

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

May 19, 2020

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held via Zoom teleconference on Tuesday, May 19, 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.

PAN CAPE BRETON FOOD HUB

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Alicia Lake, Executive Director, and Councillor Jim Mustard, PAN Cape Breton Food Hub.

Ms. Lake provided an update on the presence of the Food Hub in Victoria County. There are seven (7) producers in the County, with two (2) producer drop off points in the County.

There are currently 75 households participating in the Food Hub and a number of top restaurants in the County also purchase through the Food Hub. They include the Bite House, Telegraph House, Periwinkle Café, Danena's Restaurant and the Iona Heights Inn.

Ms. Lake provided statistics on the direct jobs created to date through the Food Hub. There are 10 on farm jobs, two full-time Food Hub staff, two additional seasonal Food Hub staff and one delivery person – for a total of 15 jobs.

Ms. Lake outlined the impacts the Food Hub has with regard to health, environment, economy, poverty reduction, tourism and community.

The Food Hub's COVID-19 response was outlined. They are in partnership with the Cape Breton Farmers' Market and currently provide home delivery across Cape Breton. They provide home delivery to Baddeck and Ingonish once per month, with weekly delivery to Sydney and area. They also participate in a Share the Harvest program.

Councillor MacLeod questioned on whether lobster could be included as an option in the food deliveries. Ms. Lake indicated that this matter has been discussed but the logistics of keep the lobsters alive for delivery is a concern.

Councillor MacInnis advised that only fishery employees are allowed on the wharves. He outlined obstacles that are currently in place. Individuals are not permitted to purchase directly from the fishermen at the wharf.

The possibility of forming a small committee to research this matter with regard to food safety and transportation was a consideration.

Councillor MacLeod questioned on whether there could be other producers joining to provide product. Ms. Lake advised that the Food Hub is always encouraging would be farmers to move to the area and start farms. She indicated that it is unlikely that local farmers markets will operate this season.

Jim Mustard indicated that this is a unique time everywhere and more food production is required and should be encouraged.

Ms. Lake advised that the PAN Cape Breton Food Hub is requesting funding from the Municipality this fiscal year in the amount of \$15,000.00. This is the same amount as last year.

Warden Morrison advised that the grant applications will be reviewed within the next couple of weeks.

After further discussion, Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Alicia Lake and Jim Mustard for their presentation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MAY 4, 2020

The minutes of the May 4, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

Councillor MacLeod brought up a couple of typographical errors which will be corrected.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the May 4, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council be approved as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

A representative from the Department of Lands & Forestry will present at the next meeting of Council.

The CAO advised that the materials for the spring cleanup have arrived and will be shipped to each Councillor for pickup. Council can contact the Collections Department to confirm where they wish the materials to be delivered.

Leanne MacEachen advised that Patrick Austin, EDO, has not heard any concerns from service stations lately, but he will follow up with them in the near future.

The cost sharing agreement with the Department of TIR for Village and Subdivision roads was signed, sealed and returned by mail.

The waste collection rejection figures were provided for the first week of May, a total of 5 for the week. This is down from the first week of April where there was a high of 59 rejections.

The CAO outlined initiatives currently being identified and worked on by all Department Heads.

Leanne MacEachen advised that Grant Thornton is currently conducting the audit virtually. A draft of the Tax Repayment Plan Policy has been developed and was forwarded to Councillors for review. A Temporary Borrowing Resolution will be completed and sent to the Municipal Finance Corporation for approval once the final policy is approved.

The Transfer Station sites were open to the public last Saturday to allow residents to bring their yard waste and building materials, and heavier items to the site. Garbage and recyclables were not accepted at the site. The day started out busy, but everything went well. 100 people visited the Baddeck site and 51 at the Dingwall site.

The CAO advised that a return to work plan is presently being discussed. If all things remain as they are currently, the date of June 1 is being considered for return to work and a June 8th opening to the public.

Leanne MacEachen advised that in discussion with Bernie Vassallo, Buchanan Memorial Hospital Foundation (BMHF), he has indicated that a new doctor will be coming to the area in September. Currently the CAO, through the Solicitor, is looking into a long term lease for rental of the municipally owned property at 165 New Haven Road to the BMHF.

Statistics were provided on the number of YouTube and Facebook views of recent Council sessions.

NEW BUSINESS

A meeting of the Victoria County Transit Board (VCTB) was held earlier today. Strait Area Transit is currently in the process of hiring a new Manager and has asked the Municipality for a representative to sit on the Hiring Committee. Councillor Perla MacLeod, Chair of the VCTB, was recommended by the Board to serve on the Committee as Victoria County's representative.

It was moved and seconded that Perla MacLeod be appointed as the Municipality's representative on the Strait Area Transit Hiring Committee for the Manager position. Motion carried.

The CAO advised that, as of right now, the Municipal Council Election will proceed on the scheduled date in October, 2020.

Whether telephone/electronic voting would be done this year was questioned. The CAO advised that HRM have tendered for e-voting services and have left room for other municipalities who wish to take advantage of the prices, to do so.

Councillor MacInnis questioned on the status of heavy garbage pickup and he was advised that it looks like it will be conducted in the fall.

Councillor MacNeil provided an update on Broadband and indicated that the update Develop Nova Scotia provided on the 2nd phase projects did not include any Victoria County projects as yet. There were projects in Phase 1 and hopefully there will be Phase 2 projects as well.

Seaside Communications are to be requested to present to Council in the future.

2020-2021 BUDGET

The CAO advised that four budget meetings were held and Council was forwarded the latest budget draft for review and consideration.

It was moved and seconded that the \$12.8 million dollar budget, with tax rates of \$1.22 residential and \$2.12 commercial, be approved and the due date for taxes be set at September 30, 2020. Motion carried.

TAXATION UPDATE

As of today, total taxes outstanding are \$1,043,724, with \$596,881 in current and \$446,843 in arrears. This is compared to \$1,167,195 outstanding this time last year, with current at \$654,345 and arrears at \$513,850.

This is a difference of \$123,471 to the better - \$57k in current and \$66k in arrears. Since May 4, 2020, Council, \$43k has been collected toward current and arrears.

The CAO advised that taxpayers, who are able to pay, are encouraged to pay their taxes.

RECESS

The Warden advised that Council would recess for 5 minutes.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

District #1

Councillor MacNeil brought up the issue of residents who have paid for their ferry passes and since COVID-19 came into effect, no one is being charged to cross the ferry. He requested that the Minister of TIR be contacted to see if there will be a rebate for pass users either, a refund for this year or a discount for the amount of time in next year's passes.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that he received a letter about Murphy's Point Road development and that the Department of TIR is backing out of their initial agreement for maintaining the road. He questioned if there is a way to arrange a meeting with the TIR Minister and the two land developers to see if this situation can be resolved. This matter will be investigated.

Councillor MacNeil advised that patching of potholes is required throughout Washabuck, especially in the area from the Church to the Crossroads.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod encouraged residents of her district who have any issues with regard to the Department of TIR to contact her.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis again expressed concern that the Englishtown Ferry has not been put back into service. Residents are getting very frustrated with the lack of service.

John Majchrowicz, Director of Marine Services, is to be requested to meet with Council on this issue.

There is a large sinkhole at the Englishtown Wharf that requires attention.

District #5

Councillor Patterson advised that the culvert located at 5123 Kempt Head Road, Southside Boularderie, is completely plugged and the adjacent ditch is completely filled in with debris.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee echoed Councillor MacInnis' concern with regard to the Englishtown Ferry. His residents are frustrated with the lack of service.

The location of gravel and grading of the Ferry Road, Ingonish Ferry, is required. This road is of high usage due to the fishing season.

The erosion on the shoulder of the road before the Ingonish Marina is to be repaired and a general inspection of the roadway erosion from Smokey to Ingonish is requested.

District #7

Councillor Budge indicated that the side roads in his district require work, especially the Lighthouse Road. There are a number of potholes and areas of erosion on this road.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald brought up the potholes in South Harbour in the area in the area of Civic address 30019 Cabot Trail, past Danena's Take-Out. He also expressed concern with the complete shoulder erosion all through the Bay Road Valley down into St. Margaret's Village. A full grading of all the gravel roads in District #8 is required.

Councillor MacDonald requested an update on the timeline for installation of the Gaelic road signs in District #8.

District #3

Warden Morrison brought up the condition of Campbell Street from the Victoria Highland Civic Centre to Shore Road.

It was moved and seconded that the list of issues addressed be forwarded to the Department of TIR for consideration. Motion carried.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

Councillor MacDonald brought up a concern with regard to the erosion of road to the causeway in Dingwall. This road leads to the Government Wharf that is owned by the federal government. The road is down to one lane.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Dingwall Harbour Authority and the federal government concerning the condition of the road to the Dingwall Causeway. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that \$500.00 be approved for the North of Smokey Food Bank and \$500.00 to the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre Garden Project from the District #8 budget. Motion carried.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the most concerning dilemma in his district is the fishery. The price of lobster is down 20% and the current catches are down by 50%. In meetings with buyers, they want to do by trip. There are tough days ahead with the fishery and this will have an adverse effect on our economy.

Last Friday, 3,700 boats set their gear. The fishery will feel the repercussions for a long time to come.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod brought up concern with regard to the opening of summer residences and the effect this could have during COVID-19.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia Chief Medical Officer of Health, expressing our concern with regard to the effect summer residences opening would have on our residents who have not seen an increase in COVID-19 cases for the past few weeks and what plans the government has in place to prevent further cases. Motion carried.

Councillor MacLeod indicated that her residents are concerned about the lack of commitment there appears to be with regard to schools, the students and parents. The current system is not working.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Hon. Zack Churchill, Minister of Education, with a copy to Keith Bain, MLA, to address the uncertainty of the coming school year and the need to have more commitment to provide a better system for educating the students if there are further school closures. Motion carried.

Councillor MacLeod advised that June is Pride Month and she would like to investigate what can be done in this regard under the current circumstances.

Councillor MacLeod encouraged her residents to continue practicing safe distancing and hand washing.

District #5

Councillor Patterson indicated that two machines were in his district cutting the sides of the Kempt Head Road. It appears that the new pavement will be completed this season and that is good news to his residents.

District #6

It was moved and seconded that a letter of appreciation be forwarded top Anne-Claude Pepin, Ingonish Beach, for organizing the roadside cleanups in northern Victoria County. Motion carried.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil advised that trees are being cleared along to the final section of the Gillis Point Road.

Councillor MacNeil acknowledged the Davidson and Franklin families for the cleaning the roadsides in the area from the Church to Maskell's Harbour and the Hector's Point area.

It was moved and seconded that a letter of appreciation be forwarded to the Davidson and Franklin families for their roadside cleanup. Motion carried.

District #3

Warden Morrison received a letter from a resident of District #5, concerning whose responsibility it is for development along the Bras d'Or Lake.

It was moved and seconded that this concern be forwarded to the Eastern District Planning Commission and the Department of Environment for their reply. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison advised that there are a number of municipalities who have their own Municipal Charter that allows them freedom from some of the restrictions contained in the *Municipal Government Act*.

It was moved and seconded that the CAO pursue the options with regard to a Victoria County Charter and report back to Council. Motion carried.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated he had inquiries from the Dancing Moose and the Clucking Hen about the possibility of locating portable washrooms by their facilities for the public's use.

Concern was expressed as to how these could be maintained and sanitized during COVID-19. There would be no handwashing associated with these units.

This is to be referred to the Cape Breton Partnership to see what options are available through the province.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) availability was discussed and the CAO advised that Dan Coffin is looking at creative ways for PPE and sanitation for businesses.

POLICY/BY-LAW

The Flag Policy has been provided to Council for review. A policy has been developed for virtual meetings for Council to review.

Council were also provided with amendments to the Water Supply Upgrade Lending Program By-law to include septic systems. These amendments are to be reviewed by Council and advertised as required.

It was moved and seconded that the Flag Policy be approved. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

The CAO presented a letter from the Off Highway Vehicle Association approving funding for the Victoria County Trails Federation from the OHV fund in the amount of \$41,670.00.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held on Monday, June 1, 2020, beginning at 5:00 p.m. This meeting will most likely be held via Zoom.

The Department of Lands & Forestry will be presenting and contact will be made with the Cabot Trails Writers Festival to see if they are also interested in presenting.

A meeting to review the grant funding requests will be scheduled for next week or the following week. Alix Redden, CFO, will advise Council of the date for the meeting.

QUESTIONS

Adam MacNamara, CBC, asked questions with regard to Broadband coverage and the contents of the letter to be forwarded to Dr. Robert Strang as approved earlier in the meeting. His questions were answered accordingly.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved to adjourn at 6:50 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO