

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

September 15, 2020

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Tuesday, September 15, 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 welcomed Council and Staff back to the first in person meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council since March, 2020. He advised that the Council session will be livestreamed on Facebook and asked Council and the public to be patient as we work through this process.

The agenda was presented for review and approval. Warden Morrison advised that a 10 minute break will be added to the agenda at 6:00 p.m.

CPL GAVIN NAIME, VICTORIA COUNTY DISTRICT RCMP

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Cpl. Gavin Naime who was in attendance to provide updates on the Victoria County District RCMP – Baddeck and Ingonish Detachments.

Cpl. Naime indicated that COVID-19 has led to some trying times for everyone including how policing is done. He indicated that the RCMP have not been doing the regular check points during this time and have come up with different ways of finding impaired drivers, seatbelt infractions and distracted driving. They have tried to lessen their interaction with the public, while maintaining their duties. Due to the nature of the job, the RCMP members are at a higher risk for COVID-related issues.

Cpl. Naime indicated that last year there were 13 impaired drivers charged and to date from April, 2020, there have been 7 impaired charges laid. The RCMP has seen an increase in alcohol related offences since COVID-19.

Cpl. Naime outlined the standoff that occurred in Black Rock this past week and indicated that the RCMP worked in conjunction with the Cape Breton Regional Police, SIRT and the dog section to provide a presence in the area. The standoff was successfully contained and two individuals are no longer in the area. There should be no risk in this area.

Traffic enforcement in the Middle River area by the turn at MacLeod's Bridge was discussed. There have been two fatalities in the area in the last year, and almost a third. This area has seen numerous accidents over the years and the RCMP are working in conjunction with the Department of TIR. Additional resources are deployed to this area on a regular basis.

Cpl. Naime provided information on staff complement at both detachments. Staff Sgt. Darren Waidson is being replaced and a new Staff Sgt. will be coming to Victoria County District in the coming months. Cpl. Curtis Kuchta and Cpl. Naime have been filling in for the Staff Sgt. for the past six months. Cpl. Kuchta has recently transferred to the Northwest Territories and the competition for his position is up tomorrow. A new recruit will be coming at the end of the month to serve in Wagmatcook.

The Ingonish Detachment is currently fully staffed and all members in this area have been in place for the past year or two and there is good consistency in this area. Two members reside in the Dingwall area and a new Cpl. has been identified for the Ingonish area.

Cpl. Naime previously forwarded the occurrence stats for all violations in both Ingonish and Baddeck Detachment for the year to date – April 1 to present.

Councillor Patterson mentioned the recent standoff in his district and thanked the RCMP for their attendance and deescalating the situation.

Whether the legalization of cannabis has made a difference in policing was questioned and Cpl. Naime indicated that it hasn't made a huge difference. They are issuing more tickets for having cannabis in reach of the driver. Drug impaired driving charges stand at 2 to 3 offences. Cpl. Naime has been trained in drug related testing and this resource is available throughout the County.

The criterion for use of the emergency alert system was questioned and Cpl. Naime advised that there are a number of alerts and the criteria differ for each. There is a chain of command that is to be followed. This is being discussed at the higher levels at present and he indicated it is a balancing act to determine its use. He indicated that during the recent standoff in Black Rock, they utilized all their social media sources to get the word out.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that speeding is a concern all through Ingonish, especially in the area from Doucette's Variety to the Main Street Restaurant. He requested Cpl. Naime thank Constable Miranda for her visibility in the area.

Whether the RCMP had any consultation with TIR regarding speed zones was questioned. Councillor MacInnis expressed concern with regard to non-compliance with speed zones exiting the Englishtown Ferry heading North and in the area of North River. Cpl. Naime indicated that they can be discussed with TIR but the RCMP has no authority or control in setting speed zones.

Councillor MacInnis questioned on where ATV's are permitted to travel. They cannot be driven on the road shoulders. Councillor MacInnis indicated that he recently collected 36 containers in the ditch of the road in a 1.5 km area from his home. 26 of the 36 bottles were alcohol related.

Councillor MacLeod requested that the RCMP presence be increased and regular patrols conducted in the Middle River area, especially in the area of MacLeod's Brook and also the Big Baddeck Loop. Cpl. Naime will provide Councillor MacLeod with the stats with regard to their presence in these areas.

Cpl. Naime indicated that they will be doing quarterly stats sheets which will be forwarded to Council.

Councillor MacNeil brought forward concern with regard to speeding, and increased break, enter and thefts in his area over the past couple of months. More patrols were requested.

Leanne MacEachen questioned on the social media platforms used by the RCMP. Twitter, Facebook and media releases are all utilized. The public must join these platforms to receive the updates.

The CAO advised that she has again approached the Department of Justice to appoint a provincial member so that the Police Advisory Board for Victoria County can be established.

Warden Morrison indicated that he requested more patrols in the school zones with the beginning of a new school year.

Cpl. Naime also indicated that they receive numerous requests for COVID quarantine checks and he requested residents not to jump to conclusions when they see out of province and country license plates. The RCMP work in conjunction with the Department of Health on this issue.

Warden Morrison brought up the decreased staff complement in the Baddeck/Wagmatcook area. Most of these staff issues are being addressed and will be in place in the coming months. Cpl. Naime also indicated the possibility of himself transferring in the New Year. He indicated that the decreased staff complement does indeed put extra stress on the Staff.

Warden Morrison thanked Cpl. Naime and all members for their service to Victoria County.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Warden Morrison indicated that he neglected to obtain approval of the agenda with the addition of a 10 minute break at 6:00 p.m.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – AUGUST 24, 2020

The minutes of the August 24, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of August 24, 2020, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

The CAO advised that she inadvertently stated that heavy garbage collection would take one week to complete, when in fact it is anticipated that it will take up to 3 weeks to complete.

The County's Voyent Alert System is up and running. Over 500 residents have signed up and residents are encouraged to do so.

Google Maps has no plans to upgrade their mapping in Victoria County during 2020, but there is a link in Google where individuals can add an updated map.

The "Caution Children Playing" signs are available and the permit from the Department of TIR has been received. The signs can be installed at the locations requested. If needed, County staff can assist in the installation.

The status of Develop Nova Scotia's plans to make the Seawall Trail a signature trail in Nova Scotia was discussed. A meeting is to be held with the Seawall Trail Society.

Work has begun on a list of municipal properties to be put to tender.

The CAO spoke with Sean Luker, Cape Breton Island Housing Authority, regarding the housing issue and he has referred the request to the appropriate person.

Discussion took place on Develop Nova Scotia's second phase Broadband announcement that did not include any areas in Victoria County. The CAO indicated that Jennifer Angel, Develop Nova Scotia, indicated that they are not done and would be focusing on the 3% that remains not covered.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee felt that this year's heavy garbage collection is going to be excessive and he questioned on having the collection done in the three week period. The CAO indicated that the collection will depend on the amount and will be adjusted as needed.

Councillor MacNeil questioned if the collectors could go up the Taylor/Mercer Road to collect heavy garbage. Public Works is responsible for the collection and the CAO advised that Robert Dauphinee or Kelly Brett should be contacted on this matter.

Heavy garbage collection flyers have been sent in the mail and it was advised that all residents are to have their waste at the end of the driveway on September 21, 2020, and it will be removed in due course. Areas will not be visited more than once.

NEW BUSINESS

The CAO met with Department Heads and updated on what is happening in the Tourism, Recreation/Active Living, Economic Development, Finance and Public Works Departments.

The financial statements of the Municipality for the year ended March 31, 2020, will be presented at the next meeting on Council on September 28, 2020.

Public Works is waiting for news for the water and wastewater funding and GHB has begun the waste management review for the County.

Casual employees will be hired for the heavy garbage collection. Water arrears collection is being ramped up and consideration is being given to disconnecting delinquent accounts.

