



Victoria County Municipal Council
April 25, 2022

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers in Baddeck on April 25, 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

Ursula Melski, Communications



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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 and mentioned that Mark Peck from Municipal Affairs was joining us last minute and will go over some updates to Council.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacLeod that the Agenda for April 25, 2022, be approved.

Motion Carried.

NSHA PRESENTATION – Brett MacDougall, Angela MacArthur and Glenn Brann

Mr. MacDougall thanked Council for allowing them to come and provide updates and share information on the two local facilities (Victoria Memorial and Buchannan)

Mr. MacDougall went over some recent Covid statistics and how those affect facility closures.

They are looking at Victoria County Memorial for space development, and future requirements and currently have surveys out and will provide updates from those surveys once they are completed.

Mr. Brann provided updates on Doctor Recruitment. 4.5 positions approved for Victoria County. A new doctor is coming in 2023 and we will have flexibility to hire another full-time person next year.

Mr. Brann said things are started to stabilize in the CBRM.

Ms. MacArthur went over nursing and said they are challenged with recruitment. There are a few vacancies, permanent and leave of absences (which are hard to fill). All positions have incentives attached to them, including signing bonuses. They have been using travel nurses in all the rural sites.

We have had 2 recent entry level positions filled and there is another travel nurse coming and will be here until June.

Hired and trained 6 paramedics for backup. Casual nurses from other sites.

Temporary closures will continue due to physician shortages and RN shortages.

The last few months a project was started to help mental health patients where they are able to meet with a doctor virtually.



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Mr. Brann said there are 5 full time physicians approved, currently we have 2.5 at Buchanan.

Ms. MacArthur said there are 8.4 full time RN positions at Buchanan, a full time OT filled and a full-time physical therapist position has not been filled at Buchanan.

At Buchanan they use “doc in the box” whereby a doctor can be called in virtually afterhours and after the patient has been triaged.

Questions:

Councillor MacNeil asked is “fixing healthcare”, as promised by the Conservative government, meaning to bring it back to the levels before covid or bringing it to new levels. Mr. MacDougall said he thinks it is both and the virtual care option is an example of bringing it to new levels and we continue to try and get as many physicians as possible to come to Nova Scotia.

Councillor MacLeod asked if the doctor that is coming in the summer, will fill all the positions and Mr. Brann said it depends what Dr. Genge decides to do with his private practise, right now, he is happy just taking patients at his office.

Councillor Longva wanted to follow up with her prior inquiry about a doctor that wanted to come here from Germany and Mr. Brann said Dr. O’Brien had been working on this and also mentioned that rules have just changed around that as well so it’s likely that that doctor could end up practicing in Canada.

Councillor Patterson mentioned that he had a doctor call him and follow up with a report on a procedure he had and appreciated the level of service that was provided.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee mentioned housing and how that is a barrier to people coming here and asked has there been any thought of providing housing. Mr. MacDougall said he isn’t sure if they have explored housing and/or being landlords but would be willing to partner with organizations and groups to talk about some options. Deputy Warden Dauphinee said it is something that the NSHA should take more seriously.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee also said something has to be done with the lack of paramedic services north of Smokey and to please take that back to your organization.

Councillor Organ asked if the lab tech in Neil’s Harbour is there temporarily, and Ms. MacArthur said she believes he is full time

Councillor MacDonald asked if they have sat down at the table with EHS to discuss the issues? Ms. MacArthur said they talk with EHS regularly, but they are also dealing with employee challenges as well.



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Mr. MacDougall said they meet with EHS twice a week and again, they are also dealing with shortages and there is no easy solution, but we will continue to work with them. Mr. MacDougall also said that life flight is also an option for critical care situations.

Warden Morrison said that he appreciates them for coming to Council but added that the communities do not know this information and we have repeatedly asked for town hall sessions and that has not happened. There needs to be better communications with the communities and better outreach to share knowledge and updates.

Mr. MacDougall said we can look at virtual options for these meetings and it is something that will discuss and possibly smaller consultation meetings with certain community groups.

