

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

June 1, 2020

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held via Zoom teleconferencing on Monday, June 1, 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. A brief In Camera meeting will be held at the conclusion of the agenda.

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

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS & FORESTRY

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Morley MacNeil, Victoria/Inverness Area Manager, Department of Lands & Forestry.

Mr. MacNeil thanked Council for the opportunity to appear and introduced staff members in attendance with him – Tanya Borgal, Forest Technician; Jonathan Murray, Wildlife Technician; and Jennifer Stephen, Crown Land Technician.

The Department of Lands and Forestry has broad responsibilities relative to the development, management, conservation and protection of forest, mineral, parks and wildlife resources and the administration of the province's Crown land.

Services are offered and delivered through four branches - Land Services, Mineral Resources, Regional Services, and Renewable Resources. In addition, the Department has a central planning and administrative support group called Policy, Planning and Support Services located in Shubenacadie.

Jonathan Murray manages the Baddeck Depot and is a wildlife technician. There have been a lot of problems this spring with bears and last winter a great deal of deer monitoring took place. He is also responsible for the two rifle ranges in the County at Hunter's Mountain and White Point.

Tanya Borgal is a Forest Technician who works to suppress fires, train with volunteer fire departments and maintain equipment. Victoria and Inverness Counties have 12 technicians covering two offices and cover both counties for fire duty. There is a 10 member fire crew. A number of calls are received with regard to illegal burning. Unless you have been issued an industrial permit, there is no burning between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. There are 16 provincial parks and five requiring operation and maintenance in Victoria County.

Jennifer Stephen is a Crown Land Technician and her position involves Crown land management and permitting, coastal waters permits, protected beaches with wilderness areas and bug and pest detection. She indicated that signs have been posted in the protected beach in North Harbour to indicate no camping, no campfires, no dogs, etc. and there is a number to call to report violations. Signage will be placed in South Harbour beach also.

Morley MacNeil advised that the head office for fire is in Shubenacadie and for wildlife in Kentville. He indicated that this update touched on the major activities but there are additional responsibilities also and he and the staff present would be happy to answer any questions Council might have.

Councillor MacNeil questioned on beavers who build dams along the road. Jonathan Murray indicated that the first point of contact in this regard would be the Department of TIR, who will assess the damage and will come to the Department of Lands & Forestry and they will work together to alleviate the problem.

Councillor MacNeil also brought up the rumored proposed park for the Washabuck area. He was unaware of this proposal and was advised by First Nations that they had been requested to provide a name for the Park. Morley MacNeil indicated that there is land designated for this park and he would get an update and forward information on the status.

Councillor MacLeod requested an update on the Uisge Ban Falls Park. Fallen trees and debris are being cut and removed. They have been given the green light to hire a contractor to go into the park to conduct maintenance on the main trail to the falls. The main focus this year is on the main trail; however, they have not given up on the River Trail as yet. Additional signage and messaging will be developed and installed. They are working with the signage engineer to come up with the best and most pleasing layout for signage for Uisge Ban.

Councillor MacLeod indicated that because the Province has announced new money to create employment following the pandemic lockdown, the project to revive the river bridge trail would be a perfect use for these funds.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that 52 years ago the worst forest fire in Victoria County's history took place in Wreck Cove. He questioned on the availability of water bombers to suppress fires. He was advised that there are 4 helicopters throughout the province and one of the helicopters is located at the Baddeck Depot. There is a mobile command centre located in Shubenacadie for the province and resources can be requested from other provincial resources. They also have an inventory of water supplies where water can be accessed throughout Victoria County.

The status for burning in the province was discussed. There is no burning permitted between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Domestic fires and campfires are permitted and residents are requested to check the daily status by calling 1-855-564-2876 or by visiting <https://novascotia.ca/burnsafe>. Green means you can burn after 2:00 p.m., yellow after 7:00 p.m. and red is no burning at all.

The change in the deer population in the Boularderie area was discussed and Jonathan Murray advised on possible reasons for same.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee extended a thank you to Morley MacNeil for the quick response he receives from the department.

The bear population in the Ingonish Centre area was discussed. There has been no success in trapping the bear yet and they are working with Parks Canada on this issue.

Councillor Budge brought up the lack of fisheries enforcement and asked that enforcement staff be requested to go to the northern area regularly.

Morley MacNeil indicated that a few years ago, enforcement was turned over to the Department of Environment and he is not privy to their scheduling. He will pass on this request and concern on to the Department of Environment.

Councillor MacDonald questioned on the stairway to the beach at the Cabot Landing Provincial Park. He wondered when the second section to the left would be installed. This site was visited recently and the permanent solution at this site is to build a ramp into the ground. Work is being undertaken on a design to provide a long term solution for this area.

Signage for Cabot Landing Provincial Park was discussed and they are currently working on sign replacement.

The use of the public washrooms at the Park and whether hand sanitizers could be located in the washrooms was questioned. Morley MacNeil indicated they will be meeting with the caretaker tomorrow in this regard. Signs will be posted indicating that these washrooms are not cleaned on a regular basis.

Councillor MacDonald thanked the Department for the signage located at North Harbour.

Councillor MacLeod has had a concern with regard to bears in the area of the Baddeck Solid Waste Management Facility. Jonathan Murray visited the site and no bear were visible. It is hoped that the mother and two cubs, that have been seen in the area, have moved on.

The problem with foxes in the Baddeck area was discussed. They are not easy to remove and the department is trying to educate the public to not feed wildlife.

The prevalence of ticks in the area was discussed. Cape Breton has the lowest numbers in the province, but there are ticks in the area. Precautions such as long sleeves and insect repellent should be undertaken when traveling in the wooded areas.

Morley MacNeil indicated that contact from Council keeps the department in touch. Victoria County has a large geography so meetings such as these are beneficial.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to the representatives for attending and for the information provided.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MAY 19, 2020

The minutes of the May 19, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval. Councillor MacNeil indicated that a correction was required on Page 5 of the minutes with regard to Broadband. He indicated he would provide the proper information for the correction.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of May 19, 2020, be approved with the noted correction. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Leanne MacEachen indicated that Intelivote was the successful bidder for HRM's pricing for e-voting. This is the same company that Victoria County has used in the past two elections and we have a good working relationship with them.

The CAO contacted Intelivote for the cost to Victoria County for e-voting in the 2020 Election. With the COVID-19 restrictions, e-voting was felt to be the best way to proceed for the 2020 Municipal Election.

The CAO contacted John Bain, EDPC, regarding shoreline development and unfortunately, there are no zoning or setback requirements currently in effect. Coastal protection regulations and minimum planning standards will likely have requirements in this regard when put in place.

Warden Morrison indicated that the Department of Environment, who are responsible for residential development not serviced by municipal water and sewer, may be contacted to investigate whether any shoreline audits have been completed.

NEW BUSINESS

The CAO advised that administrative staff reported to work today and it is anticipated that the Court House will be opening to the public on June 8, 2020.

Most of the Public Works were back today and there will be a phased in return to work plan for this department.

The CAO updated on the work being undertaken by the municipal departments. The Tourism and Development Officer is working on PPE and washroom solutions for businesses that are reopening. He has meetings scheduled with development groups in each area. The DCBA survey had the majority of responses from Victoria County and most businesses are planning to open in some form.

The Social Media course is back on schedule and a Zoom meeting on the wage subsidy was well attended.

Lydia Kerr is working on Recreation kits, the Active Living survey and strategy.

Patrick Austin is working with several businesses on re-opening and subsidy plans and is also investigating what is being done with public washrooms in other areas.

The public washroom issue was discussed. What Council felt in regard to opening the public washroom in Baddeck if the Victoria County Visitors Centre does not operate this year? It was felt that it should be opened.

The status of the public washroom to be located at the Gaelic College was questioned. The CAO advised that the walls are up and the roof is on the washroom at the Gaelic College.

Councillor MacInnis questioned if a location had been identified for the North Shore area. The CAO advised that an Expression of Interest was advertised today for community groups or businesses that may wish to take on the operation of a public washroom for this area.

Councillor MacDonald indicated that the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre public washroom project is proceeding well.

The CAO will provide a public washroom update and possible sanitization options at the next meeting.

Several complaints have been received with regard to the smell from the shells at the Dingwall Transfer Station site. Residents who may have insight or experience with the crab shell smell issue were encouraged to contact the County.

Councillor MacInnis questioned on what fish processing facilities in Glace Bay and Louisbourg do with their shells. The CAO is to investigate this issue and determine better processes for dealing with the crab shell issue.

The CAO advised that the lost revenue survey requested by the NSFM has been completed and forwarded on to the Province.

Leanne MacEachen also advised that the gardening at all municipal sites will be done in house this year.

Thirty-five (35) viewers watched the Council livestream on May 19, 2020, and so far this evening there are 38 viewing the Council session.

WATER CONNECTION FEE

Councillor MacNeil indicated that a resident who wished to connect to the Little Narrows Water System disagreed with the \$1,000.00 connection fee and contacted that Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) to question why there is this exorbitant fee when there are existing lines present.

The NSUARB agreed that if there is no work required to lay pipes, etc., then this fee should not happen.

The CAO advised that the connection fee wording was interpreted wrong and earlier connections will be reviewed and if wrongly charged, the fee will be refunded.

TAXATION UPDATE

The CAO advised that as of today taxes outstanding are \$1,013,717, with \$572,882 in current and \$440,835 in arrears. This is compared to \$1,116,465 outstanding at this time last year with \$626,044 in current and \$490,420 in arrears.

This is a difference of \$102,746 better - \$53k in current and almost \$50k in arrears. This is still on the positive side, but the gap is shrinking from the last few updates.

Since Council on May 19, 2020, \$30k has been collected toward current and arrears. In the same time period last year \$68k was collected, so we are definitely seeing a slowdown in payments.

The status and schedule of Tax Sales was questioned and an update will be provided at the next meeting.

The Property Tax Installment Program Policy will be discussed later in the agenda.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL ITEMS/CONCERNS

District #8

Councillor MacDonald indicated that there is a culvert at the Mill Hill Road, Bay St. Lawrence, which requires replacement. The existing culvert has collapsed and water is backing up on a resident's driveway. Ditching is required along this stretch of road as it is flooding. The location of this concern is 3286 Bay St. Lawrence Road.

The Old Loop Road requires shouldering and grading and this matter is to be brought to the attention of the Department of TIR.

There is a hole on the North Aspy Bridge approach and loose nails on the bridge that require attention. If the bridge could be paved, this would eliminate this problem.

The Big Hill area on the Dingwall Road is narrowing and pedestrians are forced to walk on the road and they are at risk when two vehicles meet at this location. This is a concern to be forwarded to the Department of TIR.

District #7

Councillor Budge indicated that patching was done on the Light House Road in Neil's Harbour, but there are still some potholes that require repair.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee was happy to hear the grader is in the North of Smokey area. The manholes in the Ingonish Beach area were repaired and he advised that erosion of the road south of the Ingonish Marina at Ingonish Ferry requires the location of a hazard marker before an accident occurs.

District #4

The Englishtown Ferry is back at Englishtown and Councillor MacInnis indicated it may be back in service on Wednesday or Thursday of this week.

Councillor MacInnis expressed concern about the dead trees in the ditches of the road throughout his district. They are an eyesore and he requested that TIR contact a contractor to clean up this debris.

Councillor MacInnis again brought forward his concern with regard to broken guardrail posts throughout his district.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod indicated that gravel and maintenance is required on the North Branch Road to Uisge Ban Falls in the vicinity of Civic # 420 to the Park. The little bridge to get to the Park needs to be replaced.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil indicated that completion of the grading throughout District #1 is required. Patching of the roads and sign replacement throughout Washabuck and Iona is needed.

A complete lawn repair is required at 98 New Glen Road.

Residents have asked why only 6 cars are permitted on the Little Narrows Ferry at one time and TIR is to be contacted in this regard.

District #3

Warden Morrison advised that ditching is required along the Shore Road in Baddeck as water is pooling in that area.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald again questioned on the status of the location of the Gaelic signage in District #8. The location of this signage should be completed this spring.

It was moved and seconded that the concerns addressed for the Department of TIR be forwarded to the Department for action. Motion carried.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #1

Councillor MacNeil wished to recognize residents of the Washabuck area who participated in a community cleanup recently. They did a great job of cleaning the area.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod indicated that she forwarded an email to Council with regard to “Pride Month” activities. She showed a Pride sign that can be copied and provided to businesses to place on their doors or windows.

The raising of the Pride Flag was discussed and Council agreed that the flag raising ceremony will be held on June 4, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. at the Court House, Baddeck. Social distancing will be observed and the ceremony will be livestreamed via Facebook.

Councillor MacLeod also requested that copies of the book, *Love Lives Here*, by Amanda Jette Knox, be purchased and donated to libraries throughout the County.

It was moved and seconded that copies of the book, *Love Lives Here*, by Amanda Jette Knox, be purchased for donation to the public and school libraries throughout the County. Motion carried.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the next few months will be challenging due to the major effect the COVID-19 pandemic will have on the tourism sector. It will be a difficult time for this industry and is a major concern for our economy.

District #5

Councillor Patterson indicated that at a previous meeting, discussion was held on funding available to assist with the loss of revenue due to COVID-19. The criteria for this funding was discussed and it was felt Patrick Austin, EDO, would have more information on this funding and he could be contacted for assistance.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee wished to commend Patrick Austin, EDO, for the information provided and work he is doing with businesses in this challenging time.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Brother Milne, Ingonish Beach Freshmart, for going above and beyond to assist the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Motion carried.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald again brought forward complaints from area residents along the South Ridge Road with regard to the smell from the shell waste. He felt that research should be conducted on possible ways to eliminate this issue. It is an ongoing issue each year and Councillor MacDonald felt this shell waste should not be accepted.

It was felt that the CAO should reach out to Osborne Burke, Victoria Co-op Fisheries, in this regard and a possibility of setting up a Zoom meeting for all involved is to be investigated.

Councillor MacDonald expressed appreciation to residents of his district who have participated in roadside cleanups to date and to the other areas of the district that have planned cleanups scheduled to take place.

Councillor MacDonald advised of the work being undertaken by the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre who has, in conjunction with the United Way and Department of Health and

Wellness, compiled and distributed COVID-19 kits to area seniors. They have gone above and beyond and the seniors are very appreciative.

It was moved and seconded that a letter of appreciation be forwarded to the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre for providing COVID-19 kits to appreciative area seniors. Motion carried.

District #2

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional Centre for Education (CBVRCE) requesting that they develop an initiative to allow 2020 graduates to celebrate their graduation and prom. Motion carried.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil indicated that Lyle Donovan, EMC/Victoria County Fire Services Coordinator, advised him via message that the limit of 6 cars on the ferry at one time is due to the number of people in each car to ensure social distancing.

District #3

Warden Morrison advised that he received a request via Facebook to add paving of Twining Street and the Westside Middle River Road to the TIR action list.

A community cleanup is to be held in Baddeck on June 6, 2020. Residents are requested to adopt and clean an area to ensure the entire Village is cleaned.

Warden Morrison brought up the request Council received some time ago with regard to recognition medals for volunteer fire department members who achieve 25 years of service. Information was forwarded to Council earlier today with regard to design.

Council agreed with the design and indicated that the medals be obtained and the EMC/Victoria County Fire Services Coordinator contact each department to determine how many members would qualify for this award.

BY-LAW POLICY REVIEW

Electronic Voting By-Law

The Electronic Voting By-Law was presented for first reading. The methods of voting were discussed and Council felt that under the current circumstances, voting be done 100% electronically, via Internet or telephone.

It was moved and seconded to approve the first reading of the Electronic Voting By-Law. Motion carried.

Water Supply or Septic Upgrade Lending Program By-Law

The first reading of the Water Supply or Septic Upgrade Lending Program By-Law was presented for first reading. This is an amendment to the current Water Supply Upgrade Lending Program By-Law to include septic system installing, replacing or repairing.

It was moved and seconded that the Water Supply or Septic Upgrade Lending Program By-Law be approved for first reading. Motion carried.

Electronic Meeting Policy and Property Tax Installment Program Policy

Two policies, previously submitted for Council review, were presented for approval – the Electronic Meeting Policy and the Property Tax Installment Program Policy.

It was moved and seconded that the Electronic Meeting Policy and the Property Tax Installment Program Policy be approved. Motion carried.

QUESTIONS

Adam MacNamara, CBC, questioned on the interest rate for the low rate loans to residents for taxes and the CAO advised that the interest rate charged is 1.35% per annum.

When the portal would be open for this program was questioned and the CAO advised that it is almost set to go and should be up and running within the next couple of weeks.

Mr. MacNamara questioned on the specifics for investigating the possibility of a Charter for Victoria County. Warden Morrison indicated that it is just in the investigation stages and

would provide more freedom and opportunities to operate and would promote economic development.

IN CAMERA

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

It was moved and seconded to return to the regular session of Council. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that the In Camera recommendation with regard to the property issue be approved. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING

The next meetings of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held on June 15, 2020, and June 29, 2020.

It was moved and seconded that the Public Hearing for the Electronic Voting By-Law and the Water Supply or Sewer Upgrade Lending Program By-Law be held on June 29, 2020, prior to Council at 4:30 p.m. Motion carried.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved to adjourn at 7:15 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO