



Victoria County Municipal Council
October 17, 2022

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers in Baddeck on October 17, 2022, at 2:00pm with CAO MacEachen in the Chair.

Present Were:

District #1- Paul MacNeil

District #2- Perla MacLeod

District #3- Bruce Morrison, Warden

District #4- Barbara Longva

District #5- Fraser Patterson

District #6 – Larry Dauphinee, Deputy Warden

District #7- Jackie Organ

Also present were:

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

Stephanie MacLeod, Recorder

Dan Coffin, Tourism and Recreation Manager

Absent:

District #8- Norman MacDonald

CAO MacEachen 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

CAO MacEachen called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacNeil that the Agenda for October 17th, 2022, be approved.

Motion Carried.

ELECTION OF WARDEN

CAO MacEachen explained that any Councillor is eligible for the Office of Warden and the selection is by secret ballot. Should Council be unable to agree on the choice of Warden, the decision will be determined from the two leading candidates by lot as provided in the Municipal Elections Act.

CAO MacEachen then called for nominations for the position of Warden.

On Motion of Councillor MacLeod, seconded by Councillor Dauphinee nominate Councillor Morrison as Warden.

Motion Carried.

CAO MacEachen called three times for further nominations.

On Motion of Councillor Longva, seconded by Councillor MacNeil for nominations to cease.

Motion Carried.

CAO MacEachen declared Bruce Morrison elected as Warden for a two-year term. She then administered the Oath of Allegiance and of Office to Warden Morrison.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OF OFFICE I, Bruce Morrison, do swear (or solemnly affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles the Third, His heirs and successors according to law. And that I am duly qualified as required by law for the office of Warden of the Municipality of the County of Victoria. And that I will truly, faithfully and impartially execute the duties of the office to which I have been elected to the best of my knowledge and ability. And that I have not received and will not receive any payment or reward or promise thereof for the exercise of any partiality or other undue execution of the duties of my office.

Signed: Warden – Bruce Morrison Sworn to (or affirmed) by Bruce Morrison at Baddeck, in the County of Victoria and Province of Nova Scotia, this 17th day of October, 2022, before me Leanne MacEachen, Chief Administrative Officer.

CAO MacEachen then turned the Chair over to Warden Bruce Morrison who thanked Council for their support as Warden for the next two years.

Warden Morrison indicated that the next agenda item was the election of Deputy Warden for a two-year term.

ELECTION OF DEPUTY WARDEN

Warden Morrison called for nominations for Deputy Warden.

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Organ nominate Councillor Dauphinee as Deputy Warden.

Motion Carried.

Warden Morrison called three times for further nominations.

On Motion of Councillor MacLeod, seconded by Councillor Longva for nominations to cease.

Motion Carried.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee thanked Council for their support.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OF OFFICE I, Larry Dauphinee, do swear (or solemnly affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles the Third, His heirs and successors according to law. And that I am duly qualified as required by law for the office of Deputy Warden of the Municipality of the County of Victoria. And that I will truly, faithfully and impartially execute the duties of the office to which I have been elected to the best of my knowledge and ability. And that I have not received and will not receive any payment or reward or promise thereof for the exercise of any partiality or other undue execution of the duties of my office.

Signed: Deputy Warden – Larry Dauphinee Sworn to (or affirmed) by Larry Dauphinee at Baddeck, in the County of Victoria and Province of Nova Scotia, this 17th day of October 2022, before me Bruce Morrison, Warden.

DESTINATION CAPE BRETON MARKETING LEVY PRESENTATION – TERRY SMITH

Mr. Smith gave an overview of the Marketing Levy and discussed a proposed amendment to the levy.

Marketing Levy Background

- Legislated by the Province in 2011 and implemented by municipal by-laws
- 2% charged on fixed-roof accommodation stays at properties with 10 or more rooms
- Longer-term stays (30 days+), medical stays and students in dorms are exempt
- Funds must be used to promote Cape Breton Island as a tourism destination
- MOU with all five municipalities designates Destination Cape Breton as the official agency to promote the Island
- Operators collect and remit the levy funds to the municipalities, who then in turn provide those funds to Destination Cape Breton

Victoria County Municipal Council
October 17, 2022

Stats

- Since its implementation, website traffic has consistently grown with levy revenues.
- Room nights sold have consistently grown with levy revenues. Licensed room nights growth declined in 2018 and 2019, due to Airbnb's getting a greater share of the market.
- Incremental rooms nights sold from 2012 to 2019 on Cape Breton Island more than doubled the Province overall.
- The Marketing Levy has an ROI of \$27 in visitor spending for every \$1 dollar collected.