Councillor MacLeod said community engagement would be great and also if you have updates and communication to get out, please pass it on to us.

Councillor MacLeod also mentioned the lines in the parking lot at Victoria Memorial also need to be painted and Ms. MacArthur also noticed that today and made note of it.

Warden Morrison said the more communication the better and please communicate with us so we can get messaging out to the residents in our districts.

Mr. Brann acknowledged Ms. MacArthur and she has a retirement pending and we thank her and wish her well.

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS and HOUSING – Mark Peck

Mr. Peck provided a brief update with some initiatives that the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, some of which included:

The Ministers Mandate has two components/sides. There is a Municipal Affairs side and a Housing side to the mandate.

Municipal Affairs:

- Review the Equalization Payments
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Service exchange
- Roads Review the HRM charter and municipal government act
- Double equalization payment
- Code of Conduct Review



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Housing:

- Implement recommendations from the affordable housing report
- Inventory of lands that are suitable for housing development
- The MOU is meant to replace service exchange
- Agreement that will change the partnership with the province and the municipalities
- One of the things they committed to doing fiscal review and towns task force, fiscal review remains incomplete. These documents are being reviewed again and that information will be shared with a joint working group for analysis and feedback.
- Second big initiative is the municipal act and charter review. Looking at it in various segments. Looking at in 5 categories.
- Changes to the MGA is ongoing.
- They are also working on a provincial code of conduct
- Working on Elections Review Committee
- Work being done on the Municipal Planning Committee
- Closed the call for the ICIP Funding.
- There are always announcements on housing initiatives and plans.
- Public Housing, approx. over 11,000 public housing units in NS. One of the things that changed, appointed a new CEO, Steve MacIsaac, he is working with his team on what would be the future structure of public housing in NS with governments.
- They have a focus on supply and public housing.

Mr. Peck mentioned the Village of Baddeck and said his goal is to take the information he hears to the Minister.

Councillor Patterson will be interested to see what comes from the mandates as they affect us as well.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked about PVSC and what portion will the province be paying for the operation of PVSC for the non resident tax deed and Mr. Peck said he has no idea but would take it back and look into it.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked for an update on the seasonal adjustment tax and Mr. Peck said it is on the list for review.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee also asked if there is somewhere online, we can view provincial lands that could be used for housing and Mr. Peck said there isn't but there will be.

Councillor MacDonald asked why the 9 municipalities of the 49 municipalities aren't entitled to the equalization payments. Mr. Peck said that there is a formula for that, and those 9 municipalities were shown to not need the equalization payment.



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Councillor MacDonald asked if this formula could be reviewed, and Mr. Peck said it is on the list to review and part of the Ministers mandate letter.

Councillor MacNeil mentioned communications between the province and the municipalities. The non resident property tax is a prime example of how badly this affects the municipality, and the province did not even invite the municipality to the table to discuss and we didn't know it was coming.

Mr. Peck said he is going to take this back to the Minister.

Councillor Longva was glad to hear that there was going to be some reviews done and agreed with what Deputy Warden Dauphinee and Councillor MacNeil said about the non resident property tax.

CAO MacEachen said she was pleased to see the Province consulting with the Municipalities, rather than just pushing things through without letting us know. CAO also said we had received a letter from Minister Lohr, stating that Gas Tax funds can now be used to fund Fire Department capital, she is concerned that the Province keeps "allowing expenditures" by Municipalities, rather than being funded by the Province.

If we have to take some steps with the Village of Baddeck, CAO said she is hoping there will be some help with the municipal collaboration fund.

Mr. Peck said there are some expenditures with fire departments???

Warden Morrison mentioned housing and short-term rentals, and this was referenced in the affordable housing report and requested that this be addressed in more detail.

Warden Morrison brought up the Code of Conduct and asked if there will be something coming out on that and Mr. Peck said yes, it is already legislated but there will be room for additions. Warden Morrison commented that the discipline our own municipal representatives instead of having to rely on the province to do so.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 11, 2022, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was presented for approval.