Councillor MacNeil asked for information on where the delinquent water accounts are located so he will be aware when he is contacted. The number of accounts will be provided, but no personal details will be given on who is in arrears.

Discussion took place on the significant increase in rejections of solid waste. Numbers have increased all across the County.

The HMCS Shawinigan will be mooring in Baddeck tomorrow and the sailors will be visiting the Village while in the area.

RECESS

Warden Morrison advised that Council would recess for 10 minutes.

TAXATION UPDATE

Leanne MacEachen advised that as of today, we are at \$5,753,234 outstanding compared to \$2,636,034 at the same time last year – a difference of \$3,117,200.

Current outstanding is \$4,965,301 compared to \$1,846,044 in current this time last year for a difference of \$3,119,257 behind.

Arrears are just about the same as this time last year - \$787,933 this year vs. \$789,890 last year for a difference of \$2,057 ahead.

Over \$1.12m has been collected toward current since last Council so payments are coming in for our September 30, 2020, deadline, but there is still a ways to go. A notice will be posted on Facebook and the website in the next week as a reminder of the coming due date.

The November 24, 2020, Tax Sale by tender is still on target and the properties previously identified for the March Tax Sale will be on the list. Staff is continuing to work on notices for additional properties for future sales.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL CONCERNS/ISSUES

District #1

Councillor MacNeil brought forward ongoing complaints including:

- Washabuck Road still not patched
- Road at the Gypsum Outcrop in Jamesville needs to be investigated immediately. It is dangerous as cars veer to the opposite side of the road to avoid the holes/bumps
- Grass Cove erosion in two places in this area
- Grass Cove/Gillis Point Road before the bridge is subsiding and the dangerous bumps need attention

Councillor MacNeil also brought forward a new concern that the road shoulder by the Post Office in Iona needs to be repaired as there is a deep drain running through it.

The CAO is currently investigating a quarterly meeting with the Department of TIR officials.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod indicated that District #2 TIR concerns since July 6, 2020, remain.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis indicated that the Department of TIR are not doing justice on the concerns brought forward and he felt that maintenance work should be tendered out to private contractors to complete. This is a discussion that he felt should be addressed with the Minister of TIR.

Councillor MacInnis advised that the road work to be completed from the exit of the Englishtown Ferry to the Barrachois should be done to the same standards as the remainder of the Cabot Trail construction, including bike lanes.

District #5

Councillor Patterson advised that all is well in his district as the paving and shouldering of the Kempt Head Road has been completed and other maintenance jobs have also been done.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee brought up concern with regard to graffiti on Smokey Mountain. He requested that the Department of TIR install signage on the roadway indicating “no graffiti”.

District #7

Councillor Budge advised that the hole on the south side of the Trout Brook Bridge needs to be repaired.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald advised that most of the concerns he is addressing are ongoing concerns, including:

- No directional signage at the Y intersection at Dingwall/Cape North
- Signage is required at the intersection of the South Ridge Road and Blaze Road and a long term plan for road maintenance, gravel, culverts is necessary.

- Shoulder washout of the Cape North Hill
- Bay Road Valley requires a complete shoulder replacement and armour stone. It is very dangerous for weighted vehicles that must travel on this road. The guardrail is laying down in most areas
- Culvert at Mill Hill, Bay St. Lawrence is plugged and washing out driveways in the area
- Nothing completed in the area of the Co-op Store, St. Margaret's Village
- Status of the placement of Gaelic signage throughout the district.

District #3

Warden Morrison indicated that the roadway at Exit 9 to the Old Margaree Road is deteriorating and needs to be resurfaced.

It was moved and seconded that the Department of TIR concerns outlined be forwarded to Stephen MacDonald, Area Manager, Department of TIR. Motion carried.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

The signage placed by the Department of Lands & Forestry at the Dingwall Beach has fallen.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Morley MacNeil, Department of Lands & Forestry, requesting that the signage located at the Dingwall Beach be repaired. Motion carried.