Current Situation

- ACOA funding to DCB has decreased from \$640k to \$440k and will further decrease to \$300k
- AIRBNB and VRBO rentals grew from 7% of registered rooms nights to 30%
- These factors and the pandemic have driven levy revenues down

Mitigation Efforts

- Moved office into former Sydney VIC building to cut rent costs
- Reduced staff from 11 full time positions in 2019 to 9 currently
- Took steps to achieve organizational efficiencies
- Continually honed the marketing program to deliver strong results despite shrinking budget

Revenue Stream Report

- Increase the marketing levy rate
- *"Even without the current income stream challenge faced by Destination Cape Breton, there is a multitude of benchmark evidence to suggest that the current 2%levy places the region at a competitive disadvantage to many of its competitor destinations."*
- Levies in Atlantic Canada
 - New Brunswick 3.5%
 - Prince Edward Island 3%
 - Nova Scotia 2%
 - Newfoundland 3-4%

Consultations with Accommodation Operators

Three Options:

- 1) Increase levy rate to 3%, Halifax is moving to a 3% rate-Would add ~ \$450k to our budget-Does not address Airbnb & VRBO growth
- 2) Apply the levy to all fixed-roof operators-Question of fairness-All benefit from destination marketing-Would add ~ \$250-350k to our budget-Leaves money on the table
- 3) Combination of 1 and 2

Victoria County Municipal Council
October 17, 2022

Feedback from Operators

- Vast majority support option 3—increasing the levy rate to 3%, so long as ALL fixed-roof accommodations collect, including Airbnb/VRBO
- Look at January 1, 2024, as start date for amendment
- Need flexibility to address other issues other than marketing (e.g. workforce shortage)
- Many felt that Airbnb/VRBO must be more regulated to ensure a more level playing field and quality for guests—start the process now

Proposed Amendment

- Increase rate to 3% and give municipalities power to make future rate changes
- Remove 10 rooms or more threshold and adopt Tourist Accommodation Registration Act definition of fixed-roof accommodations (includes Airbnb/VRBO)
- Amend funding use to include destination management as well as marketing
- Start date of January 1, 2024

Request to Council

- Recommend the 5 municipalities draft a consistent bylaw for all 5 municipalities in Cape Breton
- Support moving forward to propose a 3% threshold and impose the levy on short term rentals

Questions

Councillor MacNeil asked if Destination Cape Breton put out a survey to the Airbnb operators and Mr. Smith said we don't have contact info for all those operators. Councillor MacNeil added we are seeing an uptick with Airbnb's in our area.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee agrees with the 3% but added that he is disappointed in the Province with no regulations on short term rentals and putting it on the shoulders of the municipalities.

Councillor Patterson asked Mr. Smith if he knows how much extra revenue will be made with adding a levy to short term rentals and Mr. Smith said it would range.

Councillor Patterson discussed delinquent operators and asked Mr. Smith if there is any way of forcing them to pay the levy. Mr. Smith said we started a pilot project before the pandemic, but we left it but started the process again, it's called the Levy Education Program.

Councillor Longva said the marketing of the Island is doing very well and said it's been her busiest season in the almost 30 years she has been in business.

Councillor Longva mentioned washrooms and garbage and asked that with this extra money from the levy could Destination Cape Breton lobby the government to help with more washrooms and garbage cans throughout the County.

Victoria County Municipal Council
October 17, 2022

Mr. Smith agreed it is needed and he has raised his concerns about roads as well to MLA Bain. Mr. Smith added that when it comes to the Cabot Trail, it needs to have the best roads possible, they should be the gold standard.

CAO MacEachen asked when this levy goes through, would it be Airbnb collecting this levy and remitting it to the County and Mr. Smith said that is the intention, but we are looking at how PEI does this and added that Airbnb needs to see the bylaw first then they can work with municipalities.

Warden Morrison mentioned the collection of delinquent accounts and asked why are delinquent accounts the responsibility of the County? Are there any bylaws out there that deal with that, and Mr. Smith said I'm sure there are, and I will look into that.

Warden Morrison and Council agree with Mr. Smith's recommendations.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Longva that Council accepts Destination Cape Breton's 2 recommendations:

- 1-Recommend the 5 municipalities draft a consistent bylaw for all 5 municipalities in Cape Breton.***
- 2-Support moving forward to a propose a 3% threshold and impose the levy on short term rentals.***

Motion Carried.

HOME SUPPORT SERVICES MEALS PLUS PRESENTATION – JENN RIPLEY

Ms. Ripley gave a presentation on the Home Support Meals Plus Program and some highlights include:

- Bi-weekly delivery of fresh ingredients
- Includes Protein, Fresh fruit and/or veg, Grain, Sweet
- Delivered by a network of staff, volunteers, grocers, and Victoria County Transit
- Prepared in the home by a Continuing Care Assistant
- Only offered to our current home care clients.

Benefits:

- Provides curated fresh nutritious ingredients
- Fills the food insecurity gap
- Preventative lens to health
- Home delivery
- Participation tracked in our database
- Increased quality of life

The Numbers:

- \$30 dollars/person each order
- 22 clients
- 7 volunteers/businesses per delivery
- 8 communities
- 7 districts
- 5 grocers/food suppliers

Long Term:

- Beyond Home Support, there is a need for:
 - increased awareness of the connection between nutrition and positive aging
 - reduced barriers to access for nutritional food
 - Re-invigoration of interest in food preparation
- **Suggest the creation of a Municipal Community Branch of Meals Plus that is funded by the Municipality of the County of Victoria and leverages the existing Meals Plus infrastructure for ordering and delivery.**

Phase One:

- Propose a 4-month trial (January 2023- April 2023)
- Representative participation across districts
- Eligibility factors determined by Council
- Additional 12 people that are older adults, but not current VCHSS clients
- Additional 4 volunteers to accommodate home delivery option or offer a pickup option
- Curated groceries and recipe suggestions but no meal preparation
- \$2880 is for food.

Phase Two:

- Municipal evaluation of the pilot to determine effectiveness, stake-holder satisfaction, and capacity of suppliers
- Expand to 50 community members with representative participation across districts
- Add a pickup option to reduce pressure on volunteers and while meeting needs of community members that do not require the delivery option
- Food budget of \$39,000 for 50 people for 26 weeks

Victoria County Municipal Council
October 17, 2022

Questions:

Councillor Patterson said it is a great program and worth supporting.

Councillor Organ asked if the program is only for seniors, or do you offer it to people with disabilities? Ms. Ripley said it is for anyone who is currently enrolled in our program but that would be something Council would decide.

Councillor Organ asked if there is room for taking on more clients and Ms. Ripley said absolutely, there is always room for growth especially if we get more volunteers.

Councillor Longva asked if the 22 clients are all in Victoria County and what is the eligibility and Ms. Ripley said yes, it is, and Continuing Care oversees the client lists and the eligibility.

CAO MacEachen asked who makes these meals and is Victoria County getting the volunteers? Ms. Ripley said no, Home Support takes care of volunteers and CCA does the meal prep for their program.

Councillor MacLeod confirmed that the \$2,880 was for the pilot and Ms. Ripley said correct.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee said it was great to see this happening and said he was thinking about residents in his area that could benefit from this program and was also thinking how to get more volunteers.

Councillor MacNeil asked why there are no longer any clients of the program in Iona, is that because people opted out and Ms. Ripley said correct, but we are still willing and able to serve that area if we have people ask.

Warden Morrison asked if there are restrictions to this program, for example, income levels and Ms. Ripley said that would be up to Council to decide.

Warden Morrison asked who Council would talk to if we are interested and CAO MacEachen wanted to clarify that Ms. Ripley is here just to show how the program runs in case Council decided to run a program like this and Ms. Ripley said she is happy to provide support if Council decides they want to run a program like the Meals Plus Program.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the October 4, 2022, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was presented for approval.

On Motion of Councillor Longva, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee that the Victoria County Municipal Council Minutes of October 4, 2022, be approved.

Motion Carried.

CAO REPORT

Action Items

- NSHA Meeting last week.
- Meeting set up for October 27th to discuss the washroom in North River.
- UARB responses in today for the Water Rate Study
- Sent requests off to the UARB for smart meters and water tank replacement in Dingwall to build those costs into the rate.
- Trying to schedule a meeting for mayors and wardens, island wide. Among other topics, island wide shared services. Admin had a meeting on this today.
- End of Life Fishing Gear Coalition, free drop off for end-of-life fishing gear until the end of march.
- Private Road signs, who is putting them up, who is paying for them, what does council want to do.

After some discussion it was decided that Council will pay for the sign and leave it up to the residents to install it. Council will pay for just the sign, not the post. CAO said we will come up with a policy or SOP for that.

- Municipal Boundary review recommendations will be coming forward soon

Tourism and Recreation

Tourism:

- Visited tourism providers on the North Shore for introduction and to invite them to a washroom meeting on October 27th
- Compiled a list of trails user groups and their contact information to update on the Multi-Use Trail Development
- Travel along the Victoria County side the Trail this Saturday to take pictures on the 90th anniversary of the Cabot Trail opening
- Attended a DMAH session on marketing levies

Victoria County Municipal Council
October 17, 2022

- Ongoing meetings and updates on DCB initiatives and upcoming opportunities to improve labour issues

Recreation:

- Completing some disc golf research with the intention of assisting communities in future development of disc golf courses in the county
- Creating a Victoria County recreation contact list
- In contact with a few different schools within Victoria County to develop and implement new program ideas for their students

Community Development:

- Interest in Ingonish continues to be hot! Meetings requested to discuss Ingonish by Nova Scotia Tourism, ACOA, Tourism Atlantic, and Destination Canada (via DCB). Also, some strategy work being done by the owners at Keltic to inform upcoming planning
- Assessing and evaluating new programs on offer from Nova Scotia CETH for community improvement programs.

Finance

- Financial statements need approval and will be done so at a meeting on October 19th
- Tax Sale on November 22, 2022, at 11am at the Inverary Resort

Public Works

- The groundwork is done for the second production line in Little Narrows.
- Lester Tingley is going to be completing the survey for the White Point property and the environmental assessment is also in the works.
- Water Meter reads are ongoing for this quarter.
- We extended the post Fiona storm debris acceptance until October 15, 2022. We will probably have to do another C&D haul and we can hopefully get this paid for by DFA.
- Put out a tender for scrap metal recycling but haven't heard anything back
- Next week is waste reduction week so we are going to hang some green lights at the courthouse as requested by Divert Nova Scotia.
- Need to put out a tender for snow removal for the North.

Seniors Safety

- Requested a change for the eligibility for the disaster financial assistance, the application stated people needed to have an arborist or landscaping company and that is not realistic for many residents in Victoria County. Warden Morrison mentioned that he just received word back that if it is a receipt, they will accept that, it doesn't need to be an arborist or landscaping company. The receipt needs to have the residents name, the name of the person/company that did the removal, the date and the cost.
- Working on possibly putting together a Vulnerable Persons Registry
- RCMP has a mandate this fall about putting on a scams and frauds presentation and Cassandra was asked to do it with them
- Attended "Muffins" at St. James Presbyterian Church in District 5. Was very well attended.
- Fare Assistance Program is not being used; a sub committee was put together to try to get more usership out of this program.
- Seniors Safety and the library are working on a binder for seniors that will help them complete applications.
- Tourism and Recreation are working with Senior Safety on resource mapping database for seniors.
- Approached the Food Hub about a New Horizons grant to rent out their kitchen for one day a month for seniors.

Other

- Having some trouble filling positions, so we need to start promoting how great it is to work for the County. We are looking into doing a job fair around the County.
- Come up with an Admin working group for the future of our municipal offices and where they should be.

RECESS

Warden Morrison called for a 10–12-minute recess.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

District 1

Councillor MacNeil had the following concerns:

- Letter to the Provincial Department of Public Works (PDPW) concerning “No Jake Brake” signs on each side of Wagmatcook First Nation. Complaints about how loud it is at night. I was in contact with Steve MacDonald about it. He indicated that the policy is to put them in areas of 50km zones. Wagmatcook is 60 km zone, so it won’t qualify.

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee to write a letter to the Provincial Department of Public Works, c/o Steve MacDonald to reconsider installing “No Jake Brake” signs in Wagmatcook.

Motion Carried.

- Still no patching in District 1. There was a washout in Iona in the Spring. Dangerous area on a turn and cars are on the wrong side of the road to avoid the hole.

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Longva to write a letter to Henry Muggah and his group stating that Council is in favour of them buying a piece of land in Maskell's Harbour for the Province to take it over as part of the Barra Forest and MacNeil's Vale Provincial Park.

