



Victoria County Municipal Council
February 14, 2022 

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held via Zoom on February 14, 2022, at 2:00pm 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
- Alix Redden, CFO
- Allan Bragg, Manager of Accounting
- Stephanie MacLeod, Recorder
- Dan Coffin, Tourism Officer

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.



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CALL TO ORDER

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

Councillor Patterson requested a discussion about the County webpage to the agenda.

It was moved by Councillor MacLeod and seconded by Councillor Longva that the Agenda for February 14, 2022 be approved.

Motion carried.

COURTHOUSE ASSESSMENT/REVIEW – NICHOLAS CHARLTON

Mr. Charlton gave a brief introduction about his background and expertise, including, historical buildings.

Mr. Charlton went over his report, starting with the process of how the Courthouse was looked at and then went over the issues that were found.

The estimated current replacement cost is \$5,661,780.00. The capital cost forecast (lifecycle replacement) figures are the following:

- Average annual Expenditure \$182,692.00
- Maximum Annual Expenditure \$141,544.00
- Total 20-Year Expenditures \$3,780,083.00

*Please note that these figures are in 2021 dollars without inflation.

Mr. Charlton expressed the following areas of concern:

- The significant areas of concern are found on the exterior of the building; these areas require replacement as soon as possible to stop further deterioration.
- The exterior cladding is in very poor condition, and there are areas of possible significant water damage causing rotting to occur. Maintenance has not been carried out regularly.
- There are also some concerns as to the presence of ACM materials and the lack of proper insulation on the exterior walls, thus adding to increased heating costs.
- The architectural wood moldings appear to be in the same condition as the exterior wood cladding.

The Councillors all thanked Mr. Charlton for his assessment and presentation of the Courthouse and Warden Morrison opened it up to questions.

Questions:



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Warden Morrison asked how much to do the interior as well and Mr. Charlton said at least \$1 million.

Mr. Charlton said that the moment you start working on the building, the whole building has to be brought up to code. Mr. Charlton said it will cost at least \$4 million, which is a very conservative estimate.

Councillor MacNeil wanted to confirm that the yearly average cost of maintaining the building now is \$182,000 and also wanted to confirm that this is just the basic maintenance cost and that cost is going up every year.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee said we expecting there were going to be some issues and we have some hard decisions to make coming up.

Councillor MacDonald asked what the same type of building would cost and Mr. Charlton said \$4 or \$5 million and it will be built with new materials and technology so its easier to build.

CAO MacEachen wanted to confirm that a new building will be less expensive than to fix this building and Mr. Charlton confirmed this and also said to fix the building it will cost at least \$5.6 million.

Warden Morrison asked if the building could be done in phases or would it have to be renovated all at once and Mr. Charlton said, once you start renovating, it must be kept going, it can't be done in phases.

Councillor MacNeil also commented on the new accessibility requirements for the Province that have to be completed by 2030.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 31ST, 2022, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

It was moved by Councillor MacLeod and seconded by Councillor MacNeil that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of January 31st, 2022, be approved.

Motion carried.

CAO REPORT

Old Business

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- Fishing Gear Coalition letter of support has been forwarded. CBRM is no longer taking the lead, but will partner.
- Accessibility Steering Committee has met. Still looking for members.
- Village Rezoning Amendment - Public hearing will be Feb 28/22 at 4 pm.
- Housing Assessment Resource Tool - had a meeting, taking next steps, they will be coming back.
- Police Community Consultative Group- held first meeting.
- Tax exemption applications – any not for profit organization that thinks they qualify, get your application in. For any type of grant from the Municipality.
- Reached out to Robert Bernard, and L'Nui.
- Reached out to CBVRCE on driver update – 1 driver should be ready 2-3 weeks, 3 others are in training (4-6 weeks).
- Reached out to NSHA on responses to letter - awaiting a response.
- Reached out to Rink Committee, waiting on date of next meeting to update Council.
- Upland Plan Victoria - encourage residents to visit the Plan Victoria Web portal (planeasternnova.ca), and have their say on planning of the County- open until
- Public Works update/Boundary Planning meeting set for March 14/22.

Councillor MacDonald asked about the boundary review and asked if the UARB would be there, and CAO said it is just a municipal discussion right now.

Councillor MacLeod asked the CAO to send a reminder to the CBVRCE in 3 weeks time for an update.

Councillor Patterson asked if the organizations that have to apply for the tax exemption now were notified and CAO said yes, they were all notified.

Warden Morrison also requested that the NSHA come to council in April if they have not provided an update in 2 weeks.

New Business

Tourism

- Cabot Trail Winter Market Readiness Assessment is underway. This will involve research, discussion with key stakeholders, and comparison of best practices for winter destinations. This assessment will lead growth and development of offerings to visitors for a Cape Breton winter vacation.
- Working closely with Economic Development Officer, Erica Holgate, to re-ignite some momentum on the Mountain Biking Strategy.
- Met with the Friends of Alexander Graham Bell Society to get updates on the Mabel Bell Garden Project.

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- Work with DCBA to review and revamp the Festivals & Events Support program. If anyone planning a new event for 2022, please get in touch with Dan.
- Continued work to finalize some route details and coordinate with Departments of Natural Resources & Environment
- Collaborating with Mary Barker Trail Society and Cabot Snowmobile club on new trail to connect to Ingonish
- Working now to apply for new federal funding for Active Transportation for a large inclusive trail system.
- Gathering information on other communities who have done community master planning to prepare a project proposal to assist Baddeck and Ingonish areas for a pilot Community Master plan for these areas. This will align with current land use planning initiatives and previous sessions related to Baddeck waterfront.
- Placemaking work moving forward for Dingwall and additional projects being worked by local community groups in Iona, St. Ann's, and Baddeck.

Rec/AL

- Accessibility- working on recruiting members for committee
- Working with Parks on Accessible Trails Chairs
- ACAP- have connected Kathleen Aitkens (ED) with council and Kelly- Kathleen is working on a report that will outline possible initiatives to partner on prior to budget sessions
- Trails- beginning the process of applying for the federal Active Transportation fund
- Guided Hike- Nicholson Trail was the final hike in our series of guided winter hikes with Hike NS
- Had a program review interview with Communities, Culture, Tourism & Heritage to provide feedback on how they can improve their funding process/ programs
- Received updated actuals and have been sending around funding reminders to schools, rinks, and staff
- Dalem Lake walks on Thursdays at 9am are still going great, we are always happy to welcome newcomers

Finance

- Applications for grants are due by the end of March – this is for any grant we give, including a Tax Exemption for Charitable organizations. You **MUST** complete the application to be considered.

EDO

- Still getting some respondents on the housing survey.



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- Had contact with the rink board to discuss going forward with a business plan.

Public Works

- Hired 2 new water operators.
- Covid is working its way through our staff at PW might be short staffed.
- At the water treatment plant in Neil's Harbour, the new tech treatment technology should be coming online in the next few weeks.

Other

- Regional response to Province's request for review of 20 NS Agency/Board/Crown Corp we will be sending a CB wide letter in response
- Looking into possible O2 program for water operators
- Held a high-end Management Team meeting on staffing. Will be bringing ideas to budget discussions

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked about if CAO MacEachen can communicate with him after she has meetings with Cape Smoking Holdings.

Councillor Patterson asked if there was a link to the municipal grants application and asked about the "email me" buttons on the webpage.

Councillor Patterson asked if Committee Minutes, and Agendas can go on the website.

CAO responded and said there is a link and regarding the email button and it is getting looked into by the developer of the website after it was brought up by Councillor Patterson at a prior meeting. CAO MacEachen also said it is up to Council to adopt a policy to post committee minutes and agendas on the website once they are approved.

It was moved by Councillor Patterson and seconded by Councillor Longva to post committee Minutes and agendas on the website once they have been approved.

Motion Carried.



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TAXATION UPDATE

As of today, we are at \$1,038,263 total outstanding, compared to \$1,400,641 this time last year for a total difference of **\$362,378** ahead.

For current outstanding, we are ahead of last year by **\$50,130** with \$637,335 as of today vs. \$687,465 current this time last year.

Arrears outstanding is at **\$312,249** better than last year with \$400,928 for this year vs. \$713,177 this time last year.

Since the last update, **\$97,830** has been collected. Reminder letters are working and we intend to send a new batch early next week.

The upcoming tax sale contains 23 properties and will be by tender on March 22nd. This sale will be advertised in the Cape Breton Post newspaper on February 19, 2022. The total owing for these accounts, excluding any tax sale expenses, is \$135,862. Three of these accounts have been collection issues since 1999.

The next expected tax sale will be around June 14, 2022, and is planned to be by public auction.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

District 1

Councillor MacNeil had the following concerns;

- Lots of phone calls last ice storm about the lack of salt and plowing on the Washabuck Roads
- Route 223 plowing was very good last storm. Compliments to the plow operators
- There is settling in the area that was repaired at the old Causeway in Iona Needs more gravel or patching to get through to the spring

District 2

Councillor MacLeod thanked the Public Works department for clearing and sanding the roads.

District 3

Warden Morrison had nothing new to report.



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District 4

Councillor Longva said that there is excessive snow being pushed onto private property on the back roads and icy roads are an ongoing concern.

District 5

Councillor Patterson mentioned road conditions again and they need repair and MLA Bain is aware of it as well.

District 6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee said Steve will be coming down to look at a few roads and only hearing about delays in getting roads plowed.

District 7

Councillor Organ had a couple calls about roads not being plowed and salted.

District 8

Councillor MacDonald said that he is still receiving calls regarding the potholes at the bottom of Cape North Hill, below Cabot Fire Department.

Councillor MacDonald also said that he realizes that PW are short staffed and wanted to thank the operators for their work during these past storms for keeping the roads and service levels up to standard in D8. CAO MacEachen also reminded Councillor MacDonald that is it the councillor's responsibility to inform the provincial Department of Public Works with concerns.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District 1

Councillor MacNeil had the following district concerns;

- A local O2 Teacher reached out about courses for Water Operators for some possibilities that it could be incorporated in the program.
- Got a phone call from local business about the extra cost of dumping fees. I will have to talk to Kelly about it.
- Issue with NS Power from the last storm, some places in my district, didn't have power for 90 hours. The trees need to be cleared.

It was moved by Councillor MacNeil and seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee for \$1000.00 be taken from his district budget in support of the Little Narrows Community Centre to help with maintenance items.

Motion Carried.

District 2

Councillor MacLeod congratulated Victoria County resident, Margaret McPhee on her 107th birthday.

District 3

Warden Morrison reminded residents that there is a covid clinic at St. Mark's Masonic Hall on February 16, 2022 from 11am to 2pm.

Warden Morrison said at the next council session, we will be taking photos for the website so please show up prepared and please wear your county blazer.

We had a good ACAP meeting and they are going to come back with a proposal with some program opportunities.

District 4

Councillor Longva thanked staff for the letter written to Sally MacInnis.



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Councillor Longva wanted to encourage residents in her district to express interest and reach out to the new Accessibility Steering Committee.

Councillor Longva addressed concerns over the proposed dredge material management site at Little River and requested the following; that the public consultation time be extended, for a different location to be considered and wanted to suggest that the material be trucked to our already existing waste facility in Baddeck.

It was moved by Councillor Longva and seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee that a letter be sent to Scott Burley and Chyann Kirby to express concerns over the proposed dredge material management site at Little River. CC' Minister Halman, Minister Craig, Minister Dunn, MP Battiste and MLA Bain.

Motion carried.

District 5

Councillor Patterson had nothing new to report.

District 6

It was moved by Deputy Warden Dauphinee and seconded by Councillor MacNeil that a letter be sent to Minister of Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources requesting them to come to Council to discuss the Ingonish Wilderness Area. CC' Premier Houston.

Motion carried.

District 7

Councillor Organ had nothing new to report, just road issues that are being forwarded on to Steve.

District 8

Councillor MacDonald said that he received many calls regarding the closure of the postal service in St Margaret's Village. Residents were given notice 24 Hours before office closure and now must travel to Dingwall for parcels and incoming mail. Canada Post correspondence was poorly



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expressed to residents and has caused an inconvenience to the Village service and state that at this time a month or more is required to travel.

It was moved by Councillor MacDonald and seconded by Councillor Organ that a letter be sent on behalf of residents of St. Margaret's Village to Canada Post to clarify what their next steps are and when full time service will resume in the Village. CC' MP Battiste.

Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORT and OTHER UPDATES

Councillor MacLeod said that VCT haven't met yet, but we are getting ready to take over the transit on April 1st and requested a meeting with CAO and the Deputy Warden to discuss.

Councillor MacLeod and Councillor Patterson are going to try to have a meeting with Senior Safety Advisory Board in March.

Warden said the Accessibility Steering committee is working on terms of reference for the accessibility committee and CAO said they are also on our website.

Councillor Longva thanked Lydia for the great hikes she organized.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee requested to have a meeting about public garbage as the spring and summer are approaching and CAO said yes, we can, we will get something scheduled.

CORRESPONDENCE

All has been sent out.

COUNCIL MEETING

Next Council meeting is February 28, 2022, at 5:00pm.

ADJOURN

The Municipality of the County of Victoria County council session was adjourned at 3:35pm.