Councillor MacDonald requested that \$500 be approved from the District #8 budget for the Cabot Education Centre's meal assistance program. It was indicated that District #6 and #7 would also be providing \$500.00 each to this program.

Councillor MacDonald also approved \$500.00 from his District #8 budget for the North Highlands Elementary School for picnic tables.

District #7

It was moved and seconded that the remainder of the District #7 budget to the election year spending limit be divided equally between the Ingonish Volunteer Fire Department, Neil's Harbour/New Haven Volunteer Fire Department, St. John's Hall and St. Andrew's Hall. Motion carried.

District #6

It was moved and seconded that approval of two streetlights at the top of Smokey Mountain and the second pole down the Mountain be installed if lights remain in the District #6 allotment. Motion carried.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee brought up posters on telephone poles and the status of the Housing Study.

It was moved and seconded that CBRM be contacted to obtain a copy of their by-law concerning posters on telephone poles and the CBP be contacted to see where the Victoria County Housing Study stands. Motion carried.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis brought up the garbage situation through all of Victoria County. Having signage indicating “No Littering” should be posted. The possibility of installing signage on the bottom of all the Welcome to Victoria County signs was discussed.

It was moved and seconded that signs be purchased for installation on the Victoria County entrance signs and the Communications Officer come up with the appropriate wording for the signage. Motion carried.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod brought up a seasonal residents concern with regard to lack of internet service in the Beverly’s Hill Road area. This is a part of the 3% gap to be addressed

The Victoria County Transit Service has resumed operation but the uptake has been very slow. Whether coupons should be provided for a free ride was discussed. As the two year pilot will be up next year, we have to ensure the service is utilized to retain the service.

The protocol around Halloween was discussed and more will be known as time progresses.

It was moved and seconded that \$1,000.00 be provided for the Middle River Volunteer Fire Department from the District #2 budget. Motion carried.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil indicated that his concern with regard to the advertising of the Heavy Garbage Collection has been addressed as flyers were received in today’s mail.

Councillor MacNeil brought up the topic of garbage in the roadside ditches and that when ACAP presented to Council, it was mentioned that students could be hired to do the cleanup and ACAP could assist with signage.

Discussion will be held with Amanda MacDougall, ACAP, to see how they can assist us with this action.

District #3

Warden Morrison brought up the fact that businesses are suffering and the federal government needs to provide additional funding to assist businesses to be sustainable in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to the Federal Minister of Finance, with a copy to Jaime Battiste, MP, requesting that the federal government provide a relief program for tourist accommodation businesses to assist them to be in a better position to reopen next season. Motion carried.

\$500.00 is to be provided from each of the District #2, #3, and #4 district budgets for the BOLD Day Camp Program.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councillor MacNeil brought up the meeting with Develop Nova Scotia on the Broadband coverage and a concern that there are no areas in Victoria County included in the second phase. He felt there should be a meeting held in the next couple of weeks with ISP's to see what can be done to assist the areas not covered.

The meeting the CAO attended last night with Develop Nova Scotia it was indicated that their focus will be the 3% of the population not covered by Broadband.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Develop Nova Scotia with regard to the remaining areas to be covered in Victoria County. Motion carried.

BY-LAW/POLICY REVIEW

The CCDI By-Law was given 1st reading on August 24, 2020, and a Public Hearing date is to be set for a future date.

The Public Hearing and final reading for the by-law will be set for a later date, after the new Council is sworn in.

CORRESPONDENCE

The CAO advised that a letter was received from Steve MacDonald, Department of TIR, replying to Council concerns and also from Premier Stephen McNeil thanking Council for the letter forwarded to him on his retirement announcement.

The CAO advised that Dr. Strang at this point has indicated that Halloween may go ahead as planned. A final decision will be made at a later date.

DISTRICT #4 CANDIDATE

Councillor MacInnis welcomed Rosella Born, a candidate for District #4 in the upcoming Municipal Election.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, September 28, 2020, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Warden Morrison thanked Council and Staff for working through tonight's process of meeting in person.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved to adjourn at 7:00 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO