

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Ingonish at the Keltic Lodge on October 10, 2023, at 2:00pm with Warden Morrison in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1- Paul MacNeil

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

STAFF PRESENT

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

Steff MacLeod, Recorder

Allan Bragg, Manager of Finance

Dan Coffin, Tourism and Recreation Manager

Jennifer Dagsvik, Communications and Marketing Coordinator

Alix Redden, CFO

ABSENT

District #2- Perla MacLeod

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.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee seconded by Councillor Longva that the Agenda for October 10, 2023, be approved.

Motion Carried.

ROADS DISCUSSION – MLA BAIN AND STEVE MACDONALD (PUBLIC WORKS SUPERVISOR)

Mr. MacDonald Update:

- Rural Mitigation Program (RIM) majority of that budget is contracted out. Those prices came in quite high.
- Some Shoreline Protection projects were completed.
- Several gravel roads received grading.
- Asphalt spreading patching work in some areas. Still have some shoulder work to complete.
- Brush clearing and ditching is about 80% complete.
- Behind on some brush clearing so we re-tendered some of that work. Some of that work will be starting this week.
- 12kms of 100 series highways were paved, Big Farm project was completed, Black Rock is very nearly done.
- Local gravel road upgrades are being done.
- Armour stone shoreline protection work being done at Beach Crossing Road.
- Still working on storm damage repairs.
- Working on winter preparedness.
- The Cabot Trail has 7 sections that are prioritized. The agreement between the province and the federal government has stopped for paving on the Cabot Trail but we are still working on it.
- Paving work in several areas around the County are on the list for paving.
- Always a need for more work to be done and we do our best with the budget that we have.

MLA Bain Comments:

- Met with the Chief Engineer last week about the Capital Programming for next year and that funding is looking healthy.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Warden Morrison thanked both MLA Bain and Mr. MacDonald and reminded Council and members of the public that roads are a provincial issue and not a municipal one.

Councillor MacDonald commented on the Effie's Brook project and asked if that will be happening next year, and Mr. MacDonald said it was on the top of the priority list but can't say for sure when this work will start.

Councillor MacDonald commented on the chip seal in South Harbour and Mr. MacDonald said that work will be done.

Councillor MacDonald let MLA Bain know that there was a meeting regarding the South Harbour Channel and asked about funding opportunities from the Province. MLA Bain said I did approach Natural Resources because that Channel fills in quite a bit, and they say its not their responsibility so I am having meetings with Department of Environment because it should fall under Coastal Protection and the Federal Government needs to be involved as well. MLA Bain will meet with Minister Halman and send resource information to Ms. MacLeod to distribute to Council.

Councillor Longva mentioned the signs at Plaister Mines and Old Big Harbour Road and requested an update and Mr. MacDonald acknowledged he still needed to get this done but he did do some research into this.

Councillor Longva asked who is responsible for garbage pickup at the lookoffs, in particular the St. Ann's lookoff. Mr. MacDonald said he is meeting with Indigenous leaders and is in the process of doing phases of work with the lookoffs. Looking at what the options are to remove some of the garbage. There are plans with the Indigenous community for signage as well, but that is out of the Department of Public Works. There will also be some trees being cut on those lookoffs as well this fall.

MLA Bain added that there are ongoing discussions for signage on Kelly's Mountain to recognize the history in that area.

Councillor Longva asked about the culverts in the Barrachois area and Mr. MacDonald said crews were there last week. Councillor Longva mentioned the culvert on the Meadow Road and one driveway has been washed out 5 times and Mr. MacDonald acknowledged that and said something has changed in that area and that needs to be looked at to see what the best option is for that area.

Councillor Longva asked for an update on the New Harris Road, and Mr. MacDonald said some work has been done. The Stewart Road and the lower portion of New Campbellton Road are on the list for capital work for next year but we are trying to get the grader in there as much as we can.

Councillor Longva asked about the Rear Barrachois bridge cleanup and Mr. MacDonald just got some funding for that.

Councillor Longva said in Wreck Cove there is a top layer of road that is peeling off and Mr. MacDonald said we are planning to get some asphalt on that section.

Councillor Longva reminded MLA Bain about a heat pump at a business and the owner is having difficulty getting the rebate back from the program. MLA Bain said Greener Homes is a federal program and there is a provincial one as well.

Councillor MacNeil asked for some updates in his area, in particular the John Neil George Road and Mr. MacDonald some of the brush cutting projects are delayed but there is a push on to get these done before winter.

