

Victoria County Municipal Council

February, 22, 2021

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers in Baddeck on February 22nd, 2021 at 5:00pm with Warden Bruce Morrison in the Chair.

Present Were:

District #1- Paul MacNeil
District #2- Perla MacLeod
District #3- Bruce Morrison, Warden
District #4- Barbara Longva
District #5- Fraser Patterson
District #6- Larry Dauphinee, Deputy Warden
District #7- Jackie Organ
District #8- Norman MacDonald

Also present were:

Leanne MacEachen, CAO
Amy Liu, CFO
Dan Coffin, Tourism and Development Officer
Jocelyn Bethune, Communications Officer
Stephanie MacLeod, Recorder
Garrett Fazekas, IT

CALL TO ORDER

Warden Morrison called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval.

Councillor Longva requested a discussion regarding graveyards be added to the agenda.

It was moved by Councillor Longva and seconded by Councillor MacNeil that the agenda be approved with the addition of the graveyard discussion.

Motion Carried.

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RAISING THE VILLAGES PRESENTATION – JIM MUSTARD

Jim Mustard gave a passionate presentation on raising the Villages and the importance of investing in our children in the earliest stages of life and who needs to be involved.

Mr. Mustard highlighted that “if it takes a village...then we need the whole village”. That includes infants to elders, elected officials, government staff, NGO’s, volunteers, services providers and businesses.

Mr. Mustard requested further funding support from the County to help with the newly launched Raising the Villages Co-Op.

CAO MacEachen thanked Mr. Mustard for his presentation and encouraged him to fill out the application online as well.

The Warden and Councillors thanked Mr. Mustard for his presentation and the incredible work he is doing with this initiative.

Warden Morrison opened it up questions and/or comments.

Councillor Longva, agreed that it starts with the children and it’s really important.

Councillor MacLeod commented that she’s been with Raising the Village since day one and she is glad that they are at this stage now.

Councillor MacNeil asked if Mr. Mustard see these hubs throughout the county, in every community.

Mr. Mustard commented that they will support what needs to be provided in these communities, to extend what’s needed in their spaces and that they have the capacity to help communities plan and put together proposals.

Councillor MacDonald said that Mr. Mustard was a wonderful speaker and it is a welcoming initiative.

Councillor Organ commented that it sounds very promising for our children and our communities and to keep up the good work.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee stated that he looks forward to seeing the proposal for funding.

Councillor Patterson commented that it is good to see this initiative being carried out and thanked Mr. Mustard and said to keep up the good work.

Warden Morrison stated that council was pleased with the Raising the Villages partnership with BOLD and wished Mr. Mustard good luck with the project moving forward and to make sure he fills out the application.

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COUNCIL VOTE ON VOLUNTEERS

Warden Morrison stated that council took a vote from the nominated volunteers and one has been selected and will be announced at a later date once the individual is contacted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the February 2nd, 2021, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved by Deputy Warden Dauphinee and seconded by Councillor MacLeod that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of February 2nd, 2021, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

Councillor Patterson made a motion that CAO MacEachen invite Professor Tom Urbaniak to council in regards to an article he wrote on the Cape Breton Assembly.

Councillor Patterson made the motion for the CAO to invite Professor Tom Urbaniak to council. Seconded by Councillor MacNeil. Motion Carried.

CAO REPORT

Old Business

Youth Council - see proposal/info sheet.

Fluorescent bulbs - there will be a HHW day, to drop off hazardous residential waste.

CDDI - sent for Ministerial Approval.

Warden Morrison asked about any updates about the police advisory committee.

CAO MacEachen indicated that we asked for applications from residents and have not received any as of yet. We need two councillors, two members of the public and another member of the public that is appointed by the Minister.

Councillor Organ volunteered to sit on the committee as a representative from the north and Councillor MacLeod volunteered to sit as well as a representative from the south.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee made the motion for Councillor Organ and Councillor MacLeod to sit on the Police Advisory Committee. Seconded by Councillor Longva. Motion Carried.

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Councillor Longva thanked CAO MacEachen and Jocelyn Bethune for having a meeting with her regarding communications and how the administration gets information out to residents in the County.

CAO MacEachen commented that she can always meet with Councillors.

Senior Safety

Working on Placemaking project/funding with Dan.

Newsletter has been prepared, and is being mailed out.

Tech Connect - starting next month.

Setting up a meeting with District Commander RCMP.

Tourism

Setting up Quarterly sessions with Operators/Stakeholders to discuss future.

Tourism Strategy to be developed/updated.

Meeting with DCBA on several initiatives.

Helping with Waterfront Baddeck virtual session.

Placemaking - 2 Council meetings left to do - Dan will be in touch to set up.

Involved in Trails/Development Planning.

NS Trails Regional meeting - looking for Regional Collaboration.

Website - should be up and running.

Rec/AL

Canada Healthy Communities Grant - several different funding ideas - Should be Covid related.

Special Events Task Force - group is drafting a process, and moving forward.

Mental Health First Aid training will be happening in the Spring.

Working with DCBA on Festivals and Events funding.

News release last week on Walking Track - Cape North.

Sitting on the Health Promoting School Committee.

Full Moon hike - 60 signed up so far!!

Youth Outdoor Workshop last weekend went well.

Nicholson Trail is being widely used - great initiative to keep this plowed/available.

Finance

30 Day letters/Notices/Reminders going out for outstanding taxes.

Tender Tax sale March 23, 2021. Looking to do in person tax sale July 20th, 2021.

Municipal property land meeting set up for March 8th, 2021.

Working on Policies - Streetlights - any ideas prior to draft could be sent to Amy.

Public Works

Construction Tender issues for Neil's Harbour Water Treatment Plant Upgrades. This closes March 10th.

Water Rate Study Ready was to be posted.

Application has been submitted for a summer student in PW Department

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Aaron will write Level 2 certification at end of this month. This will bring our staff to the certification levels required for our facilities. Right now Aaron is approved to act as a Level 2 DRC on an interim basis (150 days) which is well past his test date.

Collection Cancelled today with occur next Tuesday.

EDO

Mountain Bike Plan.

Moving quickly - 8 businesses - 1 in each district and 32 other leads.

Dept. of Environment. Meeting to be determined to discuss

NSBI/Develop NS/Seawall Trail Tie-In.

Smokey - back on track - looking to do a staged opening in the coming year.

Business Reviews - 17 - All Districts.

3 Investment Opportunities.

Tians Project ongoing.

OTHER

Waste Management Review - several discussions.

Strait IT Initiative - Bids have come in, but seem quite high.

VCT will continue to have Admin under Strait Area Transit.

TAXATION UPDATE

Total Outstanding: \$1.205 million, about \$150,000 lower than this time last year.

Current Total Outstanding: \$649,000, this time last year it was \$839,000.

Arrears: \$556,000, \$516,000 this time last year.

Since last council session, we have collected \$128,000.

Sent out 1080 notice reminders.

Sending out 30 day notice reminders.

There are currently 8 properties that are going on the tax sale list for March 23, 2021.

Councillor Patterson commented that the province puts out municipal indicators for taxes and they are indicated by colour. Councillor Patterson asked CAO MacEachen what colour we were and what colour are we currently.

CAO MacEachen indicated that when she started six years ago, the County had 2 to 3 reds and we are now at a yellow for tax collection and all others are green. Its good there is still more work to be done.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CONCERNS

District 1

The same ongoing issues and dealing with Steve MacDonald with those and acknowledgment for the fixing the culverts.

District 2

All issues reported to Steve MacDonald.

District 3

Nothing to report.

District 4

Fallen trees from wind storms in Wreck Cove to Barrachois that need to be cut away.

Long Hill Road is covered in ice, needs to be sanded.

Steve MacDonald got back to Councillor Longva and said there is a conflict with the road data list and the civic address at the Plaister Mines/Old Big Harbour Road. The civic address is on the Old Big Harbour Road and not Plaister Mines Road but the delivery trucks bring deliveries to the Big Harbour Road. Steve MacDonald said that District Planning should be contacted because they deal with civic addresses. He suggested the Municipality make a formal request that either the civic address gets changed to Plaister Mines or change the Plaister Mines Road to Old Big Harbour Road.

CAO MacEachen requested that Councillor Longva send her the information that Steve provided so she can pass it on to District Planning.

***Councillor MacNeil made the motion to send a list of TIR concerns to Steve MacDonald.
Seconded by Councillor Organ.
Motion Carried.***

District 5

Nothing to report.

District 6

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Nothing to report as any concerns are brought directly to Steve MacDonald.

District 7

Received an email from Steve MacDonald that he is addressing district concerns and Councillor Organ will continue giving the 1-800 number to residents for road concerns.

District 8

There is a sign in Cape North notifying drivers if the mountain is closed. Once drivers get to this sign, it is a substantial distance to drive to get to a spot where they can turn around. Some concerned residents are requesting that TIR come out and assess the area and possibly have the sign be placed in a different area.

VICTORIA COUNTY GRAVEYARDS

Councillor Longva discussed the importance of proper upkeep and maintenance of the County's graveyards.

Councillor Longva asked about potential funding that might be available and CAO MacEachen said that she would follow up with a representative from the Communities Culture and Heritage department. This was a concern that was brought up before.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District 1

Councillor MacNeil requested we post the rules on burning derelict buildings.

CAO MacEachen commented that one of the last properties that got taken to the landfill had huge problems related to that and that there will be some information posted to the website.

Councillor MacNeil was contacted by Leonard Boudreau about the renaming of the Barra Strait Bridge to the Cape Breton Highlanders Memorial Way and will need further clarification if it will be the whole highway 223 that is requested to be renamed.

Councillor MacNeil will forward the information on to CAO MacEachen.

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District 2

Councillor MacLeod requested that Lydia, the Recreation and Active Living Coordinator look into booking some ice times at the rink for public skating.

Councillor MacLeod Made a motion to repair a solar light at Beverly's Hill Road. The one that is currently there is 10 years old and is not working.

Councillor MacLeod made the motion to purchase a solar light. Seconded by Councillor MacNeil.

Motion Carried.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee wanted to note that that solar light was purchased before our current streetlight policy was adopted and wanted to reiterate that after this solar light is repaired, the County would be following the current streetlight policy. The county cannot afford to install or repair solar lights all around the county.

Councillor MacLeod agreed and commented that it was installed before the policy and on a go forward she is aware that solar lights are not part of the streetlight policy.

Councillor MacLeod also asked about the new website and when we will promote it.

CAO MacEachen commented that there is just a soft launch right now; after that is completed there will be a promotion for it.

District 4

Councillor Longva made a motion to have a streetlight installed at 1230 Big Harbour Road.

Councillor Longva made the motion to install a streetlight if it meets the streetlight policy requirements. Seconded by Councillor MacNeil.

Motion Carried.

CAO MacEachen asked if the area in which the streetlight is to be installed is in accordance with the streetlight policy.

Councillor Longva said she would have to double check the location and follow up.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee also commented that district councillors can have 2 streetlights per year. Councillor Longva said this would be her last one for the year.

Councillor MacLeod asked if that number gets carried over if you don't use them in that year and CAO MacEachen indicated that they do not get carried over, 2 per year is the max.

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Councillor Longva handed in a copy of the St. Ann's Bay Recreational Society's 2021 Improvement Plan. They are asking the County for \$6,000 to help with the costs.

CAO MacEachen said that the group also has to fill out the application that is online.

Councillor Longva brought up concerns around public washrooms and businesses having an issue with the contract proposed by the County.

CAO MacEachen indicated that the contract is to protect the County and that there would be very little amount of bending that can be done. The CAO also indicated that currently there are 3-4 organizations that are good with the contract and that there is already a public washroom in District 4. That being said, we are still open to discuss with organizations that might be interested.

Councillor Longva had a resident ask if there was any funding available for heritage properties in the County.

Warden Morrison commented that there is no funding through the County but we could reach out to the Department of Culture Communities and Heritage.

***Councillor Longva made the motion to send a letter to Communities Culture and Heritage to inquire about funding for heritage buildings. Seconded by Councillor Organ.
Motion Carried.***

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked who owns the building, an individual or a group.

Councillor Longva stated that it is owned by an individual.

District 5

Councillor Patterson made a motion to have a letter sent to the Lands and Forestry Minister and Paul Koziel, the manager at the Coxheath Natural Resources depot in regards to the lack of maintenance and up keep on the trail at Dalem Lake.

***Councillor Patterson made the motion to send a letter to Department of Lands and Forests and Paul Koziel. Seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee.
Motion Carried.***

Councillor Patterson will send the RV park correspondence that the CAO received back to Dr. Harless.

District 6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked if there was any response back from the Department of Health regarding the correspondence sent about replacing the Highland Manor.

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CAO MacEachen indicated that there has been no response back yet.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee requested that the County start looking into adopting a bylaw for graffiti and made a motion to contact the RCMP to see what enforcement of that bylaw would entail.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee made a motion to look into a graffiti bylaw and contacting the RCMP for enforcement information. Seconded by Councillor MacDonald.

Motion Carried.

District 7

Councillor Organ made a motion to have a letter sent to Communities Culture and Heritage to follow up with prior correspondence asking for assistance for non-profits that are not able to fundraise due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Councillor Organ made the motion to send a letter requesting assistance for non-profits. Seconded by Councillor MacDonald.

Motion Carried.

Councillor Organ has been asked by residents for the breakdown of the \$1.22 taxes for the county and was in touch with the CAO in regards to this and the CAO indicated that currently there is a breakdown on the website from last year's budget but will get one on there from this year's budget as well.

Councillor Organ spoke to the Director of Public Works, Robert Dauphinee regarding battery return boxes and he assured Councillor Organ that he would look into it further.

Neil's Harbour/New Haven Volunteer Fire Department had their annual meeting and presented medals. There were 4 members that have 45 years of service. The fire department also has the oldest active member in Canada, Ron Ingraham who is 100 years old. Councillor Organ requested the County send Mr. Ingraham a letter of congratulations.

District 8

Councillor MacDonald brought up a request on behalf of snowmobile clubs and how they can be given access from the National Park to cross over the Highlands through the tip of the Island up north.

Councillor MacDonald made a motion to send to a letter to the Minister of Environment requesting access through the Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

Councillor MacDonald made the motion to send a letter to the Minister of Environment requesting access through the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Seconded by Councillor Organ.

Motion Carried.

Councillor MacDonald asked who he would contact to remove left over rebar materials left over from an old mussel farm in North Harbour.

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Warden Morrison suggested he start with the Department of Natural Resources and CAO MacEachen also asked to have the information sent to her and should would follow up.

***Councillor MacDonald made the motion for the CAO to contact Department of Natural Resources. Seconded by Councillor MacLeod.
Motion Carried.***

Councillor MacDonald extended an open invitation to council and staff to come to the North Highlands Nordic Centre in Cape North to check out the new building and try out the trails.

Councillor MacDonald will pass the information on to Steff and get it arranged and send a note around.

CORRESPONDENCE

Warden Morrison read correspondence from the Victoria County Trails Federation asking for the County's support.

***Warden Morrison made a motion that we support all trail federations in the municipality and to provide assistance with applications. Seconded by Councillor MacLeod.
Motion Carried.***

There was a request that the County make the month of May, Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

***Deputy Warden Dauphinee made the motion to make May, Lyme Disease Awareness Month.
Seconded by Councillor MacNeil.
Motion Carried.***

Received a letter from the Cultural Association of Cape Breton to support the cultural sector of Cape Breton.

***Councillor MacLeod made the motion to support the cultural sector of Cape Breton. Seconded by Councillor Longva.
Motion Carried.***

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MEETINGS

It was agreed to have a solid waste meeting before the next council session on March 8th, 2021.

Next Council Session is March 8, 2021.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 6:45.

Bruce Morrison, Warden
Leanne MacEachen, CAO