



Victoria County Municipal Council
April 11, 2022

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers in Baddeck on April 11, 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 #5- Fraser Patterson
- District #6- Larry Dauphinee, Deputy Warden
- District #7- Jackie Organ

Also present were:

- Leanne MacEachen, CAO
- Alix Redden, CFO
- Stephanie MacLeod, Recorder
- Dan Coffin, Tourism Officer
- Ursula Melski, Communications

Absent: District #4- Barbara Longva is out of the province.

District #8- Norman MacDonald

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.

On Motion of Councillor MacLeod, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee that the Agenda for April 11, 2022, be approved.

Motion carried.

TAIGH CURAIN DAYCARE PRESENTATION – MATT HART AND GWEN JARABEK

Ms. Jarabek provided background information and an overview on the operations of the daycare and some of those highlights were:

- Federal and Provincial Childcare Agreement: Ms. Jarabek went over the \$10/day daycare fee.
- The Plan and Budget: expanding the daycare around the County.
- Impact to Victoria County: daycare employees have an Employee Assistance Program, Health Program and Dental Program. Always looking for locals to provide services.
- Requested funding on all three levels, capital, operational and development.

Warden opened the floor up to questions.

Councillor Patterson thanked them for coming to Council and all the work that has been done to get this daycare running. It is an asset especially for young families who are thinking of moving to the area.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked how are they doing for staff and Ms. Jarabek said they reached out to the province to help fund ECE training. Mr. Hart said the province has a plan in place, that plan is a little vague right now, but they understand the challenges. Ms. Jarabek said there are also staggered opportunities, where someone can start without having their education completed fully.

Councillor Organ asked how many spaces will be available down North, Ms. Jarabek said we already looked at a couple of spaces, they are looking at logical spaces that have multiple activities already happening. Ingonish could be 12-24 and 12-18 in the other space.

Councillor MacNeil asked if they were looking over in the Iona area as there are a lot of younger families moving in and Ms. Jarabek said the recent funding they received allowed for re-negotiations to fit the needs so we can discuss that more.



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Councillor MacLeod asked about the provincial funding and wanted to confirm if it was approved, and Ms. Jarabek said it is approved. Councillor MacLeod asked if awarded the municipal grants, would it spread to all sites and Ms. Jarabek said it will.

Warden Morrison asked if the municipal funding is contingent on receiving funding from anywhere else and Ms. Jarabek said no, the municipal funding is going to be used for additional costs as they are anticipating going over budget with how the current climate is.

Warden Morrison thanked them for their time.

Warden Morrison introduced the new Transit Administrator, Keegan Campbell. Starting tomorrow, he will be taking over the dispatch and taking calls for Victoria County Transit (VCT).

DESTINATION CAPE BRETON ASSOCIATION (DCBA) PRESENTATION – TERRY SMITH

Mr. Smith went over DCBA's 2022 – 2023 strategy. Some of the highlights include:

- Website Sessions are up 59% for 2022
- Rooms/Nights Sold 55% down in 2020
- 2021 was up 41% but still down 37% from 2019.
- Bounce back from Airbnb's as well in 2021.
- Visitation is projected to be up to pre-pandemic numbers for domestic travellers, higher than 2019.
- It is projected that travellers will be spending more on travel.

Goals:

- Trying to get back to 2019 levels, room nights sold to 80%, collaborate with partners to address the labour shortages, to reach average monthly occupancy rates of 45% for spring, 60% for fall and 35% for winter.
- Year of Music, various activities all over throughout the year.
- Waterfall Season, this will help drive spring tourism.
- Niche Markets, luxury/upscale travel experiences, sport fishing, mountain biking and small meetings (business travel).
- Mobile Data Research, looking to address the lack of proper data on visitors. This data will be shared with municipalities, tourism operators and potential investors.
- Destination Development, working with partners to address/mitigate the current labour shortage, supporting CBU/World Tourism Institute, developing a sustainability plan, enhance and evolve DCBA.



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Questions:

Councillor MacLeod asked about the Waterfall Season and mentioned Uisge Ban Falls and commented how much we have reached out to the Province to get the other part of the trail fixed and asked Mr. Smith to look into that with the Province as well. Mr. Smith wasn't aware of this but will investigate it.

Councillor MacNeil asked about the projected increase in travel and asked if that projection was made before the price of fuel went up and Mr. Smith said yes, those predictions were before the higher prices but for many people it won't affect them, it just might change how they are travelling and for how long.

Councillor MacNeil asked how many cruise ships are expected to arrive and Mr. Smith said about 100 ships, but we aren't sure how many people will be on those ships.

Councillor Organ asked how a small business can be part of DCBA and Mr. Smith said they can contact us or your own EDO, Erica Holgate.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee is excited to see the Waterfall Season initiative. Are there any surveys that show why people choose Nova Scotia to visit and Mr. Smith said the number one reason is for the Cabot Trail.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee said there was some talk with CBU about a culinary program being at the Keltic Lodge and Mr. Smith said he was aware of those discussions and because of the pandemic those discussions have been put on hold, but he will look into it.

Councillor Patterson thanked Mr. Smith and mentioned that when people come here on vacation sometimes it translates to them eventually moving here one day.

Warden Morrison mentioned the labour shortage and asked if it was just a spike or is this going to be an ongoing issue and Mr. Smith said it is a huge issue and not just here, its national. It is a complex issue, and we have looked into temporary foreign workers but we also have a housing shortage, so we have no place for them to stay. He also commented about the risk that using foreign workers may hurt the local "connection" people feel when they visit here.

Councillor MacLeod also thanked Mr. Smith with his support in voicing his concerns with the terrible condition of the road in Westside Middle River and how that impacts travel on the Cabot Trail.

RECESS

Warden Morrison called for a 10-minute break.



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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 28, 2022, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

On Motion of Councillor MacLeod and seconded by Councillor Organ that the Victoria County Municipal Council Minutes of March 28TH, 2022, be approved.

Motion carried.

Old Business

- Scheduling a PW meeting with Steve and Jamie in May
- Asked the Village about the tennis courts, waiting to hear back from them, it was referred to someone else with the kindergarten to get back to me.
- Heavy Garbage is starting May 9th, contingent on responses from the tender for the North. The South will start on the 9th regardless.
- VCT is underway and an application for funding got submitted.
- Regional EMO exercise was done yesterday, ECC exercise on April 13.
- Supposed to have a call with Nick Charlton regarding the courthouse cost estimates but it didn't happen, he was out of Wi-Fi services. Will reschedule.
- The water pipe in the middle of Ocean View Drive will have work done on it when the water dissipates.
- Received no comments on Committee Minutes policy - will clean up, based on Roberts Rules
- Ukrainian survey has been approved and it will be launched on our website tomorrow.

Warden Morrison mentioned "No Mow May" and asked if there will be signs. CAO said signs will be purchased to be put on the lawns of all our facilities to communicate why the lawns are not being mowed.

CAO REPORT



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Communications

- Almost done the VCT transition, introducing Keegan on social media. After Monday the new phone will be ready to be used for VCT.

Finance

- Fire services committee meeting to discuss fire funding, need to find out what other areas are doing for fire area rates.
- Budget will start soon
- ICIP application went in for the Ingonish water extension and the Ingonish beach wastewater extension

REC/AL

- Placemaking event in Dingwall Thursday, it went really well, there were 16 people in attendance. 8 of those people signed up for a potential committee we are looking to form.
- Looking at Volunteer recognition ideas
- Looking at a new ACOA funding that is out for the sidewalk in Ingonish
- Planning for the Accessibility engagement sessions
- Community garden beds messaging. Beds are not available for booking as of now. They current beds are being replaced.

Tourism

- Winter Market Readiness assessment approx. 90% complete – Valuable insight coming from the project.
- County, DCBA, and Cape Breton Partnership on an awareness program for the Seawall trail project.
- Tourism Strategy early stages of consulting Tourism Stakeholders and evaluating strategy of strategic partners like TIANS and Tourism Nova Scotia.

Community Development:

- Trails
 - Completed and submitted Application to Infrastructure Canada for a Victoria County Multi-use Trail System.
- Placemaking



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- Community Meetings in Ingonish and Dingwall / Cape North
Additional Follow-up placemaking Meetings will be taking place over the next few months in Iona, Ross Ferry, and St Ann's.
- Community Master Planning
 - The Communities of Ingonish and Baddeck has expressed a desire to have Community Master Planning any other communities wanting to be involved please contact Mr. Coffin.

Public Works

- Hired a clean internship person for a 16-week term, will focus on Waste Diversion
- Tender being worked on for a new side loader
- Bids back for the tenders for the warehouse in Baddeck and transfer site in Dingwall, Council decision on what to do there.
- Re-Use building is opening on April 30th
- 2 double collection days because of the easter weekend, April 13 and April 20

Senior Safety

SSP:

- email distribution list being worked on.

UnCommon Room

- the UnCommon Rm project - in partnership with VCHSS and CBHA is up and running with fantastic results. Residents in the 4 seniors housing buildings are enjoying connection, support and programming
- Working on Grade 3 PenPals project.

VCT

- Working closely with VCT to work out issues seniors have experienced, to make it easier to use.

Virtual Seniors Lunch

- Working with St. Ann's bay on Senior's Lunch.
- Partnering with Seniors Drop in Program
- Working on ACT.



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- Lead role on AAC (Accessibility Advisory Committee)

EDO

- Attended the ICSC@Whistler conference last week and connected with several real estate developers and franchise groups.
- Looking forward to presenting on the Ingonish Housing Survey to the Housing Committee of Council.
- Ongoing business advisory: following up with businesses and initiating new potential connections

Other

- We have heard from UARB and our upgrades at the Neil's Harbour Water Treatment Plant have been approved.
- The Warden and CAO will be presenting at the Village meeting on the 25th.
- Lots of job postings, please look at the website.

Councillor Patterson asked the Warden if he had his presentation to the Village and CAO said we have started it and when it is complete, we will be passing it on to Council.

Councillor Patterson asked if the new Clean Internship person can go out into the communities to educate on proper sorting and CAO said Communications will work on a plan to get this messaging out there and this may be part of the intern's role, I'm just not sure yet.

Councillor MacNeil asked about the status of the water rate study and CAO MacEachen said it is with GA Isenor Consulting and they are gathering some information and we are expecting them to come to Council in the next couple of months with their findings.

Warden Morrison requested that Councillors contact him if they are planning to attend the Village meeting on the 25th.

On Motion of Councillor Patterson, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee to write a letter to the Minister of Public Safety expressing our concern about the RCMP retroactive pay and asking who and how this will be paid. CC' MP Battiste.

Motion Carried.



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TAXATION UPDATE

As of today, we're at \$824,261 total outstanding, compared to \$887,307 this time last year for a total difference of **\$63,046** ahead.

Current outstanding is creeping up at **\$49,300** higher than last year - \$483,997 as of today compared to \$434,697 this time last year.

Arrears outstanding is at **\$113,347** better than last year - \$340,263 compared to \$452,610 this time last year.

Since the last update, **\$51,734** has been collected toward outstanding taxes.

Reminder letters will be going out mid-month. We intend to update wording on these to reflect that fact that new tax bills will be going out soon so outstanding amounts should be paid ASAP so that we can bring that current outstanding balance back down.

The deadline for the first notices of our **June 21 tax sale** is tomorrow. Second notices will be going out this week. This batch includes approximately 50 properties, and we anticipate somewhere around half of those to end up at tax sale.

Warden Morrison acknowledged the CFO and Deputy Warden for their great interview on CBC regarding the tax sale.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

District 1

Councillor MacNeil had the following concerns:

- Red Point East Road sign must be replaced. All signs in District have to be looked at.
- Potholes from Little Narrows to MacKay's Point in Washabuck need to be patched.
- Grading on Gravel Roads
- Gravel was put in the hole at the washout repair in Iona.

District 2

Councillor MacLeod said all the gravel roads in the district need to be graded.

District 3

Warden Morrison had no new concerns to report.



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District 5

Councillor Patterson said the section from the Kempt Head Road from the Steeles Cross Road to the firehall have massive potholes that need to be fixed ASAP.

District 6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee said Steve MacDonald will be coming to tour his district on Thursday.

District 7

Councillor Organ said all the gravel roads need to be graded.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District 1

Councillor MacNeil said there was great turnout at the Welcome Wagon event, over 100 people attended, 15 newcomers' households attended. 58 door prizes were given out. Excellent entertainment, free food served, good time had by all.

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee to direct the CAO to set up a meeting with representatives from the CBRM to discuss the possibility of trail development along the railway in District 1 in Victoria County and District 3 in CBRM.

Motion Carried.

District 2

Councilor MacLeod thanked Allan Bragg and staff for all the hard work done with VCT and also brought up that she is also hearing from residents regarding the Non-Residential Tax.



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District 3

Warden Morrison Warden Morrison acknowledged the new speed indicators that have been set up before entering Irving location on the Trans Canada Highway.

Councillor MacNeil said the signs may need to be looked at as it registered a wrong speed for him.

On Motion of Warden Morrison seconded by Councillor MacNeil to send a thank you note to Steve MacDonald with the Department of Public Works for the installation of the speed indicator signs.

Motion Carried.

District 4

On behalf Councillor Longva, Warden Morrison mentioned her concerns:

Councillor Longva also wanted to encourage residents to check out the *Ukraine Refugee Support* survey that will be posted on the County website tomorrow.

Warden Morrison also mentioned that Council and members of staff raised the Ukraine flag at the Municipal Building prior to Council this afternoon.

On Motion of Warden Morrison seconded by Councillor MacLeod to take \$500.00 out of district 4 budget to the Little River Port Authority to help offset the cost of a Port o Potty they get every season. Fishermen, tourists and local beach goers and others benefit from it.

Motion Carried.

District 5

Councillor Patterson asked if we ever heard back from Public Works about the road name change on the Southside and CAO said we have not but will follow up.

District 6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee wanted to thank Councillor MacLeod and staff for all the hard work that was done with VCT.



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District 7

Councillor Organ had no district concerns at this time.

COMMITTEE REPORT and OTHER UPDATES

CEPI meeting on Thursday.

VCT hired Keegan Campbell and submitted an application for vehicle funding.

AAC (Accessibility Advisory Committee) met last Thursday and there is an Accessibility Plan being drafted and a communications plan for community engagement sessions being prepared.

CAO MacEachen said there will be some public consultation done with the Accessibility Plan and we will also include boundary review discussion at these public consultations as well.

CORRESPONDENCE

Warden Morrison received some correspondence regarding the new property tax for out of province property owners. The Warden wanted to be clear that this is not a municipal tax and requested a representative from the province to come to speak to Council to discuss and inform.

CAO MacEachen added the following information which she received from the province.

More details will become available once the FMA (Financial Measures Act) has been introduced in the legislature. And, it will follow the usual process before becoming law.

We'd like to share three pieces of information with you in the meantime:

- 1. Both of these tax measures are to be administered by the province.*
- 1. The Department of Finance and Treasury Board has developed a web page with more information for each of these tax measures: <https://novascotia.ca/finance/en/home/taxation/tax101/non-resident-deed-transfer-tax-and-property-tax.html>*
- 1. Finance and Treasury Board have provided two email addresses specific to the non-resident deed transfer and non-resident property tax initiatives. We'd ask that municipalities direct all public enquires to the below emails. They are being actively monitored.*



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- NSPropertyTax@novascotia.ca
- NSDeedTransferTax@novascotia.ca

Warden Morrison mentioned that Councillor Longva has also been contacted over this issue as well.

Councillor MacNeil expressed his frustrations with the Province over this issue and how they don't inform nor communicate with the County before these new laws are put in place.

COUNCIL MEETING

Next Council meeting is April 25th, 2022, at 2:00pm.

ADJOURN

The Municipality of the County of Victoria County council session was adjourned by Councillor MacNeil at 4:07pm.