

***Victoria County Municipal Council***

January 5, 2021

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at Council Chambers, Baddeck on January 5, 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

Also present were:

Leanne MacEachen, CAO  
Amy Liu, CFO  
Jocelyn Bethune, Communications Officer  
Dan Coffin, Tourism and Development Officer  
Steff MacLeod, Recorder

Absent was:

District #8 - Norman MacDonald

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**It was moved and seconded that the agenda be approved and presented.**

**Motion Carried.**

Warden Morrison sent out condolences to Councillor MacDonald and his family.

**EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

Warden Morrison presented and recognized the years of service for six employees. Cyndi Ingraham, 5 years of service and Calvin Fitzgerald, 10 years of service were in attendance to accept their certificates. Those not in attendance were, Charles Bonaparte, 10 years of service, Robert Fitzgerald, 25 years of service, Joan MacInnes, 20 years of service and long standing employee Heather MacLean who has retired after 43 years of service.

**MOUNTAIN BIKE TOURISM PRESENTATION- ADAM SHORE**

Tourism and Development Officer, Dan Coffin introduced Mr. Shore and gave a background of how the project got started.

Mr. Shore provided us with his report for the Mountain Bike Tourism Action Plan for Victoria County.

The benefits and opportunities that this initiative will bring are many and cover a wide array of what our area can offer. There is the potential for more tourists, accommodations, camping, food and beverage locations, retail, experiences, events and supporting services such as bike rental and repair shops. There are job opportunities with coaching, trail building and design, trail maintenance, etc.

Outcomes and goals of this project is to build a thriving mountain biking economy and create new opportunities. Some of those opportunities include:

- Introduce new opportunities for land owners.
- New business opportunities for locals.
- There are also shoulder season opportunities as well, as many enjoy mountain biking in colder, snowier weather.
- Access to international markets, with further involvement with Ski Cape Smokey.

Moving forward with this project includes identifying missing cluster components and scoping communities. Some of the next steps also include identifying funding and prioritizing the building of the first trail systems and park locations in spring 2021.

This is a good time to get this initiative started. There has been an 80-300% growth in this market over the last year and the timing with the developments with Cape Smokey and other investments in the area creates great leverage.

The Mountain Bike Tourism Action strategy has identified potential funding opportunities with different levels of funding and they are hoping that they can build applications with multiple sites. This funding is not just to build a trail; this funding is to build an economy.

The next steps in this project are to formalize commitments from land owners, County, managers and parks, building an application, prioritizing sites and figuring out how the different tiers are going to work together. For example, Destination Cape Breton will be the primary marketers and the municipalities will work with the actual operators, connector trails and local parks. Victoria County will

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work on larger connector trails to connect communities and the Cape Breton Partnership will help businesses set up and expand, etc.

Mr. Shore thanked Councillors for their time and Warden Morrison opened the floor up to questions.

The Councillors all thanked Mr. Shore for his presentation and voiced their enthusiasm for this project.

Warden Morrison asked about the clusters in Victoria County.

Mr. Shore commented that Parks Canada has been really interested in Baddeck, Iona, Whycocomagh, Wagmatcook and they have been grouped together as a cluster.

Cape Smokey is also part of it, but there is a lot of community connection that has to take place in Ingonish. Aspy is perhaps the most understated cluster of the group and Mr. Shore has been in discussion with some of the wilderness people in this area. Cheticamp, Inverness, Margaree and CBRM are also clusters.

Councillor MacNeil asked if Mr. Shore has worked with provincial parks.

Mr. Shore commented that there is interest but we haven't done any work with the provincial parks yet.

Councillor MacLeod asked if more land owners needed to be contacted.

Mr. Shore said that the clustering approach is better when more land owners and participants are involved and will only enrich the experience and they would love to talk to more land owners.

Councillor Macleod commented that she was supportive of this initiative and would be willing to assist with talking to the province about using the Uisge Ban Falls Park as a potential site.

Councillor Patterson asked if most of the participants own their own bikes, or are there rental opportunities.

Mr. Shore agreed that the bikes are expensive and yes, there are opportunities for potential rental businesses.

Councillor Patterson also indicated that Dalem Lake Provincial Park could be a potential area for a mountain bike trail.

Mr. Coffin interjected and said that provincial parks have regulations that sometimes make it difficult but there are some strategies that are hopefully coming that will help with this access.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked who would actually be applying for funding.

Mr. Shore commented that they will be grouping entities together and then the partnership will help build that. Mr. Shore called on Patrick Austin with Cape Breton Partnership to comment further regarding funding applications.

Mr. Austin said that they have spoken to ACOA and several other funding organizations. The individual businesses will be looking for the funding in the private sector and a group of clusters will be

put together for the trail building. The individual ones that are going to build a mountain bike park, will be through ACOA and they understand the importance of the clustering effects and will be looking for 3-4 applicants at a time to start building.

Deputy Warden commented that he hopes the Province gets on board with this initiative as there have been a lot of barriers with getting things like this in place from the Province and hopes they see the importance of this.

Councillor Organ asked if anyone considered people with disabilities and accessibility and this also may open the doors for more funding.

Mr. Shore explained that Keppoch in Antigonish is a good point of reference for this. They built a whole accessible trail and that is something that they aspire to emulate. There are so many advances in technology with better accessible bikes so they want to include everyone in this mountain bike initiative.

CAO MacEachen commented that this initiative is really exciting and eco-tourism and adventure tourism is a whole other market that we are embarking on and look forward to welcoming new visitors and opportunities in the County.

CAO MacEachen also indicated that there is possibly going to be a formation of a Municipal and Provincial Special Events Task Force and that these mountain biking events could tie in with that task force. This will also help with reducing the red tape that always seems to be an issue with these types of events.

CAO MacEachen asked if the connector trails are typically owned by the Municipalities.

Mr. Shore commented that in theory that yes, they are. In a lot of cases this is what we are typically seeing, similar to the walking trails.

So for example, is the multiuse trail that we currently have, would that be something that can be tied in with this development along with private businesses? In this case, the multiuse trails would be the connector access points and this acts as good example of the municipalities and private businesses working together.

Mr. Shore said that this is exactly what they hope to achieve. He said having visitors staying in Baddeck and being able to ride their bikes from Baddeck into the Highlands using these connector points is very similar to European eco-travelling which has become very popular.

Warden Morrison commented that this was a perfect fit for Victoria County and we are very interested in supporting this.

Warden Morrison then asked what Mr. Shore's next steps were and is this something that he sees coming back to Council to ask for funding.

Mr. Shore indicated that it will be multifold as we identify who the first grouping will be to apply and then we would work with that group and try to build a template.

Warden Morrison asked if they start with a recreational trail and build that into a more technical trail or do you just go to site specific and build the trail that you think is most appropriate?

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Mr. Shore said you have to look at the audience of who will be utilizing the location. The design and the concept of the park has to encompass the audience. The thing to focus on the most is getting kids and families excited so having a variety is key.

**It was moved and seconded that Council supports this initiative.**

**Motion Carried.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the December 14, 2020, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

Two corrections to be made to the December 14, 2020 minutes were:

- 1) *Councillor Longva also indicated that some residents in her district did not know the meaning of broadband.*

Councillor Longva indicated that residents would like a definition of some words, like broadband, in the next newsletter.

- 2) *Deputy Warden contacted the Minister of Justice again today to inform him that he had a constituent willing to be on the Police Advisory Committee and would like to be contacted back regarding this matter.*

Deputy Warden noted that it was the Warden who contacted the Minister of Justice, not the Deputy Warden.

**It was moved and seconded that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of December 14, 2020, be approved with the noted corrections above.**

**Motion carried.**

**CAO REPORT**

***Old Business***

Meeting up with Josh Wiese new RCMP Staff Sergeant for Baddeck.  
Solar lights at Beverly's Hill - waiting on Lynk Electric to quote.

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Victoria County sign - will be waiting until end of winter season to put up.  
Still pushing the Voyent App for Municipal issues - please encourage all to sign up.

Councillor MacLeod asked if there had been any correspondence back regarding the cemetery in Big Baddeck.

The CAO indicated there had not been any correspondence sent back as of yet.

***New Business***

***Senior Safety***

Working on an Age Friendly grant application.  
Working with Dan on getting a Senior Safety section on the website.

***Tourism***

Reviewing DCBA 10 year tourism strategy - our new strategy will be guided by this  
Will be picking a new date for the Baddeck Visioning session  
Placemaking sessions - looking to be 2nd week of February  
Winterization program is moving ahead  
Trails - need an archaeological report prior to any more funding received  
Helping connect business with Tourism Training Initiatives

***Rec/AL***

Will research a vaping/smoking cessation initiatives for young adults  
2 Upcoming hikes - will be working with Cabot Shores, who also have hiking initiatives in place on the weekends Looking to arrange a Full Moon Hike  
Helping Library with an outdoor scavenger hunt  
Strategy is going through final revisions  
Working on several winter initiatives  
Planning a staff outdoor event in February - more details will be coming

***Finance***

Getting status of VC owned land title searches - to move to Council discussion on lands to keep/sell  
Will be planning a budget day - Feb 22 or March 8 - Council day...  
Taking a policy course

***Public Works***

Preparing a rate study RFP  
Waste Management Review in progress  
Lydia is going to work with PW to see if there can be a grant for Active Transport for Ingonish sidewalks

***EDO***

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Still working on financing options for some clients  
Tourism Training Initiatives  
Mountain Bike Strategy finalization

***Other***

We are all monitoring Covid wave - will decide daily how we will be progressing - like to stay in the middle of the pack...

News article about a VC couple who raised money and donated pet oxygen masks to all FD's in Victoria County!! Thanks very much!

Received appraisals for the White Point lots in New Haven and we have 6 lots for sale. If anyone is interested in purchasing those lots, they have to be sold at fair market value. Appraisals will be done more consistently on those lots going forward as fair market value is changing all the time. We possibly need a motion put in place in the future for these appraisals to be changed to reflect market value increases.

Councillor Organ requested a copy of the map, showing the lots and the information pertaining to them.

CAO MacEachen informed the Councilor that Steff would send the lot information out to her as requested.

Councillor MacLeod asked if there was a policy that outlines things like restrictions.

CAO MacEachen indicated that there are restrictive covenants that are in place but she is encouraging Council to have some parameters with the purchase and sale agreements, which will be worked out with the lawyer so that it is fair. Going forward with the current lots, it will be a consistent process.

CAO MacEachen also wanted to note that we did send a letter out to Minister Hines in regards to speed reductions on the section of highway in Baddeck by the Irving garage and have not heard anything back yet.

**RECESS**

Returned to Council Session at 6:22PM.

**TAXATION UPDATE**

Total outstanding is \$1.527 million which is \$50,000 less than this time last year.

Current outstanding is \$916,000 which is close to \$80,000 lower than it was this time last year.

Arrears outstanding are \$611,000, about \$30,000 less than last year.

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The first 30 day notice letters have been sent out and the final 60 day notice letters will be sent out next week.

The next tax sale is scheduled for March 23, 2021 which will be by tender.

The tax installment program is still open for applications. There have been no new tax financing applications since the last council session.

Councillor MacNeil asked how many properties will be for sale and CAO MacEachen indicated that we won't know that yet, it's still too early to tell. CAO MacEachen then asked CFO Liu how many 30 day notices went out and the CFO commented that she was unsure but there is a master list.

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CONCERNS**

Warden Morrison and the Councillors wanted to thank the TIR for their quick and effective response to the first major snow storm of the winter season.

**District 7**

Driveway at civic number 35746 has been repaired.

There are 2 pot holes in Neil's Harbour that should be filled. The pot holes are at 175 New Haven Road and bottom of Ocean View Drive. They are always filled with water.

Jack MacLeod Road is an unlisted road which has always been plowed by a contractor. That contractor is getting out of the plowing business so the residents are wondering who is going to plow the road. Councillor Organ questioned if no other contractor takes over this road, would the County be plowing this road.

CAO MacEachen commented that the County doesn't plow roads; the Province is responsible for provincial roads. CAO MacEachen suggested Councillor Organ and the residents contact TIR to determine if the private road could become public.

**District 1**

Shoulder issues continue to be a problem in Estmere and Hectors Point. Received a number of phone calls and texts about damage to vehicles from hitting the low shoulder in the Estmere area. Councillor MacNeil has sent emails with pictures and discussed the problem with the District Supervisor and he indicated that the OS will investigate, but nothing has been done.

Councillor MacNeil made a motion to have letter sent to TIR in regards to the shoulder issues in Estmere and Hectors Point.

**It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to TIR.**

**Motion carried.**



**District 3**

Warden Morrison requested an update/response from regarding issues that Council have brought forward, including the deeply rutted section of road in front of the hospital on Old Margaree Road.

**DISTRICT CONCERNS**

**District 1**

Councillor MacNeil expressed that the Washabuck area is experiencing problems with internet service. It has been getting worse. Councillor MacNeil has been in touch with Seaside and they are looking into it. If something isn't done in 2 weeks, Councillor MacNeil would like a letter sent to Seaside concerning this issue. The tower in Middle River is not being serviced to the full capacity and they don't plan to upgrade it.

Councillor MacNeil is also concerned with the correspondence we received back from the CBVRCE in regards to the bussing issue and road classifications. They indicated when the policy for bussing was being developed there were no concerns about the road standards, but the public was not informed that this policy was being looked at and they did not know what was being discussed in regards to rural bussing so how could concerns be brought forward.

Councillor MacNeil made a motion for another letter to be sent to CBVRCE in regards to their response.

**It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to CBVRCE.**

**Motion carried.**

Councillor MacNeil ordered a Street Light for the Beach Street area back in August 2020 nothing has been done and he did not see any correspondence about it so he wondered if this could be looked into.

Councillor MacNeil also requested an update on the status of the street lights on the bridge in Iona. It's been months now that Lynk Electric said they were waiting on new hardware. Currently, there are 6 lights out on the north side of the bridge.

Motion to contact Lynk Electric about street lights out

**It was moved and seconded that Lynk Electric be contacted regarding the lights.**

**Motion carried.**

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Broadband throughout Washabuck area has to be looked at. Councillor MacNeil emailed David Horton about the existing problems but he said that not much can be done right now and Develop NS has not got back to them on any fixed wireless approaches anywhere in Cape Breton.

**District 4**

Councillor Longva commented that residents are complaining about the aging infrastructure in Victoria County and more specifically the rink in Baddeck. Residents have voiced that they would like to have a multipurpose building. Councillor Longva referenced the multipurpose building in Guysborough County as they have a similar population to Victoria County. Councillor Longva asked if a survey could be done to see what the level of interest would be.

CAO MacEachen commented that the funds (\$11 Million) used to build the civic centre in Guysborough County came from the royalties from Sable Gas. The community raised another \$250,000 to have the civic centre built.

Councillor MacLeod also commented that she sits on the Board of the rink so if organizations are reaching out to you then the rink can reach out to them. The Rink Committee are currently making a business plan so it would be beneficial to have a partnership with different organizations.

Councillor Longva requested an update on public washrooms.

CAO MacEachen commented that we are in early discussion with an organization regarding this and will have an update soon.

**District 5**

Councillor Patterson expressed frustration with the power outage automated service for the restoration is nowhere near being accurate.

Councillor Patterson made a motion to send a letter to NSPI to make improvements to the estimated restoration system.

**It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to NS Power.**

**Motion carried.**

**District 6**

Councillor Dauphinee requested that \$1500.00 from district budget be used for winter extravaganza project in Ingonish.

**It was moved and seconded that \$1500.00 from District 6 budget be taken out for Winter Extravaganza in Ingonish to the Ingonish Development Society.**

**Motion carried.**

**District 7**

Councillor Organ again questioned why the heater is not working at the New Haven Depot.

Councillor Organ recognized a long standing employee who is retiring.

Councillor Organ commented that the Voyent Alert System alerted residents about the water being shut off, after it was already shut off.

CAO MacEachen commented that it wasn't a scheduled shutoff it was an issue that happened with the water and weren't able to put out an alert ahead of time.

Councillor Organ inquired as to what residents are supposed to do with fluorescent lightbulbs since our facilities no longer accept them.

Communications Officer Bethune commented that we don't have any way to dispose of them at our facilities since Nova Scotia Power stopped their program so we had to stop accepting them. There is a place in Dartmouth that does accept them.

Councillor Organ said that something will have to be done about this as people will start to throw them in the woods.

CAO MacEachen commented that we are currently doing a waste management review and the consultant will be in soon to give updates. There are several different options of things that could happen related to North and South facilities. Those will be Council decisions to make on what we do on a go forward basis.

Councillor MacLeod also commented and said that Efficiency Nova Scotia took hers.

Warden Morrison also mentioned that Council needs to be prepared for decisions that are going to have to be made once the waste management review is complete.

Councillor Organ also brought in a wind blocker that fell off a telephone pole in her area. She expressed that there are many of these that fall and pose a major safety risk. She requested that Aliant secure these better and do proper maintenance on them.

Councillor Organ made a motion to contact Aliant regarding this issue.

**It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to Aliant.**

**Motion carried.**

**District 3**

Warden Morrison received correspondence from VC Trail Federation, Athol Grant is resigning. There was too much of a lack of support from different levels of government, countless volunteer hours submitting applications.

Warden Morrison made a motion to send a letter to minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage and MP Jaime Battiste to show frustration of getting no response from applications....no access to funding.

**It was moved and seconded that letters be sent to Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage and MP Jaime Battiste.**

**Motion carried.**

Warden Morrison congratulated the new Village Chair, Bill Marchant. Made a motion to send a note to Village Commission to congratulate the new chair.

**It was moved and seconded that a letter be sent to Bill Marchant.**

**Motion carried.**

**BYLAW**

CAO MacEachen indicated that there will be a public hearing on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 for the CDDI Bylaw

Councillor MacLeod asked if a meeting for the housing strategy take place soon.

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CAO also mentioned that she is looking at doing a review of the County's Policies and By-laws so Council should be prepared to start seeing some new drafts come through over the next few council sessions.

Councillor Longva congratulated Steff MacLeod on her new job as Executive & Special Projects Assistant with the Municipality of the County of Victoria.

Warden Morrison indicated that they will be updating the Committee lists as well for the new website.

**NEXT MEETING**

February 22nd, 2021 will be budget deliberation day.

VCT will be meeting January 18<sup>th</sup>.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that CEPI has three meetings coming up:

- Management Committee meeting on January 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Steering Committee meeting on January 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Senior Council meeting on January 27<sup>th</sup>.

Next Council session is January 18, 2021.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 6:56

Bruce Morrison, Warden  
Leanne MacEachen, CAO