On Motion of Councillor MacLeod, seconded by Councillor Organ that the Victoria County Municipal Council minutes of April 11, 2022, be approved.

Motion Carried.



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CAO REPORT

Old Business

- TIR/PW meeting will be scheduled for May, Received a list of J Class roads. Will forward
- Heavy garbage set to start Monday, May 9
- Meeting scheduled for May for policies/bylaws/admin update
- Tennis Courts - inquired to the Village, they are getting an update from Holly MI, or, referring it to the playground group
- Road name - sign has been ordered form Dept PW. EDPC/DPW have both approved
- Spoke with CBRM - Sydport still has plans for Railway, they are not interested in discussing at this time any other plans
- Ukraine Survey is now available on our website

CAO had a call with Nick Charlton on Courthouse next steps and she will bring that information forward at a future meeting.

New Business

Communications

- Civic Numbers Communication messaging
- AAC communications is complete
- Boundary Review plan is underway
- Working on new PowerPoint templates for the county and letterhead to incorporate the new logo.

Tourism

- Labour shortage is a major issue.
- Housing is the number one issue and the number one thing that will help with the shortage and transportation is housing
- Seawall Trail meeting on Integrated Approach for Awareness
- BABTA AGM is next week and new website- Presenting at AGM
- DCBA is putting a new festival program launch, 8 weeks of live music in Ingonish and Baddeck if they get the funding.
- Beautification program is due May 12 looking at stats from Placemaking to see where some funding can go from that funding.



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- Upcoming meetings for tourism strategies with TIANS and Tourism NS.
- Ingonish Development Society is launching their website last week
- Evaluating the STEP program to maybe help with Ingonish Development Society

Community Development:

- Placemaking follow-ups from Community Engagement
- Ingonish, forming a steering committee for placemaking initiatives and major project revival for Main Street.
- Dingwall, funding secured, Steering Committee formed and project underway.
- Pilot project for Baddeck, comprehensive community plan

Trails:

- Application for funding is submitted, looking at hopefully hiring a community development assistant.

Rec/AL

- Signs are coming for the Community Garden
- Working on the AAC engagement session events and adding in Boundary Review discussions
- Received the first trail chair and it was delivered to Parks
- Finalizing the proposal for Develop NS for next Placemaking project
- Contractor for Dingwall to get the picnic space started
- Working on a TOR for a community group in Dingwall
- Volunteer recognition, haven't seen any names come forward yet- Council to advise?

Finance

- Conducting interviews this week for the customer service clerk and utility and pw seasonal positions
- Going to Employment Law Symposium.
- Melanie from Grant Thornton will be doing walk throughs on the site, booked the audit for the last two weeks of August.
- Day 1 of Budgeting is May 9, 9-1 pm.

EDO



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- Final stages of completing a retail marketing analysis
- Working on succession planning, focus on immigration
- Foreign investment project
- Housing meetings and plans
- CB Partnership launching a SMED Program, reach out to Erica for more info – focusses on Manufacturing
- Working on the Baddeck Housing Survey
- EnPower, 15-week program, working with people in the tech community
- Awaiting info on Victoria Highland Civic Centre
- Signing up for a Mtn bike summit in June

Public Works

- Heavy garbage is a go in all of County – May 9th.
- Community Garden repair will begin next week.
- The beach in Neil’s Harbour is getting new stairs.
- We have the cost for sidewalk repair for Ingonish and discussion will be taken to Budget.
- Building renovation’s quote came in (Dingwall/Baddeck TS), need Council to decide
- Side loader tender is almost complete.
- Water bills will be later than normal as new staff are learning the systems and all the civic addresses
- Need a ventilation system in Little Narrows WU.
- Computer issues in Neil’s Harbour at the WTP.
- Need to plan a C&D haul. Will be done once road restrictions are lifted
- Looking at dates for the Household hazardous waste- hopefully in June.
- Clean Leadership Intern is scheduled to start May 19

VCT

- A quick update for my first 8 days of being at the reigns.
- I have joined the Rural Transit Authority. They have been incredibly welcoming and helpful and will certainly be a great asset to my growth in the role. They have given me plenty of information related to reporting data and securing funding.
- Since the phone number has gone live, I have taken about 25 calls or so a day. Some are people booking trips but some are people simply inquiring as to how the booking process works and our fee structure. It seems that a fair number of people weren’t aware of the service and our recent social media messages have really reached people.



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Other

- Regional EMO May 18th.
- Spoke with Nick Charlton and will have further discussions on a draft report.
- Spoke with DNR today about the White Point site, for a potential transfer station there are a couple of other steps that need to get done before they can get us a proposal on getting us that piece of property.
- Also want to think about moving Council sessions to other districts now that we have the OWL camera system.

Councillor Patterson asked about the ridership to Sydney and CAO doesn't have a breakdown of ridership yet.

Councillor MacDonald commented on the Civic addressing and said most people are under the impression that it was the responsibility of the municipality and asked if there is any funding with from the municipality to help residents who can't afford the signs and CAO said there is no current funding.

Councillor MacNeil asked about the festival and events funding with destination CB and CAO said it is available for everyone.

Councillor Organ asked that communications are really pushed on messaging for household hazardous waste and CAO said yes and we are relying on Councillors to get that messaging out to the districts as well.

TAXATION UPDATE

As of today, we're at \$800,417 total outstanding, compared to \$864,580 this time last year for a total difference of **\$64,163** ahead.

Current outstanding has come down a bit from last update at **\$45,803** higher than last year with \$463,578 as of today compared to \$417,775 this time last year.

Arrears outstanding is at **\$109,966** better than last year - \$336,839 compared to \$446,805 this time last year.

Since the last update, **\$50,266** has been collected toward outstanding taxes.

We're still on target for our June 21 tax sale which is booked for in-person at the Inverary Inn due to anticipated interest. All title searches have now come back, and we have 40 properties to move forward with for this sale. We already are building our list for our fall tax sale – date and location TBD.

We have noticed payments slowing down over the past couple of weeks so we're also continuing to work on reminders that focus on current amount outstanding prior to the upcoming 2022 tax bill.



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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

District 1

Councillor MacNeil had the following concerns:

- Received a phone call on the condition of the Cains Mountain Road needs grading but also needs gravel in some areas.
- Spring grading will be coming once conditions dry up, but a thorough grading of all gravel/dirt roads must be done.
- The Washabuck Road from ferry right to MacKay's Point in Washabuck needs patching in a desperate way. At the meeting with the Deputy Minister, I asked if this area could be considered for a maintenance paving maybe a 2-year project.
- The situation in front of the post office in Iona is bad. Asphalt is needed in a bad way there and not just patching. Signage was requested for speed. It is a dangerous area and tricky turn that wants to take you to the wrong side of the road and the potholes make it worse.
- NS Public Works garbage on John Neil George Road, i.e., old culverts, need to be picked up
- New ferry coming between May 03-09. Old Ferry will stay in service until then. After it arrives and while the transition is taking place, there will be no ferry for about 2-3 weeks if everything goes according to plan.

District 2

Councillor MacLeod had the following concerns:

- In Big Baddeck, the Red Bridge sign is broken.
- West side Big Baddeck needs repair, gravel road, there are lots of potholes, no way to avoid them to pass the road. Road condition in the beginning of the Rocking Horse Ranch is getting less road every time it rains.

District 3

Warden Morrison mentioned the pothole at MacDonald Street and Hilltop Crescent that has yet to be filled.

District 4

Councillor Longva had the following concerns:



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The Long Hill Road is in need of gravel and grading and also on the Bein Breagh side there has been a hole in the road there by the old Red Head School for over a year.

The road in Tarbot where there was a washout, there still needs a lot of work to be done there.

Councillor Longva also mentioned the Englishtown Ferry, and can we write a letter regarding this and Deputy Warden Dauphinee said he was talking to MLA Bain and he said it should be back in operation today. Councillor Longva withdrew her request for a letter.

