

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

August 10, 2020

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held via Zoom teleconferencing on Monday, August 10, 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 #8 – Norman MacDonald

Also present were:

Leanne MacEachen, CAO
Heather MacLean, Recorder

Absent was:

District #7 – Wayne Budge

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Warden Morrison called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval. Councillor Patterson requested that the issue of separating 911 centres be added to the agenda.

It was moved and seconded, that the agenda of the August 10, 2020, meeting be approved with the noted addition. Motion carried.

ST. ANN'S BAY TIME BANK

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Jitka Zgola, St. Ann's Bay Time Bank.

Jitka Zgola thanked Council for the opportunity to appear and present on behalf of the St. Ann's Bay Time Bank.

Ms. Zgola advised that time banking is a community of people joined together and committed to supporting each other by giving and receiving. It creates a chance to socialize, share skills and experiences and to give something in exchange for something else. She provided Council with a copy of the brochure.

Ms. Zgola provided the values and goals of the St. Ann's Bay Time Bank. Membership is open to all residents of Victoria County, people of all ages, families, organizations and businesses.

In 2016, the St. Ann's Bay Development Association (SABDA) did a survey of the community and the topic of development of small group projects for seniors in their communities was proposed.

At that time they came across the idea of time banking. The largest time banks in the world are *Timebanks Worldwide and Timebanks USA*. They felt this would be a good concept to approach and sent in an application for funding to New Horizons for Seniors grant program.

Funding was received and the Time Bank initiative was launched. A coordinator was hired to organize community events and their website, <https://.stannsbay.timebanks.org> was launched.

In the past four years, the St. Ann's Bay Time Bank is the biggest and most active time bank in Canada.

Ms. Zgola provided a background history of the St. Ann's Bay Time Bank from 2017 to present and outlined the program, successes and growth that has occurred.

Now in 2020 they are considering developing a partnership with home care services, and other communities both in and outside the County have requested help to start a time bank. An advisory committee of 4 volunteers has been formed to give direction to the part-time staff, applying for funding, etc.

Ms. Zgola outlined their vision and challenge. The challenge is the timebank needs minimal funding every year to stay alive - \$25k. They rely on grants every year and are looking for partnerships to multiply affects using members and how to ensure sustainability of the program.

Warden Morrison questioned if the \$25k was being requested from the Municipality and she advised that whatever could be provided would be appreciated.

The time bank concept was seen as a great program by Council. The question was raised as to whether the organization would consider affiliating with other interested areas in the County and Ms. Zgola indicated they would absolutely be interested.

Whether contact was made with the Bay St. Lawrence Community Center was questioned and Ms. Zgola indicated they have not succeeded in making contact. Councillor MacDonald will provide the contact information.

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the St. Ann's Bay Time Bank is a great asset in his district.

The CAO advised of the Community Grants Program and the category of operational funding that could be applied for and Ms. Zgola was advised to keep checking the County website for the application for funding.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Jitka Zgola for her presentation and she left the meeting at this time.

WATERFRONT BADDECK PRESENTATION

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Bill Marchant, Waterfront Baddeck, and representatives from Develop Nova Scotia, including:

Adam Langley, Director of Operations & Marine

Peter Bigelow, Vice-President – Planning & Development

Bill Marchant provided Council with an update on the Baddeck Wharf. EXP was retained to do an assessment of the wharf and gave a final report in October of last year outlining safety issues.

The initial project was \$150k, Phase 1 of a three phase project. The Municipality was asked to contribute \$25k at that time which they approved. COVID-19 hit and the project was put on the shelf for a while. The new project is a \$1.1 Million project to complete all three phases at one time.

Mr. Marchant outlined what the project entailed. This project will have benefits beyond the Village. The Village of Baddeck has committed \$20k to the project and Waterfront Baddeck have committed to raising another \$20k through citizen donations. The new ask for the County is \$60k.

Adam Langley thanked Council for the opportunity to appear and extended regrets from Jennifer Angel, President & CEO of Develop Nova Scotia.

Mr. Langley indicated that the Baddeck Wharf is a critical asset which Develop Nova Scotia feels can become a signature destination area and attraction and is in alignment with the strategic plan of the province.

Baddeck is a desirable location for waterfront development and will provide business opportunities beyond what it can at present. He outlined Develop Nova Scotia's commitment to the project and being a funding partner.

The \$60,000.00 request from the Municipality was discussed. This was felt to be a good expenditure as it will attract over \$1 million in spending and be an asset to all Victoria County.

Whether consideration could be given to other waterfront areas in the County for such development was questioned and Adam Langley indicated he would be the contact for such a request.

It is anticipated that the project will commence in the fall and be completed by spring 2021 – an 8 to 10 month project.

The CAO questioned if more funding came in from the fundraising aspect, would it reduce the County's contribution. It was felt the funding request would remain as requested.

Concern was expressed that the County is heading into uncharted waters with the Village of Baddeck and their governance. The County has yet to sit down with the Village to discuss its future. Whether this could affect ACOA funding was questioned and Bill Marchant indicated that the County and Village partnered on the Waterfront Baddeck funding application.

Bill Marchant outlined the work that would take place through this project. This work will provide long term maintenance on the wharf and make it sustainable for the next 25 years.

Whether there were visual aids to show the new look for the Waterfront area was questioned and Bill Marchant indicated that these documents are not available as yet.

Councillor MacNeil indicated he would look forward to Develop Nova Scotia's assistance in developing the Port of Iona in the future.

Alix Redden indicated that \$100,000.00 was included as a special projects line in the budget and could be accessed for the remainder of the updated funding request.

It was moved and seconded that the Municipality approve the additional \$35,000.00 and partner with Waterfront Baddeck on the upgrade initiative contingent on funding being received from other government agencies. Motion carried.

The Warden advised that the Waterfront Baddeck upgrade will be an asset for all of Victoria County and he thanked Adam Langley, Peter Bigelow and Bill Marchant for their presentation.

Warden Morrison extended a thank you to Bill Marchant and the Committee for their work and commitment to this development.

The gentlemen left at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 27, 2020

The minutes of the July 27, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the July 27, 2020, minutes of Victoria County Municipal Council be approved as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

The CAO advised that there is a municipal by-law with regard to municipal heritage which has been forwarded to Council for review.

The valuation of the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department has been received and forwarded to the Solicitor to move forward with conveyance of the property.

The CAO indicated that the Village will be setting a meeting between the Village, County and Province with regard to their future at a time that is convenient for all three parties.

NEW BUSINESS

911 COMMUNICATION CENTRES

Councillor Patterson brought up the recently published article in *The Chronicle Herald* regarding the proposed RCMP plan to eliminate geographic separation by locating both Nova Scotia communication centres in one community, failing international standards and putting all Nova Scotians at risk.

The RCMP has plans to dismantle its communications centre in Truro and relocate to Dartmouth. A number of elected officials have been advocating against this plan because of the danger it poses if something should happen to shut down communications in the HRM area.

Councillor Patterson requested the Warden to contact the Mayors of Truro and Colchester County, the Chief of Millbrook First Nations and the MP for Cumberland-Colchester to determine their sense of urgency with regard to this issue.

It was moved and seconded that the Warden contact Truro Mayor Bill Mills, Colchester County Mayor Christine Blair, Millbrook Chief Bob Gloade and Cumberland-Colchester MP Lenore Zann to obtain further information and their stand on the RCMP's 911 communication centres proposal. Motion carried.

Solid Water Rejection Numbers

The CAO indicated that the solid waste rejection number are not black bag use issues as it appear to be more food and non-recyclable materials are being placed in blue bags. Sort sheets and FAQs will be prepared and provided to collectors to leave at problem areas.

CAO Report

Leanne MacEachen presented her report. She met with department heads earlier today and updated on all departments.

Dan Coffin, Tourism and Development Officer, is continuing to meet with tourist operators and gets the indication that seasonal businesses will close when their employees obtain their hours to collect EI.

The multi-purpose trail from the rink to the multi-purpose over pass has been completed and the Victoria County Trails Federation is working on the next phase of the trail project.

Dan is also working with North Highlands Nordic Ski Club on fundraising ideas and the ground has been prepared for their new site.

Community Placemaking projects are the new project planned by the Tourism and Development Officer.

Lydia Kerr, Recreation and Physical Active Living, has received craft kits that will be distributed through the Family Resource Centre.

Recreation kits are well received and once the summer season is over consideration is being given to donating the kits to community organizations.

The Active Living Survey is closed and the winners of the prizes will be announced. The Province have announced recreation infrastructure funding which Lydia is sending to community organizations throughout the County.

The Volunteer Awards may be done via Zoom this year with the awardees. Input is being requested from Council.

A hiking etiquette photo challenge is being developed and further information on this will be available at a future meeting.

Economic Development

Patrick Austin is currently on vacation and projects that have commenced are ongoing.

Finance

Several in house projects are being worked on to become more efficient.

Alix Redden, CFO, will be going on maternity leave in the fall and a replacement will be required.

Public Works

The predesign study for the Waste Water Treatment Plan in Ingonish has begun. This is required to apply for federal funding.

Water arrears letters were sent out last week – approximately 90 in total.

A RFP will be closing in the near future for the processing of metals at County sites.

Updates

Masks became mandatory in our building on July 31, 2020, and provincial guidelines are being followed.

Training is being done on the Voyent messaging system and it should be rolled out in the coming weeks.

Sean Donovan has been hired as the Manager of Inspection Services for the Eastern District Planning Commission.

The County will move forward with the Buchanan Memorial Hospital Foundation lease of the Neil's Harbour property.

The Cape North washroom will proceed when the MOU is in place.

The Municipality is looking for local companies to help with replacing our servers. Our data is currently on an older server and requires replacement.

A \$10,000.00 accessibility grant has been received from Communities, Culture and Heritage for the purchase of mobi-mats and chairs that will make a couple of the beaches in Victoria County accessible.

The CAO also provided staffing updates and advised that she will be on vacation starting on Thursday, August 13, 2020, returning on August 24, 2020.

Council was advised that both MLA Keith Bain and Municipal Advisor Ross MacDonald are watching Council on Facebook Live.

RECESS

The Warden advised that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

COMMUNITY DEVELOP PROJECT – VICTORIA COUNTY HOME SUPPORT

Warden Morrison indicated that he and Councillors MacInnis and Patterson met with homecare concerning their new Community Development Project and has requested the County to appoint an advisory committee member.

It was moved and seconded that Councillor Fraser Patterson be appointed to the Victoria County Home Support Community Development Project Advisory Committee. Motion carried.

TAXATION UPDATE

As of today, there is \$7,521,701 outstanding versus \$6,093,246 this time last year which is a difference of \$1,428,455 behind.

The due date for bills last year was August 15 so this is a tough time to be making a comparison. This year the due date has been extended to September 30 so people are taking their time to pay.

For comparison, for August 1-10 this year \$373k has been collected and last year for the same time period, \$1.56m in tax payments was received.

Current is the major difference - \$6,675,035 outstanding at present compared to \$5,196,059 last year, for a difference of \$1.479 behind.

Arrears have remained in the same position as last update – ahead just slightly by \$50,521 (\$846,666 vs \$897,187).

Work has begun on a letter to be sent to those in arrears as part of our restart on collections. This will also remind taxpayers about the installment program. There are currently seven applications, for ten tax accounts, and only one is commercial.

Moving forward with a tender process for Tax Sales is being investigated and Alix Redden updated Council on where we currently stand with Tax Sales.

There was a Tax Sale in the queue when COVID-19 hit and it was postponed. The Solicitor was contacted to see if we could consider tendering the properties that were to be sold for taxes at Tax Sale and he did not recommend this action.

A new list of properties is being developed and Alix Redden indicated that she would like to start tendering some of these properties with Council's authorization. She outlined the process to Council and indicated that properties could be tendered until Tax Sales are viable again.

She indicated that a surplus equipment tender was held recently and went quite well. She felt the same could happen with regard to taxes.

It was moved and seconded that the Municipality adopt Tax Sales by tender while COVID-19 restrictions are in place. Motion carried.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL ITEMS/CONCERNS

District #1

Patching was done in Iona but some holes were missed. The holes seem to be patched with cold patch which will not last. This work should be done right the first time instead of having to repair again in the fall. The pothole at Hector's Point was missed.

The Washabuck area needs patching and the road at the Gypsum Plant in Little Narrows needs work and patching.

The Gillis Point road near the bridge has to be looked at and ditching completed on the New Glen Road.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod indicated she had the same concerns as the July 6, 2020 Council meeting.

She questioned the Department of TIR when they will paint lines in District #2 on the Cabot Trail and Big Baddeck and when the work on Beverly's Hill Road will begin.

The Big Farm Road also requires asphalt patching.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that line painting was completed from the Lobster Galley to the foot of Smokey today and this is the first activity he has seen on this stretch of road this season, except to repair the hole at the former North Shore School.

He expressed his concerns that TIR is not getting the required maintenance done.

District #5

Councillor Patterson agreed with Councillor MacInnis. It is the little jobs that are not getting done such as ditching, patching, brush cutting, etc. which is frustrating to the public.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee requested that the area supervisor do an assessment of the Kings Point Road, Ingonish. Cars are blocking the beach, roadway and driveways on this road and he feels that "No Parking" signs should be installed in this area.

The shoulders of the road south of the Knotty Pine Cottages also require attention.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald agreed that work is not being done and the same issues from the last few Council meetings remain.

Signage needs to be placed in Dingwall in the area of coastal erosion and nothing has been placed to date. Councillor MacDonald estimated that there is a 10 foot undermined area in this area.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of TIR and Keith Bain, MLA, requesting that rock be obtained and placed in the area of erosion at 750 Dingwall Road. Motion carried

No reply was received from the Department of TIR with regard to the Gaelic Signage issue and the Fraser Road. Councillor MacDonald would like an update on these two issues.

The shoulders of the road through the Bay Road Valley to St. Margaret's Village require attention.

A manhole cover is upended and needs immediate attention in front of the North Highlands Cultural Centre, Cape North. It was almost the site of a motorcycle accident recently.

Councillor MacDonald questioned on when the *Caution – Children Playing* signs would be received. The CAO advised that the signs have been received and a civic address and the number of children present must be provided to go with the application for a permit to be sent to the Department of TIR.

Councillors are to provide this information to the CAO's office by Thursday, August 13, 2020.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to the Minister of TIR requesting that he look seriously at providing free passes for the two Victoria County Transit busses. Motion carried.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

It was moved and seconded that a street light order be approved for installation at 3223 Bay St. Lawrence Road. Motion carried.

Councillor MacDonald indicated that the North Highland Nordic Ski Club will be looking for a letter of support from Victoria County Council for their groomer/equipment building.

It was moved and seconded that the County provide a letter of support for the North Highland Nordic Ski Club for their groomer building when requested. Motion carried.

Councillor MacDonald brought up concern with regard to the Cabot Volunteer Fire Department. Their pumper truck is no longer in service and due to COVID-19 fundraising was affected. There are two residents who wish to donate substantial money for this cause but wish to obtain a charitable receipt for their donations. The Fire Department does not have charitable status.

What can be done to assist with this issue was discussed. The CRA have tightened their regulations for obtaining and retaining charitable status.

Alix Redden advised that there is a \$40k equipment fund for all fire departments in the County.

Further discussion was held and it was agreed that this matter remain in the hands of Lyle Donovan, Fire Services Coordinator, for review.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee questioned whether there were any signs remaining with regard to “Dogs on Leash”. Councillor MacNeil indicated he may have one available.

The Ingonish Barrier Beach as discussed. The barrier has been breached and it is agreed that this is the responsibility of the Province.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Premier, with copies to the Ministers of Environment, Lands & Forestry, and TIR, requesting that immediate action be taken to repair the Ingonish Barrier Beach as damage has occurred to the harbour, coastline and beaches and the barrier must be reinstated. Motion carried.

Discussion took place on the Develop Nova Scotia Broadband Program and the Victoria County sites approved for upgrade under this program. The CAO is to follow up with DNS on this matter and report to next meeting.

District #5

It was moved and seconded that the street light located at 1937 Old Route 5, Big Bras d’Or, be changed to an LED light. Motion carried.

District #4

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of TIR requesting that consideration be given to tendering projects to private contractors in order to get maintenance done in Victoria County. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded that a letter of congratulations and best wishes be sent to Premier Stephen McNeil on his recent announcement on his retirement after 17 years in public service. Motion carried.

District #2

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It was moved and seconded that a letter of congratulations and thanks be forwarded to Barb MacDonald on her retirement as Principal of Baddeck Academy and a letter also be forwarded to the new principal. Motion carried.

Councillor MacLeod requested that messaging be developed asking tourists and residents to take their garbage home when using our rivers and beaches. No littering is requested.

Councilor MacLeod advised that the Women in Government School will be held in Membertou on August 22, 2020. If anyone is interested they should get in touch with her.

Warden Morrison advised that Councillor MacLeod was selected to participate in an online course in Climate Leadership through FCM. This course will be held online every Wednesday and she will travel to Ottawa in March, 2021, as part of this course.

District #1

It was moved and seconded that a streetlight be ordered for location at 179 Gillis Point Road. Motion carried.

District #3

The Warden indicated that he received an unsigned letter raising concerns over COVID-19 and people arriving to the area that are outside the Atlantic bubble.

It is not the County's role to police such matters and all we can do is provide up-to-date information on the County website. Further concerns should be addressed through the RCMP.

BY-LAW/POLICY REVIEW

The CAO advised that the By-Law Modernization Project is progressing with Emily Pond, Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing. By-Laws will be searchable on the County website and some by-laws no longer used may be repealed.

The proposed Commercial Development District Improvements By-Law was sent to the province for input and the CAO indicated that it has been passed on to the legal department.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association is looking to conduct a periodic review and is seeking a letter of support for the review from the Municipality.

It was moved and seconded that a letter of support be provided for the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Association for their review. Motion carried.

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture have a new initiative to clean coastal ocean environment and are asking that the Municipality waive fees for marine waste and recycling from these clean ups.

The County does not charge a fee for such waste.

The take-up on the Tax Relief Program is 8 in total to date, with only 1 being commercial.

Twenty residents have signed up for the Low Income Tax Exemption Program.

Council congratulated Alix Reddin on her growing family news.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held on Monday, August 24, 2020, at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURN

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

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO