

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

March 25, 2020

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held virtually via Zoom on Wednesday, March 25, 2020, beginning at 4:00 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 #5 – Fraser Patterson
District #6 – Larry Dauphinee, Deputy Warden
District #8 – Norman MacDonald

Also present were:

Leanne MacEachen, CAO
Jocelyn Bethune, Communications Officer
Heather MacLean, Recorder

Absent were:

District #4 – Merrill MacInnis
District #7 – Wayne Budge

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Minister Chuck Porter approved an emergency directive on March 22, 2020, that municipalities must hold Council meetings electronically, by video or telephone, during COVID-19. Virtual meetings must be recorded and posted on a public website within 24 hours of the meeting.

The agenda was presented for approval.

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

PANDEMIC PLAN APPROVAL

The CAO presented the Pandemic Plan for approval. Councillors were provided with a copy of the plan to review prior to the meeting.

Councillor MacNeil indicated a change on Page 7, which should read that the CAO activates the Pandemic Plan on the approval of the Warden and Council.

Councillor MacLeod brought up the Prevention and Intervention Strategies on Page 17.

Whether this plan would be submitted to Public Health and other agencies was questioned. When approved that plan will be posted on the website and Lyle Donovan, EMC, will circulate it to the appropriate organizations.

It was moved and seconded that the Pandemic Plan be approved with the noted changes and Lyle Donovan be authorized to circulate to all appropriate departments and agencies. Motion carried.

This Pandemic Plan is specific to Victoria County and its operations.

CREDIT CARD INCREASE

Leanne MacEachen advised that in order to provide more flexibility in the midst of the pandemic, it is recommended that the Credit Card limit be increased from its present \$50,000.00 to \$100,000.00.

It was moved and seconded to approve that the Municipality's credit card requirement through RBC be increased from an accumulative total of \$50,000.00 to an accumulative total of \$100,000.00, with proper internal controls in place. Motion carried.

TAX RELIEF

Tax relief is an issue of concern and the CAO advised that she participated in a two hour conference call with AMANS and other municipal units throughout the province earlier today. There were a number of great ideas raised during the meeting and she indicated that she is unsure if municipalities will proceed on their own or collectively.

The CAO advised that the Municipality does not issue tax bills until June and we can wait until we see what comes out of the provincial meeting today. There could be several different options. The Municipality has operations that must be maintained.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that the three (3) gas retailers in the North of Smokey area are at a critical point. They need assistance to enable them to continue to operate. This is an issue that can be referred to the EDO to investigate if there is anything that the province can do in this regard.

It was moved and seconded that the critical issue with regard to the gas retailers in the North of Smokey area be referred to the EDO and Cape Breton Partnership to investigate and discuss this matter with the province. Motion carried.

The CAO is to investigate whether our EMO Plan designates any of these service stations for emergency response at present. This matter will be referred to Lyle Donovan, EMC, for direction.

OPERATIONS UPDATE

The CAO indicated that the County is presently operating with a skeleton crew. Collections are operating according to their collection schedule. Ten members of the outside staff have taken a voluntary layoff and Records of Employment have been issued.

Pauline Davis and Lauri Macaulay are working on a rotating daily schedule answering the phones.

Conversation is ongoing with water and waste water system operators on Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia to come up with an agreement to share supplies if necessary.

All municipalities in eastern Nova Scotia are working together and AMANS is developing a report on best practices across Nova Scotia.

The COVID-19 team participates in a daily conference call beginning at 2:30 p.m. and the CAO outlined some of the initiatives that are taking place.

The Annual FCM Conference has been cancelled, as have the AMANS and NSFMS spring conferences.

Cassandra Yonder, Seniors' Safety Officer, has received \$10,000.00 in provincial government funding to assist seniors in general and she is reaching out to determine the best delivery methods.

Council indicated that they have not received any complaints and expressed appreciation to all the workers who are handling the COVID-19 crisis.

Concern over some people not social distancing as they should was brought up and the possibility of coming up with a message regarding this issue was discussed. Jocelyn Bethune indicated that the County is following the parameters suggested by the federal and provincial governments in this regard. She will come up with a response for Council should they be contacted, but indicated that all information must be accurate and vetted before provided to the public. This is why the contact information for the federal and provincial government will be provided.

RETURNING OFFICER

The status of the October 17, 2020, Municipal Election was discussed and the CAO advised that an advertisement was placed for a Returning Officer and one application was received.

The candidate was interviewed and has experience working in elections and is recommended for the position.

It was moved and seconded that Blair Gallop be appointed as Returning Officer for the Municipality of the County of Victoria for the October 17, 2020 Municipal Election if an election takes place this year. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING

Council indicated that they felt their first video Council session went quite well and agreed that the next session will be held via Zoom on the regular scheduled date of Monday, April 6, 2020, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

The CAO will contact Robert Dauphinee and Kelly Brett to see if they wish to continue with the Public Works meeting scheduled for 4:00 p.m. that day to deal with tipping fees,

The minutes of this meeting will be posted as a draft on the Victoria County website by 4:00 p.m. tomorrow as indicated in the Minister's directive.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved that the meeting adjourn at 5:15 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO