



Victoria County Municipal Council
July 26th, 2021

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held at Council Chambers in Baddeck on July 26th, 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

Stephanie MacLeod, Recorder

Dan Coffin, Tourism Officer

Garrett Fazekas, IT



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Warden Morrison welcomed everyone and acknowledged that this meeting is being held in Unama'ki, One of seven traditional districts of Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw People.

CALL TO ORDER

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

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil and seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee that the agenda be approved.

Motion Carried.

Warden Morrison gave acknowledgment to Bruce D. Morrison for the work he has done with renovating the new Council Chambers, which was the former courtroom.

HOUSING ASSESSMENT RESOURCE TOOLS (HART) PRESENTATION – CAROLYN WHITZMAN AND PENELOPE GURSTEIN

Ms. Whitzman opened the presentation and outlined the first phase of work and explained that they have been funded from March to September 2021 by the CMHC as part of the Housing Supply Challenge to develop simple, robust, equity-focused, comparable and replicable housing need and land assessment tools.

Over the past five months, they have developed:

1. Better needs assessment methods that can identify the size and price points a range of households need to live in adequate and affordable housing
2. Better land assessment methods that focus on government and other non-profit land for social housing
3. Testing of need and land assessment as a proof of concept in the City of Kelowna, BC.
4. A national 'readiness' survey of politicians, planners and housing providers to discover their use of, and opinions on, need and land assessment.

Their report on first stage activities will be published by the end of July. Their proposal for second stage funding to extend our project from November 2021 to March 2023 has a deadline of September 29, 2021.



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Their Housing Need Assessment Tool uses census data to calculate housing needs using the following simple formula:

[deficit = housing need by income category, divided by size of household] +

[projected net loss of affordable housing over next 10 years, using 10-year trends and assuming Business as Usual (BAU)] +

[population increase and change related needs over next 10 years, using 10-year trends and assuming BAU] =

housing need over the coming decade

They further disaggregate the housing need using 13 priority populations: (1) survivors, especially women and children, fleeing domestic violence; (2) single mothers; (3) seniors over 65; (4) young adults aged 18-25; (5) Indigenous peoples; (6) racialized groups; (7) newcomers, including refugees; (8) LGBTQ2S+; (9) people with physical disabilities; (10) people with intellectual disabilities; (11) people with psychosocial disabilities (mental health and addiction issues); (12) veterans; (13) homeless people.

Housing need assessments can and should inform targets and strategies to achieve those targets.

One important strategy is using government and non-profit land for social housing. Their Land Assessment Tool uses assessment and amenity data to identify well-located government land for social housing. In the next phase, they want to expand this tool to include other non-profit land, as well as private properties and land that are suitable for acquisition for social housing.

In their next phase, they want to partner with up to 10 governments they can assist to develop their own housing need and land assessment reports.

They will provide

- Assistance from experienced housing need assessment providers and GIS technicians in developing need and land assessments
- A peer support network of other governments undertaking the same needs assessments
- An Advisory Committee that includes very experienced experts in need of land assessment, including the BC Department of Municipal Affairs, VanCity Credit Union, BC Non-Profit Housing Association (developers of the Rental Housing Index, the Women's Housing and Homeless Network, and the Aboriginal Housing Management Association)
- In the case of smaller municipalities such as Victoria County, they will undertake primary responsibility for developing the land and need assessments.

In order to become a partner, the government must agree to:

- Have an initial meeting with the research team in early 2022 to clarify timelines and expectations and identify a lead staff person that can direct queries from the research team;
- Be willing to complete a one hour before and after interview on housing assessment and housing policy;



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- Share data on location of government and non-profit land, ideally through assessment rolls
- Share data on location of road networks and amenities, in order to generate a mapping of well-located government and non-profit land
- Share data on land and properties that may be suitable for acquisition (on a confidential basis)
- Write a letter of support indicating their willingness to partner with us by September 15, 2021

Warden Morrison thanked Ms. Whitzman and Ms. Gurstein for their presentation and opened it up to questions.

Councillor Patterson said that there was an impressive amount of work on this topic. The housing situation is difficult, and the market is burning itself up. How long do you think this can last?

Ms. Gurstein thinks it is never ending, people are buying property as an investment and communities are feeling the impact of people moving in because work from home is more flexible. The tool is going to show to a community what is needed in terms of housing.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked if there was a time frame? If we were to start from scratch, what is the timeline?

Ms. Whitzman said that one of the advantages of using public or not for profit land is not having to purchase land so that should get things done more quickly and with modular housing it is possible to get them built in 18 months.

Ms. Gurstein said in small communities it could be faster than that. This tool will give you the data that is needed to make strong arguments with the provincial and federal governments.

We see this as an advantage of smaller communities to level the playing field with the different levels of government.

Councillor MacDonald asked what was the main type of housing that was actually asked for?

Ms. Whitzman said it wasn't so much the type of housing, we used the census data to assess needs with household income. It was pretty neutral in terms of single story, or condo's, etc.

Ms. Gurstein said one of the things they intend to do in the second phase is to refine the tool and this is something we might want to include...looking at the different types of housing.

Councillor Longva said she likes the idea of using public land because the price of land has gone very high in Victoria County and asked what types of public land they include, crown, provincial or municipal land?

Ms. Whitzman said that they look at all levels of government public lands and also church owned lands.



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Warden Morrison asked how much of an impact did short terms rentals have on affordability?

Ms. Gurstein said that short term rentals do have a very significant impact and that is why a number of municipalities are clamping down on them. It has to be the municipalities taking initiatives as to what to do about short term rentals.

Warden Morrison asked what phase do we enter this study?

Ms. Whitzman said that we need to apply by September 29, 2021, and Victoria County would be included May 2022 but we would hope to have the lands and needs assessment by the end of 2022 and the whole project needs to be completed by 2023.

Next steps would be email or letter to say that the County is interested in partnering with HART. It is of no cost to the County and they need that letter or email by the end of August.

It was moved by Deputy Warden Dauphinee and seconded by Councillor MacLeod that the Victoria County work with the HART project.

Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 28th, 2021, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved by Councillor Longva and seconded by Councillor Organ that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of June 28th, 2021, be approved.

Motion carried.



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CAO REPORT

Old Business

In touch with Robert Bernard, setting up a learning session for Council/staff.

Cycling signs - request has to come from a Cycling group. Council can only support it.

Housing - met with CBP, they are reaching out to some contacts. Amy sent a survey for a researcher who is interested in Housing solutions for us.

Beautification grant - sent in application June 29, 2021

Bylaw training with PNS July 13, 2021.

Paul - Met with Dan and myself Re :Tourism

Barb to meet with Jocelyn on Heritage properties issues/cemeteries, develop a recommendation.

Contacted DNR in regard to North Harbour area.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked about the CB partnership and NewDawn. CAO MacEachen indicated they have been looped in and are aware and actually got us in touch with the HART project.

New Business

Senior Safety

BOLD will now be administering the Cyber Seniors project

Looking at options for the Good Food Bus Program

Uncommon Room Project - VCHS may take this on. Working with LTC Facility Rec Depts

VCT - need advertising to get senior ridership up

BOLD - Tuesdays 5-8, Saturdays 9-12

Meeting with Rosella Born, VC Health Board, also on other Boards, to collaborate

Tourism

Place making sessions

Trails

Festival and Event funding through DCBA is still available - contact DCBA



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Rec/AL

Accessibility funding received - looking to purchase Trail chairs

Bi-weekly Hikes to enhance the Step Challenge

Youth Programming - looking to implement

MH 1st Aid - in the fall

Place making sessions

Trails

Meeting with Parks Re: Old RCMP site - can it be developed?

Finance

Need to schedule a budget meeting for some changes that came about after Budget approved

Looking in to purchasing/converting to Microsoft 365. We will be migrating Council emails/laptops

Housing survey sent to you - complete

Tax bills being sent week of July 6

PACE bylaw is now in effect.

Public Works

WU Bills went out this week

NH WTP Upgrades going well

Lead sampling program - will be available on website - keep checking

RFP - Fencing project - going out

Cape Smokey meeting - water wwtp

ReUse - Baddeck is busy. Need goods, and groups for Dingwall

Tipping fees - Starting Aug 30/21

Amended solid waste bylaw - changes coming into effect August 1/21

Courthouse RFQ - scoring. Will evaluate shortly



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Other

Washroom EOI closed. Will be scoring, to take next steps

Ebike tour of Celtic Shores Coastal Trail

Sept 27-Oct 3 - International "Right to Know" week. Is Council willing to proclaim this?

Tax Sale happened July 22. only one property had a bid, underbid.

First Reading - Deed Transfer Tax

We received a request from Cape Breton Gateway project related to a new gateway welcoming at the Canso Causeway and to inquire if the County would like to be part of the project. Before this project gets under way, they need to confirm funding commitments. Their request is for \$5,000 from the Municipality of the County of Victoria and from neighbouring municipalities as well.

Warden Morrison added that the Department of Transportation is changing the existing rotatory at the causeway. When changes such as these are being made by the Province, it is important for Municipalities to have input with these changes and by partnering with this Gateway project, it will ensure we have a voice in these discussions to add other changes that can be made at that time to enhance visitor experience.

Warden Morrison strongly suggested that Council consider this request.

Councillor MacNeil asked if this would affect this year's budget and CAO MacEachen said that it would but we can discuss that at the Budget meeting on July 28, 2021.

It was moved by Councillor MacLeod and seconded by Councillor MacNeil that the Victoria County Municipal Council accept the funding commitments for the Cape Breton Gateway project on principle, pending the Budget meeting on July 28th, 2021.

Motion carried.

Councillor MacDonald requested the CAO get in touch with Public Works for an update in regards to the gate at the Dingwall Water Tower and to also change the Victoria County sign when you enter into District 8. CAO MacEachen said yes, she would have Public Works take a look at it.

Councillor MacNeil mentioned that the placemaking session in Iona may not have a big turnout as there wasn't a lot of advertising done for it and suggested having a backup date just in case.



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PROCLMATION

RIGHT TO KNOW WEEK

September 27 to October 3, 2021

WHEREAS the Municipality of the County of Victoria has adopted the principle of openness, transparency and accountability; and

WHEREAS Part XX of the Municipal Government Act gives citizens a right of access to information in the custody or under the control of the Municipality of the County of Victoria; and

WHEREAS access to information ensures citizens of Nova Scotia have the opportunity for meaningful participation in policy formulation, ensure fairness in government decision-making and permit the airing and reconciliation of divergent views; and

WEHREAS the Municipality of the County of Victoria joins all other Canadian jurisdictions and democracies world-wide in acknowledging international Right to Know Week;

THEREFORE be it resolved that I, Bruce Morrison, Warden of the Municipality of the County of Victoria, do hereby proclaim September 27 to October 2, 2021 to be Right to Know Week in the Municipality of the County of Victoria.

It was moved by Councillor MacLeod and seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee that the Victoria County Municipal Council adopt the Right to Know Proclamation as read by Warden Morrison.

Motion carried.



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TAXATION UPDATE

Numbers will be high because we just sent out the tax bills.

Total outstanding is \$8,802,415.09 which is \$696,848.69 higher than last year's \$8,105,566.40.

Current outstanding is \$8,229,399.78 which is \$953,111.08 higher than last year's \$7,276,288.70.

Arrears outstanding are \$573,015.31 which is \$256,262.39 lower than last year's \$256,262.39

Tax sale on July 20 (tender):

- 20 properties are paid eight by full or in arrangements.
- The final list had only 3 properties because of the satisfactory payment (20 properties), the requested removal from the solicitor (30 properties), and movement to the next public auction tax sale (4 properties).
- 136 tenders received from 62 bidders.

Notes:

1. We collected 375,981.28 current taxes from July 14, 2021 (the date that tax bills were mailed) to today.
2. Last year tax bills were sent out about 2 weeks earlier than this year, resulting current outstanding this year higher than last year's.
3. We collected 57,306.44 arrears from June 28, 2021 (last council meeting) to today.
4. Next tax sale would be a public auction in November (date will be determined later).

Councillor Patterson asked about the properties that were removed and why does that take place.

CAO MacEachen indicated that our tax solicitor is very conservative in his approach, if we don't have clear title, it comes off the tax sale and we can pull properties from the list up to 5 mins before the sale.

Councillor Patterson asked what happens to those 30 or so properties that were taken off the tax sale.

CAO MacEachen said they are still in the queue or have been paid. It could mean we are still waiting for more information from the lawyer, didn't have his opinion back, could be he said not to sell it. There could be several different reasons.

Warden Morrison asked how many taxes were paid from the list and CAO MacEachen said at least half of the listed properties, the taxes were paid.



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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND ACTIVE TRANSIT (TAT)

District 1

Councillor MacNeil had meeting with residents on New Glen Road, they are looking for grading, ditching and some gravel. Councillor MacNeil indicated he was in contact with Steve MacDonald regarding this. This area needs mowing and trimming as well.

Councillor MacNeil thanked TAT for the work that has been done in the area and is still working on past issues with Steve.

District 2

Councillor MacLeod mentioned again that the damage at the entrance to 2926/2930 Cabot Trail is still waiting to be fixed. There also needs to be trimming done in her district.

District 3

Warden Morrison had nothing new to report that hasn't already been reported to Steve.

District 4

Councilor Longva had the following concerns:

- Tree hanging over the road at the beginning of the Murray Road, you have to drive on the wrong side of the road to get past it.
- Over growth in the ditches and sides of the road along the North Shore need to be cut, as it is encroaching onto the road.

Councilor Longva also mentioned that the following signage issues, have not been dealt with as of yet; the hidden driveway sign on the Bay Road, the Plaister Mines /Old Big Harbour Road sign and the sign on the Gaelic College hill.

District 5

Councillor Patterson said all is well.

District 6

Deputy Warden said that the local TAT staff have been excellent to deal with.



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District 7

Councillor Organ said she spoke with Steve about a speeding issue. She also had a request for no parking sign or something similar for New Haven Road Neil's Harbour where people park on both sides of the road for the beach. People are finding it hard to get out of their driveways when both sides have cars parked there. The road is narrow and has a slight incline, so it is hard to see if anything is coming in the opposite direction if you pull out around a parked car.

District 8

Councillor MacDonald had the following TAT concerns:

- Cabot's Landing Provincial Park entrance and roadway is in bad need of grading, cars are driving up on the grass to avoid the potholes and ruts to avoid damage to vehicles.
- Government Wharf Road in Dingwall again in need of grading and getting calls from Fishermen and residents who are unable to access Dingwall Beach due to poor road conditions. Councillor MacDonald spoke with TAT about that, and they said they are not responsible for that area, but they have done it in the past. Councillor MacDonald asked it could be found out who is responsible for grading this area
- Brush Cutter Location South Ridge Road in some locations is down to one lane visibility
- as well as intersection of Dingwall Road, which is brought up yearly and nothing is being done at this location.
- Spoke with TAT and brush cutter was thought to be transported to Cape North last week. This is a very busy area of Cabot Trail.
- Requested a timeline of when the intersection at St Margaret's Village will be started and asked if Council ever received the RIM project work from TAT as requested.
- Asking why the paint line truck stopped at the intersection in Cape North.



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DISTRICT CONCERNS

District 1

Councillor MacNeil said that some vendors concerned about tipping fees and said they would have liked more notice.

Councillor MacNeil mentioned that the Washabuck Community Center has a golf tournament and they were wondering if the County wants to put team in to show support. The cost would be just green fees and cart rentals and I am willing to take this out of my district budget.

Councillor MacNeil commented on the school bussing issues in regards to the bus not going to the house of a student on the Jubilee Road. The new policy of not picking up students that are 2.5km from school is unacceptable for rural schools. Councillor MacNeil said we have no sidewalks and shoulders are not wide enough to be walking on and sides are not mowed. It is an accident waiting to happen.

Councillor MacNeil requested that a meeting be arranged with applicable CBVRCE Staff and officials to talk about these issues.

CAO MacEachen will contact them to set up a meeting.

District 2

It was moved by Councillor MacLeod and seconded by Councillor MacNeil that a letter be sent to Department of Lands and Forestry and Mines for an update on the river trail repairs at Uisge Ban Falls.

Motion carried.

Councillor MacLeod asked for a thank you letter to be sent to RCMP District Commander Weise to thank him and the detachment for their shirt tie dying event they had with the kids.

District 3

It was moved by Warden Morrison and seconded by Councillor MacLeod that a letter be sent to Graham MacKenzie to acknowledge the Baddeck Pharmasave for doing over 5000 vaccinations.

Motion carried.

Warden Morrison suggested that Victoria County Transit's contact information should be put at hotels and motels in the community to further advertise their services.



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Waterfront Committee had a request to accompany them to Lunenburg. Permission from council to travel to Lunenburg.

None of the Councillors were opposed to Warden Morrison's travel to Lunenburg.

Councillor MacLeod and I were asked to join a small group, we are not promoting any particular project and not making any promises. We are having discussions.

Warden Morrison mentioned that he, CAO MacEachen, Dan Coffin and Councillor MacLeod met with BABTA today about the current tourism struggles. We asked them to provide their concerns and we would present that to council. Warden read the following concerns aloud:

After speaking with a number of Community Business in Victoria County, it is quite evident that Tourism is now in a Crisis position.

Although operators statistics for 2020 were down 70-90% , we are predicting an even worse outcome so far for 2021. Our Visitor Information Centre in Baddeck has counselled 90% less visitor in 2021 then in 2019 and 14% less this July than July of 2020!

Some business chose not to open 2020 due to Covid. This enabled those that did open in 2020 to capture a bigger piece of the market, whether it was hotel room nights, restaurant dining, gift shops, etc. 2021 season, we are looking at more business open with fewer people travelling within our County using these facilities.

One area noted by many accommodation operators is the confusing information available on Covid Restrictions and timelines to accurately address questions posed from potential out of province travellers. We want long haul visitors to be assured they will not get to our borders only to be turned away because of mis-information. When this occurs, these visitors choose another destination and with very competitive incentives to tourists from PEI and NB Governments it is easy to see how we are at a competitive disadvantage here in nova Scotia.

Supports, like the Emergency Wage Subsidy held it together for business struggling 2020. Changes coming to that program in the coming months will reduce that financial cushion. We all understood that 2020 would be challenging and had concern that it could extend into 2021, and here we are. With the exception of dwindling support programs, where are the recovery supports that will help tourism focused businesses survive from now until a successful and safe season can happen in 2022?



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We respectfully bring these concerns forward to share with council after conversations and meeting with local business owners.

*Eileen Montgomery-Baddeck Lobster Supper
Cathy Lamey-Cabot Trail Motel and Restaurant*

It was moved by Deputy Warden Dauphinee and seconded by Councillor Organ that Tourism Officer, Dan coffin send a letter to the provincial government to address the lack of communication concerns regarding tourism.

Motion carried.

District 4

Councillor Longva requested the following funds from her District Budget:

- \$400.00 for the Pinehill Cemetery.
- \$500.00 for the Giant MacAskill Museum.
- \$250.00 for the Baddeck Ladies Auxiliary for welcome baskets for newcomers.

Graveyards, St. Ann's Timebank made it one of their priorities.

Councillor Longva mentioned that Explore the Bras D'Or celebration through CEPI is happening now. It started July 24th and it runs for 2 weeks. They have an event calendar posted on their website.

District 5

Councillor Patterson requested a congratulations letter be sent to Peggy MacNeil on her retirement from Alderwood.

District 6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee mentioned that there is a large parcel of land in the Ingonish area that has never been surveyed and asked what the plan was for all the municipally owned land as far as surveying.

CAO MacEachen indicated that is part of the housing committee decisions and I will do some research and bring that to the committee.



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Warden Morrison said we will have a short housing committee meeting after the budget meeting on July 28th.

District 7

Councillor Organ said she talked with Const. Robert Dickerson of the Ingonish Detachment would like two caution children playing signs.

Councillor Organ received two phone calls and one email with concerns over the tipping fees at the Dingwall transfer station.

It was moved by Councillor Organ and seconded by Councillor MacDonald to take \$1,000.00 from her district budget for the Neil's Harbour/New Haven Development Association towards repair and expansion of the cenotaph in New Haven.

Motion carried.

District 8

Councillor MacDonald said that he has had a lot of calls/emails regarding the tipping fees. He has also received a hand written letter from a resident and I have forwarded that onto the other councillors and the CAO and Public Works.

Road into the Dingwall Transfer station needs repair as commercial and residential haulers have called, Councillor MacDonald requested that these complaints be passed onto Public Works.

Councillor MacDonald has received calls from residents with regards to the conditions of Cabot Landing Provincial Park. There are various concerns with the Park and they have been directed to Parks officials and Councillor MacDonald said he had a conversation with Morley MacNeil with Department of Lands and Forestry and Energy and Mines.

Councillor MacDonald said one of the concerns is that garbage waste is not allowed in the park and tourists are taking their garbage and disposing of it in local residents' garbage boxes close to park entrance.

Councillor MacDonald asked what Parks Canada is going to do to address these concerns and the CAO suggested residents put locks on garbage cans. There is not a lot we can do about that.

It was moved by Councillor MacDonald and seconded by Councillor MacNeil to take \$1,000.00 from his district budget for the St. Paul Island Museum to assist with installation of entry ramps and stairs and to take \$500.00 from his district budget for the Bay St. Lawrence Fire Department student grant for the Pioneer Cemetery Project.



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Motion carried

BYLAW/POLICY REVIEW

It was moved by Deputy Warden Dauphinee and seconded by Councillor MacLeod to approve the first reading of the amended Deed Transfer Tax By-Law.

Motion carried

CORRESPONDENCE

CAO MacEachen addressed the letters that were passed on to Council regarding tipping fees. She said we will be investigating whether a portable scale will be put down at the Dingwall Transfer Station and will get back to council.

Deputy warden Dauphinee said he has received complaints about tipping fess but also received praise for implementing them as well. CAO MacEachen indicated that Victoria County were one of the last municipalities to implement this.

THANK YOU

Councillor MacNeil thanked the CAO, Tourism and Rec officers for the meetings and Deputy Warden thanked CFO Liu for her hard work and dedication.

COUNCIL MEETING

Budget meeting July 28, 2021.

Next Council meeting is August 23rd, 2021.

ADJOURN

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil to adjourn.

The Municipality of the County of Victoria County council session was adjourned at 7: 21pm.