Councillor MacNeil said some holes that received patching are bad again, some of them that were done that day, are already dug up again by night. One major section is the section near Jamesville, something has to be done there because its very dangerous. Mr. MacDonald said he might have to order a geotechnical study on that section because it is a gypsum hole.

Councillor MacNeil asked that the area near Hazeldale be put on the priority list and MLA Bain said he spoke to the Chief Engineer about that as the gypsum plant is reopening there and traffic will be higher.

Councillor MacNeil requested signage throughout the district and Mr. MacDonald recognized that signage is an issue around the County and options are being looked at because we are falling behind on that.

Councillor MacNeil mentioned the brush cutting and Mr. MacDonald previously addressed that issue and Councillor MacNeil also mentioned the sings for the ferry and Mr. MacDonald said he is ordering 5 signs for the ferry in Little Narrows.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee discussed the bridge at the beach and Mr. MacDonald said they started the bridge work there and got pulled away to complete other projects but there should be crews there next week with a traffic light system.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked about courtesy roads, and Mr. MacDonald said they are going to do their best to continue to plow them.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee thanked the Department for the work that has been done but noted that more brush cutting needed to be done in many areas, along with gravel on certain roads, in particular, Rocky Point. Mr. MacDonald said there is money in the budget for gravel but added that they are having a difficult time sourcing gravel.

Councillor Patterson emphasised that roads are a provincial responsibility, but calls are put into Councillors.

Councillor Patterson asked if Maple Hill Drive is on the list and Mr. MacDonald said he could look at the road for a candidate for paving.

Councillor Patterson asked about the other section of the Kempt Head Road, the paved part and Mr. MacDonald is aware and is hoping to get some work done there.

Councillor Patterson asked for an update on Seal Island Bridge and Mr. MacDonald said he is not directly involved but knows there are a lot of assessments over the years and there should be no panic that the bridge is going to fall down right now but there needs to be a plan for 10-15 years down the road, but maintenance work will be done on it over the next few years.

Councillor Organ asked if there is any shoulder or brush cutting being done in District 7 and Mr. MacDonald said he could send Councillor Organ the list. There is some work scheduled in the White Point area.

Councillor Organ asked about more shoreline protection in New Haven, Mr. MacDonald said nothing in the immediate future, but I can look into it.

Councillor Organ asked about the bridge in New Haven and Mr. MacDonald said he did talk to the bridge engineer and can get an update from him and get back to Councillor Organ.

Councillor Organ asked about the “no parking” sign request in White Point and MLA Bain and Mr. MacDonald said they would follow up on this.

Councillor Organ said the beach in Neils Harbour is popular, and the beach goer’s cars are blocking driveways and Mr. MacDonald will have a look at that and possibly get some no parking signs up.

Councillor Organ asked about asphalt patching on Ocean View Drive, and Mr. MacDonald said he could take a look.

Councillor Organ asked about highway cameras and Mr. MacDonald submitted Council’s prior requests to the Department and still waiting to hear back.

CAO MacEachen mentioned the 100th anniversary of the Cabot Trail, and the roads on the Trail need to be brought up to a higher standard and we have an advisory committee set up for that the anniversary and they are inviting Public Works to a meeting to discuss concerns, and Mr. MacDonald said he would attend a meeting with the committee.

Warden Morrison asked about the Traffic Control Officer position and said there needs to be something done about it, the County is 18 months waiting for crosswalks. Mr. MacDonald knows of the requests, but he is not able to put signs up, it needs to be completed by the Traffic Control Officer.

Warden Morrison requested again to reduce the speed limit near the Tims/Irving on Highway 205.

Warden Morrison also wanted to make it very clear that the Municipality has no interest in taking over roads as part of the new proposed service agreement with the Province.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee asked Mr. MacDonald for an update on a beaver dam removal at an unsightly premises property in Nyanza and Mr. MacDonald said it should be removed soon and then the vehicles can be removed from that property.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

- Kyla Dunphy Williams asked Mr. MacDonald about Beach Crossing Road and seeing a lot of non-local traffic through there and asked if it is possible to get “no parking” signs there and Mr. MacDonald will look into it. She also requested some brush cutting.
- David Smith said he lives on Ocean View Drive and had issues with where the waterline was put in years ago, because ever since the road has been in deplorable condition. Mr. MacDonald said we don’t have the capital funds for new paving, but I can try to get it on the list for priority projects.
- Loreto Doyle asked what the cost is to maintain and manage roads in Victoria County and Mr. MacDonald said he gets a \$10-million-dollar budget and \$6 million of that is for the winter.
- Ms. Williams asked about the equipment North of Smokey and if there is any money in the budget for new equipment and Mr. MacDonald said right now the cost is high, but he is scheduled to get one new vehicle this year and that his department, usually gets one new truck a year.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the September 12, 2023, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was presented for approval.

