

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

May 4, 2020

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held via Zoom teleconference on Monday, May 4, 2020, 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
Heather MacLean, Recorder

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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 20, 2020

The minutes of the April 20, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the April 20, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council be approved as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

The CAO advised that a joint application will be submitted to the Province that will include Inverness/Richmond/Victoria and Port Hawkesbury with regard to minimum planning standards.

A Flag Policy was provided to Council for review some time ago. Council are to provide their comments on this policy before Friday of this week and the Flag Policy will be brought to the next Council to approval.

The CAO advised that a three-year cost sharing agreement for subdivision roads was received from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (TIR).

It was moved and seconded that the Warden and CAO be authorized to sign the 2020-2021 agreement with the Department of TIR regarding subdivision roads. Motion carried.

Condolences were sent to Colchester County with regard to tragic events of April 18-19, 2020 and to CBRM on the death of Councillor Ray Paruch.

An application has been submitted to the Province for Provincial Capital Assistance Program (PCAP) funding for an extension to the Ingonish water line.

NEW BUSINESS

The CAO provided the updated collection rejections for the Municipality. The week of April 6-9, 2020, there were 59 bags rejected and the past week, April 27-May 2, 2020, there were a total of 17 rejected.

Application has been submitted and approved by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) for Digital Marketing and Social Media Training. The courses are 40 hours long and Dan Coffin has received 19 applications. A course complement is 12 people, so two sessions will be held.

The CAO provided an update on items being worked on by the Tourism and Development Officer, Recreation and Active Living Coordinator and Economic Development Officer.

A Budget meeting will be held via Zoom on Wednesday, May 6, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. The audit for the year ended March 31, 2020 will take place on schedule in May, 2020.

The Public Works Committee met prior to Council where tipping fees were discussed and an update on operations was received. The CAO will be meeting with Robert Dauphinee, Director of Public Works, and Kelly Brett, Public Works Supervisor, tomorrow to discuss tipping fees and exploring a return to operations in keeping with the current State of Emergency.

The CAO provided a staffing update and outlined the meetings attended virtually. She also presented statistics on the public views of Council for the last three Council meetings held virtually.

Councillor MacNeil advised Council that meetings have been held with Adam Shore with regard to mountain bike trails throughout Victoria County. Another meeting on this topic will be held in the near future.

TAXATION UPDATE

The CAO reported that as of today, taxes outstanding are \$1,086,616, with \$628,880 in current and \$457,735 in arrears. This is compared to \$1,222,373 at the same time last year, with \$690,021 in current and \$532,351 in arrears.

This is a difference of \$135,757 - \$61k better in current and \$75k better in arrears. Since the April 20, 2020, Council session, \$46k has been collected.

On a positive note, our total taxes outstanding are moving closer to the \$1 million mark, a mark that was not reached prior to billing last year.

The CAO advised that the Province knows we will have an issue with collections this year, as will all municipalities, and have come forward with the possibility of a proposal to offer each municipality what they expect their shortfall to be on taxes. It is anticipated that they will lend the money to the Municipality, who in turn will offer micro loans to those who qualify. The loan will be at an extremely low rate with a two year payback.

A motion is required to direct staff to submit a request to the Province once it is known what will be offered. The CAO indicated that at this point it is a guess but they have come up

with a figure of \$3.6 million on current taxes. The Municipal Finance Corporation will be the lending institution.

It is anticipated that the tax bills will be sent out in mid to late June, the same as last year. Taxpayers who can pay their tax bills are encouraged to pay them.

A policy on the qualifications for accessing this tax repayment program will be developed.

It was moved and seconded that a request be sent to the Province to participate in a Municipal Taxation Repayment Plan. Motion carried.

More details should be available for the Budget meeting on Wednesday.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

A meeting was held with Department of TIR officials last week and many items were addressed at that time.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil brought up a concern with regard to flooding of the culvert in the Lower Washabuck area.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that Keith Bain, MLA – Victoria-The Lakes, advised that the Englishtown Ferry should be back in service within the next couple of weeks. This is welcome news.

District #5

Councillor Patterson advised that the rain has washed out the culvert at the end of MacLean Road, Ross Ferry, and has taken a portion of the shoulder and pavement also.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that construction has commenced on Smokey Mountain again.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald advised that he has received calls from residents of Fraser Road, Bay St. Lawrence. This has been brought up to TIR in the past and they have indicated that this will be a RIM project this year.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

Councillor MacDonald indicated that a number of residents have inquired on when the Dingwall Transfer Station may open.

The CAO advised that no decisions have been made and this is a discussion she will have in her meeting with Public Works Management tomorrow. They will investigate a slow reopening of some sort and if and when it is decided everyone will be notified.

Councillor MacDonald advised that today is International Firefighters Day and he would like to extend a thank you to firefighters in all Victoria County Volunteer Fire Departments and across the province.

Warden Morrison indicated that this is timely, as Baddeck suffered a loss with a fire this past week and he commended all involved in fighting this fire.

District #7

It was moved and seconded that \$1,800.00 be approved from the District #7 budget to alleviate the problems of flooding on the MacLeod Road, Ingonish. Motion carried.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that with the spring, residents will be picking up garbage in the ditches of the road and he wondered if gloves and garbage bags can be provided as in previous year.

The CAO advised that these supplies are available and possible distribution will be discussed with Public Works tomorrow.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that he remains concerned about the local service stations. One service station has closed in the Cheticamp area of Inverness County and he is concerned this could happen in north of Smokey also. This service is critical to tourism and the local residents. He requested that this matter be passed on the Patrick Austin, EDO, and the Cape Breton Partnership.

District #5

Councillor Patterson indicated that he has received a request with regard to heritage property designation and he questioned on the criteria for municipal heritage property designation. This matter will be investigated.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis brought forward the ongoing concern with regard to the lack of cell coverage in his district, in particular the area from Indian Brook to the Gaelic College. The lack of highspeed internet in his district is also an ongoing concern.

Councillor MacInnis requested that a letter of congratulations be extended to Councillor Patterson's daughter, Amy Spurway, on being selected as one of three finalists for the Stephen Leacock Award for her novel, *Crow*.

Councillor Patterson indicated that he and his family are proud of this accomplishment.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod indicated that she would like to request that Morley MacNeil, Department of Lands & Forestry, or his representative, come to Council to update on Uisge Ban Falls and the plans for the 2020 season and to address safety concerns at this site in the winter season.

Other Council members may also have items to address with regard to the Department of Lands and Forestry.

It was moved and seconded that Morley MacNeil, Department of Lands & Forestry, be requested to come to Council to update on the current plans for Uisge Ban Falls for the 2020 season. Motion carried.

Councillor MacLeod also indicated that she is also concerned about highspeed internet coverage in her district and would like to know the plans for upgrading this service this year.

It was moved and seconded that the Broadband Committee meet with all Councillors to update on coverage and plans for improving the highspeed internet service in Victoria County. Motion carried.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil also updated on broadband coverage problems. He indicated that he contacted Aliant representative, John Swantee, with regard to coverage problems. Aliant was awarded the 1st phase of broadband coverage updates through the provincial broadband program.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that with the loosening of some restrictions with regard to COVID-19 by the province, there was evidence of increased traffic fishing and participating in other recreation activities this past weekend. The concern that social distancing is not being maintained was discussed and residents of Victoria County were again requested to practice social distancing.

The CAO is to send out a reminder to residents, through the Communications Officer, to remind residents of the importance of social distancing and request them to continue to manage themselves accordingly.

Councillor MacLeod suggested that the RCMP be contacted to request that they increase their patrols to address concerns with regard to maintaining social distancing.

District #3

Deputy Warden Dauphinee assumed the Chair.

Warden Morrison indicated that there is a beautification and streetscape program through the Province of Nova Scotia that the Village of Baddeck wishes to access. The Village is not

eligible to make application on its own for this program. Up to \$25,000.00 can be obtained through this program.

It was moved and seconded that the Municipality make application on behalf of the Village of Baddeck for the provincial Beautification and Streetscape Program provided all requirements are met. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison returned to the Chair.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning Advisory Committee

Warden Morrison advised that the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) met last week and will be incorporating a policy and guidelines for heritage properties that will address this issue in all areas of the County.

POLICY REVIEW

Flag Policy

The proposed flag policy will be reviewed and brought to the next Council meeting for approval.

APPRECIATION

Warden Morrison, on behalf of Council, extended a thank you to all frontline staff throughout Victoria County working diligently to continue to ensure that COVID-19 remains under control in our County. It is very much appreciated by Council and all citizens of the County.

Warden Morrison indicated that with Council getting more used to meeting virtually, there are a couple of presentations in the queue which may be held virtually moving forward.

Councillor MacInnis questioned whether funding was provided by the County for foodbanks in the County. This item will be discussed during budget and Council was advised

that Deputy Warden Dauphinee contributed from his district budget and this is a possibility for other Councillors moving forward.

NEXT MEETING

Due to the Victoria Day holiday, the next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held virtually on Tuesday, May 19, 2020, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

QUESTION

Adam MacNamara, CBC, questioned on the \$3.6 million dollar figure mentioned with regard to tax collection shortfall. The CAO advised that this is very much an estimate at this point.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved to adjourn at 6:00 p.m.

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

Bruce Morrison, Warden