

VICTORIA COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

September 28, 2020

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at the Court House, Baddeck, on Monday, September 28, 2020, beginning at 5:00 p.m. with Warden Bruce Morrison in the Chair.

Present were:

District #1 – Paul MacNeil (Via Zoom)
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 MINUTES

Warden Morrison called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval. He noted that a brief recognition was to be added to the agenda.

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

RECOGNITION

Warden Morrison advised that he wished to start Council by recognizing retiring Councillors – Wayne Budge and Merrill MacInnis, who are attending their last meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council.

Councillor Budge has served his district for a combined total of 34 years and Councillor MacInnis has served for 12 years. He thanked the retiring Councillors for their service to the

Municipality and their comradery and support over the years. On behalf of Council he wished both well moving forward.

Councillor Budge thanked Council for their support over his years of service and indicated it was a lot different when he was first elected to Council in 1979. At that time Council held a week long annual session in February and quarterly meetings in May, August and November. Committee meetings were held during these sessions also and a lot was accomplished.

Councillor MacInnis acknowledged Council's support over the past twelve (12) years. He indicated that there may have been differences at times but Council always worked for the good of the residents and the County as a whole. He acknowledged Barb Longva and Rosella Born, who were in attendance. They are offering to fill the District #4 seat and he wished them well.

The CAO, on behalf of administration, thanked Councillors Budge and MacInnis for the time and effort they have devoted to Council. They have been true gentlemen and she wished them tons of happiness in the days and years ahead. They will be missed.

PRESENTATION OF THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE MUNICIPALITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

Courtesy of Council was extended to Alisha Mombourquette, Grant Thornton LLP, who was in attendance to present the Consolidated Financial Statements for the Municipality of the County of Victoria for the year ended March 31, 2020.

Ms. Mombourquette and Kim Livingston, Grant Thornton LLP, met prior to Council with the Audit Committee and presented in detail the Consolidated, Non-Consolidated and Victoria County Water Utility financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2020. The report to the Audit Committee and the audit strategy and results were also presented to the Audit Committee.

Ms. Mombourquette indicated that the Consolidated Financial Statements include the Municipality, Victoria County Water Utility, Alderwood, Highland Manor and a percentage of the Eastern District Planning Commission.

Ms. Mombourquette presented the Consolidated Statement of financial position, outlining the financial assets, financial liabilities and the non-financial assets and indicated that the accumulated surplus for the year ended March 31, 2020, was \$13,306,197. She reported a clean audit report for 2019-2020.

It was moved and seconded that the Non-Consolidated Financial Statements, the Consolidated Financial Statements and the Victoria County Water Utility Financial Statements for the year ended March 31, 2020 be approved. Motion carried

Ms. Mombourquette thanked the CAO, CFO and municipal staff for the cooperation received during the course of a first virtual audit and indicated that they looked forward to meeting Council in person next year.

Warden Morrison thanked Alisha Mombourquette for the presentation and excused her at this time.

CAPE BRETON PARTNERSHIP

Warden Morrison extended the courtesy of Council to Carla Arsenault, CEO, and Patrick Austin, EDO, Cape Breton Partnership who were in attendance to present on the *#CapeBretonFirst* Campaign.

Ms. Arsenault advised that the *#CapeBretonFirst* campaign was announced last week by the Cape Breton Partnership and they were in attendance tonight to update Council on the campaign. This is an island-wide campaign to encourage Cape Bretoners to buy, eat, and stay local.

The Think Cape Breton First initiative has been around for over 20 years and was reinvented in 2014 and again at present. Now due to COVID-19, our purchasing power matters more than ever. Every dollar spent on-island contributes to a better Cape Breton-Unama'ki.

The Cape Breton Partnership has partnered with the Breton Ability Centre who will make *#CapeBretonFirst* shirts, hats, storefront/car decals, pens and tote bags available for sale online through their retail shop. All proceeds from the sales will be donated back to the Breton Ability Centre.

As part of the campaign, a social media component will begin where Cape Bretoners are encouraged to snap photos of their support for the campaign, and tag the CBP on social media using the #CapeBretonFirst hashtag.

Council then viewed some videos of the campaign and Ms. Arsenault indicated that the launch video was created in partnership with Seaside Wireless Communications.

In the midst of COVID-19, the #CapeBretonFirst campaign is most important. The new logo and merchandise was developed by VIBE. The items for sale are reflective of our diverse cultures and are available in English, French, Mi'kmaw and Gaelic.

Ms. Arsenault advised that they are looking for Council's help to promote, share and tell local businesses about the #CapeBretonFirst campaign. Mr. Austin then distributed some of the items available for sale.

Individual Councillors expressed their support for the campaign and wished the CBP well and indicated that they will support the campaign as requested.

Warden Morrison advised that Victoria County has the highest number of small businesses per capita and Council would be pleased to assist with the #CapeBretonFirst campaign in any way they can.

Warden Morrison thanked Ms. Arsenault and Mr. Austin for their attendance and they were excused at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

The minutes of the September 15, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved and seconded that the September 15, 2020, minutes of Victoria County Municipal Council be approved as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Leanne MacEachen advised that the water accounts for shut-off have been sent to each Councillor for their information.

Contact will be made with the Province to find out about naming sections of highway. The CAO indicated she doesn't believe it is a municipal responsibility.

The Cape Breton Partnership has completed the housing strategy in draft form and it should be released within the coming weeks.

The CAO advised that staff is working on a pride in your community initiative to stop littering and anti-graffiti project. More information will be brought forward in the future.

The status of Halloween in other areas was requested and most have not discussed it yet. The Chief Officer of Health will be updating his recommendation as Halloween comes closer.

Two letters have been sent to the Federal Government seeking assistance for the tourism industry.

Heavy garbage collection has commenced today and will be ongoing for some time. Heavy garbage is to have been placed by the road this morning and will be picked up in due course. The collectors will only do one trip by each household.

The solid waste rejection numbers appear to be decreasing in the past couple of weeks. This may be due, in part, to seasonal residents leaving to return to their permanent homes.

The CAO advised that there is a leak in the Little Narrows Water System and it will be repaired. There should be no impact to customers.

NEW BUSINESS

The CAO updated on activities within the Tourism, Recreation/Active Living, Finance and Public Works Departments.

Dan Coffin is working with the developer on a new website for the Municipality. The launch of the new website is still a few weeks away. Work will also be done on a portal for where Council can access their Council information, etc. Training will be provided.

The last phase of the Recreation/Active Living strategy is being completed. Lydia Kerr is looking into having a community engagement session for feedback and then will present the strategy to Council.

Leanne MacEachen indicated that provincial reporting is due on September 30, 2020 and will be submitted.

The first Tax Sale by tender will be held on November 24, 2020, and a tentative date of March 23, 2021, has also been set.

Interviews for the CFO maternity position will be completed shortly.

The CAO is working with the Regional 9 Group on an IT project that is looking into deficiencies and issues with our IT systems.

Victoria County Transit is operating and messaging promoting the operation will be completed.

The CAO advised that in her meetings with Department Heads, they are starting to discuss a possible second wave of COVID-19 and discussing having contingency plans in place in case this does happen.

Patrick Austin is looking at arranging a Broadband meeting with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) on the underserved areas within the County. An update on the work being undertaken by the EDO was provided.

MUNICIPAL ELECTION

The Municipal Election will be held on October 17, 2020, and Victoria County will see all voting done by Internet/Telephone. The Advance Poll will begin on October 8, 2020, at 8:00 am and run until the close of voting on Election Day, October 17, 2020, at 7:00 pm.

Voters should receive their voter's letters with PIN number in the mail in the coming days. Polling stations will be available on Election Day, Saturday, October 17, 2020, between 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 pm and will be located at Cabot Volunteer Fire Department, NH/NH Volunteer Fire Department, Englishtown Community Hall and the Victoria County Municipal Office.

MEETING – DEPARTMENT OF TIR

The CAO advised that Stephen MacDonald, Area Manager, TIR, is proposing a meeting date of October 15, 2020, at 10:00 am. The location is to be determined and the CAO will advise Council of the location at a later date.

TAXATION UPDATE

The CAO advised that as of today, \$4,445,525 is outstanding vs \$2,485,595 at this time last year for a difference of \$1,959,930 behind.

Current outstanding is \$3,669,597 compared to \$1,721,628 in current this time last year for a difference of \$1,947,969 behind.

The arrears balance is also now behind at \$775,928 at present vs \$763,967 last year for a difference of \$11,961 behind.

\$1.3 million has been collected toward current and arrears since last Council on September 15, 2020, and we are still two days from the due date.

Tax Office staff are continuing with their collection strategy. The November 24, 2020, Tax Sale is a go and a tentative date of March 23, 2021, has also been set.

15 applications for the Installment Program have been received and 3 more applications have been picked up. The deadline is set for September 30, 2020.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL CONCERNS

District #1

Councillor MacNeil indicated that a fall grading of all the gravel roads in his area is to be completed.

He thanked the Department of TIR for the patching done in the Washabuck area and indicated there are a few holes that were missed in the area.

There is a deep pothole on Hector's Point.

Signage and patching is required for the turn at the Canada Post Office in Iona and the beaver dam under the bridge on the John Neil George Road is to be removed and work be completed on the roadway.

The Gillis Point/Grass Cove Road issue remains ongoing.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod indicated that she spoke to Steve MacDonald about Beverly's Hill road and the erosion on the Mersey Road. This does not have to be included in the letter, but is to be reported in the minutes.

District #4

Councillor MacInnis advised that tractor trailers are travelling through his district around the clock hauling gravel for the pavement on Smokey Mountain. The gravel that they had on site was not acceptable for use and the gravel being transported is from Whycomagh. He felt there should be a gravel supply in Victoria County that could be used for this project.

Councillor MacInnis also felt that the erosion of the sides of the road on the Cabot Trail is a concern that is not being addressed. Something needs to be done before snow removal starts this season.

District #5

Councillor Patterson indicated that there is a two foot hole by the culvert at 9581 Kempt Head Road that needs to be investigated and repaired.

Councillor Patterson indicated that on travelling Kelly's Mountain today, there is a section going down the mountain towards the west that is full of pot holes.

Councillor Patterson indicated that brush clearing presently being done in the Port Bevis area is being completed exceptionally well, whereas, the area cleared by the Patterson Road, Boularderie, left stumps standing that are 2 to 3 feet.

He requested that the Department of TIR be questioned as to why brush clearing on the roadsides in the County is not completed to the same standards.

Warden Morrison recognized former Councillor, Athol Grant, who was in attendance in the audience.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee indicated that the 133 ml. of rain that fell in the Ingonish area left the shoulders of the road in bad condition and these areas are to be investigated and addressed immediately.

District #8

Councillor MacDonald indicated that a culvert to be investigated by TIR on Mill Hill is located at 3286 Bay St. Lawrence Road.

Councillor MacDonald expressed concern that the brush cutter has not visited his district. He questioned whether the brush cutter is contracted by TIR or do they have their own equipment also.

It was moved and seconded that the list of TIR concerns addressed by Council be forwarded to Stephen MacDonald. Motion carried.

It was indicated that Keith Bain, MLA, viewing by livestream, advised that a tender was called for repairing the potholes mentioned by Councillor Patterson on the western side of Kelly's Mountain.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District #8

Councillor MacDonald questioned if Victoria County had a Noise By-Law.

He was advised that there is no Noise By-Law in effected in the Municipality.

It was moved and seconded that the CAO look into a Noise By-Law for Victoria County. Motion carried.

Council was advised that the RCMP can respond to issues concerning disturbing the peace.

The CAO advised that a staff member is currently being certified to issue Summary Offence Tickets.

District #5

It was moved and seconded that if funds remain in the District #5 budget, \$600.00 be approved for the Big Bras d'Or Volunteer Fire Department and \$5,000.00 for the Ross Ferry Volunteer Fire Department from the District #5 budget. Motion carried.

District #2

Councillor MacLeod advised that she received complaints about private helicopters operating in the area and disturbing the residents and also expressed concern about SeaDoos which are travelling too close to the shore and affecting swimmers in the area. She questioned on the safety regulations for these operations.

Councillor MacLeod indicated that all the "Caution – Children Playing" signs are up in her district.

She indicated that Council should continue to advocate for Internet in the white and underserved areas in her district and throughout the County.

District #1

Councillor MacNeil questioned whether the Municipality would provide a road sign for the listed road – Stanley's Drive in his area.

The Municipality provides private road signs, but listed road signage is the responsibility of the Department of TIR.

Councillor MacNeil offered best wishes to retiring Councillors Budge and MacInnis and indicated that they were easy to work with and wished them all the best in their future.

District #3

Warden Morrison advised that the County has obtained the 25 year service pins for both active and non-active firemen. The distribution of these medals is to be facilitated through Lyle Donovan, Fire Services Coordinator.

The Warden advised that a plaque was received from the HMCS Shawinigan who recently visited the Baddeck area. The plaque will be located adjacent to the Baddeck Ships Bell in the Court Room.

The Warden advised that he and the CAO met with Bill O'Brien, NSHA recruiter, on the need for additional doctors in the southern area of the County. It was felt at that meeting that three new positions were needed – 2 in the immediate future and 1 on Dr. Genge's retirement.

Councillor MacLeod indicated she felt 4 would be a more realistic number to cover all the area.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be forwarded to Kathy Bell, Director, Primary Health Care, NSHA, requesting at least four positions be considered to cover the short term and long term physician requirements for the Victoria County Memorial Hospital coverage area. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison brought up a concern of the Victoria County Trails Federation with regard to the road blocks incurred when making application for trails funding. The same occurs in other trails organizations within the County.

It was moved and seconded that government agencies, including Community, Culture and Heritage, Environment, ACOA, Department of Lands & Forestry, Gaelic College, SANS, ATVANS, First Nations, etc. be invited to meet to determine how to properly access funding for trail development in Victoria County. Motion carried.

Warden Morrison asked Athol Grant, President of the Victoria County Trails Federation, about the roadblocks encountered when applying and receiving funding for trail development.

Mr. Grant indicated it is very frustrating and lots of trails have been lost as a result of the log jams encountered when applying for funding. They have been told for 2 years now that \$81,500.00 was approved by the Province and would be forwarded and to date no money has been received.

Applying and receiving funding for trail development should not be this difficult.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Warden advised that he and Deputy Warden Dauphinee met with the CAO earlier and conducted her performance appraisal.

CORRESPONDENCE

All letters, both sent and received, have been forwarded to Councillors.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council will be held at a date to be determined following the Municipal Election. The first meeting will comprise of the swearing in of Council and the appointment of Warden and Deputy Warden.

The CAO will be providing in house training that is open to all Council, not just the newly-elected Councillors.

The Warden thanked the technical crew, Dan Coffin and Jocelyn Bethune, for the work in livestreaming the Council session.

District #6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee advised that he has received the same complaints and concerns with regard to helicopters in his district. The licensing from these operations is through Transport Canada and it was indicated that it is easier to contact the operator and request a change in flight path.

THANKS

Councillor MacInnis indicated that he wished to recognize staff and thank them for their assistance during his tenure as Councillor.

Council reiterated that they would miss Councillors Budge and MacInnis and wished them a happy retirement.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Bruce Morrison, Warden

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

DRAFT