District 5

Councillor Patterson said the potholes mentioned at last Council have been repaired and asked if the provincial department of Public Works still have their 5-year list of projects and Councillor MacNeil have said they do.

District 6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee thanked Steve for touring his district last week.

District 7

Councillor Organ said all gravel roads need to be filled and graded, the shoulder of the roads needs to be repaired from the rain storm in November.

Councillor Organ also would like to discuss coastal erosion with the Public Works Department as there seems to be a lot, especially on the New Haven Road.

District 8

Councillor MacDonald had the following concerns:

- There is a pothole at Mountain View and around the intersection to turn to the post office, that fills with water. Cars are getting damaged due to the size and location.
- Grading of roads in all areas.
- The road to the wharf in Dingwall is as always in need of repair at this time of year.
- Capstick area has a sink hole that requires immediate attention. This has been forwarded to the Public Works department as it is requiring attention ASAP.
- There are pieces of asphalt missing, no shoulders on either side and traffic is going into the wrong lane on a blind crest on the hill in Cape North by the firehall.



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DISTRICT CONCERNS

District 1

- NS Property Tax, receiving many phone calls and a request for information on getting a list of non residents so a group can be formed and CAO said we cant give out personal information. It can be accessed on POL (Property Online) if someone has access to that.
- Fire Dept Insurance. Received an email from an individual involved with the Iona Volunteer fire Dept. Lyle has been working on a fleet insurance for several years now and has requested information and pictures from the fire depts. It seems like most departments gave information but some departments did not but all were slow to get info back. This was meant to be a fleet insurance to save all fire departments money but now it seems to be dead in the water because lack of co-operation. The insurance company was frustrated Lyle is frustrated, is there something that can be done to further this project?

CAO said we have hired a regional fire services coordinator (Lyle Donovan) to gather information for all the districts and CAO asked what Council was willing to do to get Lyle this information.

Councillor MacLeod asked if Lyle could give councillors a list of the fire depts in their districts and we can reach out to the fire chiefs.

Warden wanted to follow up with the insurance conversation and CAO said we can hold off on funding if they don't provide the info that Lyle is requesting.

They have a fire services committee and Lyle should request a meeting with that committee to discuss what is needed with the fire chiefs.

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee that \$1000.00 be taken from District 1 budget to the Nova Scotia Highland Village to help with the costs associated with youth choir for Celtic Colours.

Motion Carried.

District 2

Councillor MacLeod requested a letter to congratulate the 4H members and leader for the fantastic job they did in the regionals of public speaking this past weekend and good luck to the members are going to provincials in May. We recognize the importance of the skill of public speaking.

On Motion of Councillor MacLeod, seconded by Councillor Longva to write a letter to 4H leaders and members to congratulate them for the fantastic job they did in the regionals of public speaking this past weekend and good luck to the members who are going to provincials in May.

Motion Carried.



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District 3

Warden Morrison said BABTA and some town residents did a community cleanup this past weekend and thanked Dawn MacKinnon for organizing that.

CAO reminded Council that there are bags and gloves at the Municipal Building for anyone who is doing cleanups in their district.

District 4

Councillor Longva asked about the Ukraine survey and how many participants there were, and Ursula told her that there were 10 people who have taken the survey so far and Councillor Longva said a committee won't be formed until more information is gathered.

Councillor Longva is getting calls about the garbage on a section of HWY 105 by the Baddeck Bay look off and asked if that area could be added to the ACAP garbage clean up day.

Councillor Longva asked if we have contacted the province to send our disappointment with the non resident tax and the Warden said we have reached out to the province to meet with us regarding our concerns and added, I'm not sure what else we can do.

Warden asked what Council want to do and Councillor Patterson said he has been directing this calls and emails to MLA Bain and thinks that all Council should do that to stay consistent. Warden said its not our control and Councillor Longva said no, but we can lobby for these non residents. Councillor MacNeil agrees with Councillor Longva and suggested we write a letter to the Minister of Finance.

Councillor MacDonald asked what the justification was for this tax and CAO said her take on this, is that it was part of the initiative to address the lack affordable housing issue.

There was a lot of discussion on what Council have been hearing in their districts.

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee to write a letter to Minister Lohr regarding the new non resident tax on residential properties and request a meeting to provide more information.

Motion Carried.

Councillor Longva questioned why she is not able to attend Council sessions via Zoom when she is unable to attend the meeting in person.

CAO said that we are trying to do a good presentation for those watching on our livestream. CAO also mentioned that we are working on policy that will include attendance concerns, outlining that if a Councillor is absent, they are absent. If its virtual, it will be virtual for all, if its in person, it all in person, no hybrid Council sessions.

Councillor Longva also asked if there would be a public meeting about the rink, there was a big ask from the Steering Committee and we haven't discussed it since.

Warden Morrison said CAO will get in touch with John Trickett as this is not a municipal initiative so it will be up to that committee to hold those meetings.



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Councillor Longva said she is receiving more complaints about the trailers in River Bennett, some of them are going to start to float away. There is also a road right across from those trailers by the Pine Hill Cemetery that has a cabin on it that is falling apart. Councillor Longva said she would be happy to contact the owners of that property to do something about it. Residents that live near there would like to see something done with these trailers and cabin.

Warden Morrison said that can be referred to EDPC and they can determine that and a form will have to be filled out. Councillor Longva asked for the property owners information to approach them first to discuss before going to EDPC.

Councillor Longva requested \$500.00 from her district budget to the South Haven Community Hall.

District 5

Councillor Patterson had several calls regarding heavy garbage and asking for messaging be sent out on that.

District 6

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacLeod that \$1000.00 be taken from District 6 budget to the Cabot Snowmobile Club.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacNeil to resend the letter to the Federal Minister of Environment regarding snowmobile access in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. CC' Blair Pardy.

Motion Carried.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee had a meeting with Parks Canada and discussed septic and future development and asked if the CAO has heard anything about this and CAO said she has a meeting this week with Parks.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacDonald to contact Parks Canada regarding a shared wastewater treatment facility and request to have a meeting for an update on the system design that was being developed in the winter of 2021.

Motion Carried.



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District 7

Councillor Organ had a call about a school bus issue, problem has been rectified.

On Motion of Councillor Organ, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee that \$1000.00 be taken from District 7 budget to the Ingonish United Church Cemetery Fund.

Motion Carried.

District 8

Councillor MacDonald has been getting calls from residents in Dingwall regarding dirt bikes, off road vehicles etc. (noise and being in locations that they feel shouldn't be driving in). There is concern that there is a lack of police patrols since there are only two members in that area.

CAO mentioned the CCG and we can bring this issue up with them.

Councillor MacDonald commented that there has been no real communication from Canada Post regarding postal service in St. Margaret's Village and CAO said there has been communication back from them but nothing stipulating a plan.

Councillor MacDonald requested \$500 from his District 8 budget for the Bay St Lawrence recreation society for youth recreation equipment.

PROCLAMTION

On Motion of Councillor Longva, seconded by Councillor MacLeod that June 19th, 2022, as the Longest Day of Smiles in Victoria County.

Motion Carried.

COMMITTEE REPORT and OTHER UPDATES

Councillor MacLeod received a report from VCT. The administrator said hours for booking will be from 8:30am - 4:30pm, Monday to Friday. Even though the bookings can only be made from Monday to Friday, people can still ride transit from Monday to Sunday and requested Communications to get messaging out about this.

At this time Warden Morrison said that Council will go into In Camera to finish up an In Camera session that was held prior to Council.



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On Motion of Councillor Longva, seconded by Councillor MacLeod that June 19th, 2022, as the Longest Day of Smiles in Victoria County.

Motion Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

All has been sent out.

COUNCIL MEETING

Next Council meeting is May 9, 2022, at 2:00pm.