Motion Carried.

District 2

Councillor MacLeod mentioned the meeting Council had on October 13th, 2022 with NSHA and EHS representative and requested a follow up meeting with EHS to come to Council.

On Motion of Councillor MacLeod, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee to contact EHS to request a representative come to Council for a follow-up meeting.

Motion Carried.

Councillor MacLeod requested a meeting with Council to further discuss the Meals Plus Program.

Victoria County Municipal Council
October 17, 2022

Councillor MacLeod also mentioned that Baddeck Academy is looking for sponsorship for their hockey team and it was agreed between Districts 2, 3 and 4 to sponsor the hockey team for \$2000.00.

On Motion of Councillor MacLeod, seconded Councillor Longva to sponsor the Baddeck Academy hockey team for \$2000.00 from District 2, 3 and 4 budgets.

Motion Carried.

Councillor MacLeod shared the good news that Victoria County Transit got funding approval from the Provincial government for a new vehicle. She thanked Council for their support.

District 3

Warden Morrison mentioned the NSHA meeting and wanted to thank the residents and representatives from the NSHA for attending this meeting. That meeting was held before the County's rescheduled NSHA meeting and anyone wanting information on that meeting can request the Minutes. Warden Morrison also concurred with Councillor MacLeod in having EHS coming to council.

On Motion of Warden Morrison, seconded Councillor MacLeod to send a letter to thank the nurses, doctors, lab/x-ray and staff at Victoria County Memorial Hospital to thank them for their dedication and work done to maintain the pressures at the hospital for so long.

Motion Carried.

Warden Morrison requested a report from Christine Hines on the Urgent Treatment Centre.

District 4

Councillor Longva had the following concerns:

- I would like to thank Steve MacDonald and his crew for the work done on Long Hill Road and Beinn Breagh Road and for the work done on the Big Harbour Road.
- The Tarbotvale road is still undone. Needs guardrails installed before winter and approaches to the bridge fixed as people are bottoming out going on and off the bridge.
- I would like to ask Steve MacDonald when the lines will be painted on the road that was chip sealed recently on the North Shore.
- Would like to contact Nova Scotia Power again for the light requested months ago for Tarbotvale.
- Would like to remind Steve MacDonald about the Old Big Harbour Road sign requested 2 years ago.

District 5

Councillor Patterson had the following concerns:

- The Celtic Colours Festival was back to where it was before Covid, and it was a great turnout.
- Notice of Motion: Request Council to undertake an analysis of post Hurricane Fiona, what worked and what can we do better.
- The Ross Ferry Stewardship Society looks after the Marine Park in Ross Ferry and the land that the Marine Park is on is owned by the Department of Natural Resources and Renewable. The Society is looking at the possibility of acquiring that land, and one option proposed is that the Municipality might engage in a land swap with the Province. MLA Bain is aware of this and the process that may take place to do this swap.

District 6

Deputy Warden Dauphinee had the following concerns:

- Hearing some concerns with PDPW. Washouts, etc. will be in touch with Steve MacDonald.
- Huckle Buckle Festival was well attended and lots of money was raised. Huge thank you to all the volunteers.

District 7

Councillor Organ had the following concerns:

- Requested \$500 to Pinkalicious
- Congratulate the volunteers for the Huckle Buckle Festival
- Requested \$500 to Huckle Buckle Festival c/o Ingonish Development Society
- More work to be done on the roads post Hurricane Fiona, including rock wall reinforcements.
- White Point area, still “No Parking” signs where the busses need to turn around.

MOTIONS

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee seconded by Councillor MacNeil that Victoria County Council support donating a portion of the land at Tower Road to Destination Cape Breton for housing development to address the housing shortage in the Ingonish area.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded Councillor Longva to contact Bell Aliant to request a representative to come to Council to provide an update on broadband and give a post Hurricane Fiona briefing.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Longva, seconded Councillor Organ to send a letter of congratulations to the Celtic Colours Festival and their volunteers on another great year.

Motion Carried.

COUNCIL MEETING

Next Council meeting will be November 7, 2022, could possibly be in Iona at the Highland Village at 2:00pm. Warden Morrison will be absent and will be chaired by Deputy Warden Dauphinee

ADJOURN

Councillor MacNeil made a motion to adjourn at 4:07pm.