of the water utilities and it was indicated that Ron Delaney remains on a call basis if needed.

TAXATION UPDATE

Total taxes outstanding as of today are \$2,516,828, compared to \$2,505,735 this time last year, so we are now just \$11,093k ahead of last year. Keep in mind that \$191k more was billed this year than last.

The current outstanding is lagging behind last year by \$117,101. Arrears continue to exceed \$100k at \$106,068 better than last year.

Staff is working on notices for the next Tax Sale which is tentatively booked for December 10, 2019.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL ISSUES

District #1

Signage covered by vegetation and trees and down in the ditches of the road.

District #2

Thanks to TIR officials for hosting the meeting on Friday past.

District #4

Plaster hole on the Cabot Trail Road by the old North Shore School property that has been there for years needs warning signs and repair and repairs to the bumps on the TCH 105 at Port Bevis.

Councillor MacInnis recently travelled to Newfoundland and he found the highways to be far superior to ours in Nova Scotia.

District #5

The lack of funding for maintenance was evident at the meeting. After the meeting, Councillor Patterson received a call about a culvert that has required repairs since three years which have not been completed.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to the Premier expressing Council's concern that for the past number of years, the same issues pertaining to the Department of TIR have been brought forward with very little done and that the lack of maintenance funding is the root cause of the issues and it is imperative that additional funding be provided to carry out the necessary repair work. Motion carried.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that the meeting with TIR officials was a good meeting and we will wait to see the results.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald indicated that the shoulders of the road in Bay Road Valley area need immediate attention and he has received complaints from the residents of Meat Cove with regard to lack of maintenance.

Although Meat Cove is in Inverness County, the residents gravitate to Victoria County for many services. It was felt a sign should be ordered to put at the county line leaving Meat Cove.

District #3

Warden Morrison advised that the road at the bridge at the Bay Pond has dropped and should be investigated.

TIR officials have agreed to meet with Council three times per year, the Municipality compiles a list of items to be discussed and have an agenda for the meetings.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that the Deputy Minister of Lands & Forestry has advised that the quarry considered for Smokey has been stopped.

District #7

Councillor Budge indicated that the culvert on the Jack MacLeod Road which is adjacent to our waterline is in need of being replaced.

Councillor Budge requested that an additional wreath be order for Branch #85 Legion for Remembrance Day.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the flags at the Court House require replacement.

Funding for fire departments for new oil tanks, roofs, etc. was questioned. Fire Departments can apply for funding under the municipal capital grant program and also Lyle Donovan, Fire Services Coordinator, may know of possibilities for funding.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod brought up the concern with regard to the dangers of “vaping”.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Director of Public Health, requesting that “vaping” be banned. Motion carried.

Councillor MacLeod brought up the recent climate change parade in Baddeck and the possibility of providing trees for planting at such events in the future. Trees can be obtained from the Strathlorne Nursery.

Councillor MacLeod requested that Carla Arsenault, CBP, be contacted to see what they can offer with regard to physician recruitment.

It was moved and seconded that staff be authorized to pursue the three recommendations submitted by the doctors at their Council presentation this evening. Motion carried.

District #3

Warden Morrison indicated that there is increased demand at present for assistance from our local food banks. They require some short term assistance.

It was moved and seconded that \$500.00 be provided to each food bank in Victoria County to assist with their increased demands from the public. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison brought up the cruise ship issue and providing a local welcome. The Village will be contacted in this regard and staff can look at working with the Village to do a welcome to cruise ship passengers.

The hours of the public washrooms at the visitor centre was discussed. They close at 7:00 p.m. and the possibility of extending the hours later in the evening was requested. This will be discussed and considered.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The recent accessibility meeting attended by the CAO and Warden was very informative and eye-opening. There are new regulations in effect and the cost of making the Court House accessible was discussed.

Pricing for upgrading the parking at the building was just obtained and it was \$170,000.00. No further action will be taken on the parking issue as spending this amount and not being able to meet accessibility requirements for the building is a consideration. Long term planning may require a new building, as it may be cheaper than required upgrades.

Warden Morrison and Christine Hines, Facility Manager of VCMH, attending the recent Dalhousie Resident Education Weekend in St. Andrew's, New Brunswick. 143 first and second year residents attended this event. The Buchanan Memorial Hospital booth was moved adjacent to the Victoria County booth and it worked well for both.

Councillor MacNeil attended the CEPI where discussion took place on species at risk. Additional information will be provided.

Leanne MacEachen advised that a Group of 6 municipalities are looking at the IT inventory as to what we have and need and a tender has been issued for a consultant due the end of October.

A group of 4 to 5 municipalities are looking at an Efficiency Manager to come to municipalities to investigate efficiencies in the operations.

BY-LAW/POLICY REVIEW

Discussion took place on the Internal Communications Policy presented for Council for review.

It was moved and seconded that this matter be tabled until a Committee of the Whole meeting is scheduled. Motion carried.

An inventory of the municipal-owned properties by district was questions. Staff is working on this matter.

NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting of Council will be held on Monday, October 21, 2019, beginning at 5:00 p.m. at the Court House, Baddeck.

A date for the Committee of the Whole meeting will be set and Council will be advised once the date is set.

A Cape Breton Unama'ki meeting will be held in Membertou on Wednesday, October 2, 2019.

IN CAMERA

It was moved and seconded to move In Camera to deal with a financial issue. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded to return to regular session.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations from the In Camera meeting be accepted. Motion carried.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