On Motion of Councillor Longva seconded by Councillor Organ that the Victoria County Municipal Council Minutes of September 12, 2023, be approved.

Motion Carried.

CAO REPORT QUESTIONS

Councillor Longva asked about the generator request in Englishtown and CAO said that has been approved and next steps is to contact the Victoria County EMO officer to facilitate this request.

Councillor Longva asked about people buying land/properties at tax sales and selling it right away and CAO said there is no policy to stop them from doing that as long as the property is classified as “non-redeemable”.

Councillor MacDonald asked about the survey markers in Dingwall and CAO said the County Department of Public Works have no record of ever moving survey markers and ethically would not participate in that practise.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

DISTRICT 1

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Patterson to write a letter of congratulations to Rodney Chaisson for accepting a new position as manager of Site Maintenance with Nova Scotia Museums. Rodney will be missed at the Highland Village where he was Executive Director for over 30 years.

Motion Carried.

DISTRICT 3

On behalf of Councillor MacLeod, Warden Morrison made the following motion:

On Motion of Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor MacNeil to sponsor Raising the Villages for \$250.00 to be taken from the general coffers.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Warden Morrison, seconded by Councillor MacDonald to request the Provincial Department of Public Works to install crosswalks across Ross Street on Shore Road intersection and across Twinning Street at the Shore Road intersection.

Motion Carried.

DISTRICT 4

- Nova Scotia Power cancelled the meeting in Wreck Cove, but it will be rescheduled at a later date.
- Take \$400 for SABDA from District 4 Budget.
- Take \$500 for the Giant MacAskill Museum from District 4 Budget.
- Community Garden BBQ went very well this year.

DISTRICT 5

- 70-75% of people at the Celtic Colours Festival were tourists, great to see.

DISTRICT 6

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Organ to take \$1,000.00 from District 6 Budget to the North of Smokey Food Bank.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacDonald to take \$2,000.00 from District 6 Budget and \$1,000 from District 7 Budget to the Hucklebuckle Festival.

Motion Carried.

DISTRICT 7

- Most concerns were for Public Works and those were addressed with Mr. MacDonald and other than that, Councillor Organ only heard about the Local Improvement Charge bylaw.

DISTRICT 8

On Motion of Councillor MacDonald, seconded by Deputy Warden Dauphinee to write a letter of support for Inverness County for the bussing issues with Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education.

Motion Carried.

- Requested that the RCMP come to Council to provide a policing update. CAO MacEachen will contact them with that request.
- Take \$500 for the Cabot Volunteer Fire Department from District 8 Budget.
- Take \$500 for the North Highlands Community Museum from District 8 Budget.

MOTIONS/PROCLAMATIONS

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Organ to rescind the following motion made at the September 12, 2023 Council Session:

On Motion of Councillor MacNeil seconded by Councillor Organ to grant the subdivided land on Tower road to Destination Cape Breton for an amount less than Fair Market Value for housing development. This motion is on the condition that the County's lawyer draft a first right of refusal section in the sale documents. This will allow the County to have first right of refusal in the event that Destination Cape Breton decides to sell the property.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacDonald that the Council of the Municipality of County of Victoria agrees to convey the property at Water Tower Road, Ingonish Beach (PID #85175958) to Destination Cape Breton Association at less than Fair Market Value and that the County will relinquish title to the property dependant on the following conditions: (1) the land be used only for residential housing purposes; and (2) if the property is no longer used for housing purposes or Destination Cape Breton wishes to sell the property the Municipality will have the right to re-acquire the property for the same price it sold the property.

Motion Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

All previously forwarded and sent.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CAO MacEachen mentioned the Municipal Department of Public Works presentation held at a prior Committee of the Whole meeting on September 28, 2023, and requested Council to consider the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) portion of the presentation. Council needs

to decide to opt in or opt out of the program and that staff will need to have Council's decision submitted to the Province by January 1, 2024.

Councillor Patterson said there are certainly more questions than answers around this program and hopefully by December, Council will have answers to those questions and will make a motion on it.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

- Resident, David Smith asked if Council would consider waiving the late charges and interest fees on the water bills for the summer period due to the issues around the new meter installs and readings.
- CAO MacEachen said the County has to write a letter to the Utility and Review Board (UARB) to see if we can waive those charges.

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Organ to write a letter to the UARB requesting permission to waive late charges and interest fees for water utility customers of Victoria County for the period of July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023.

Motion Carried.

- There was a request to have speakers/microphones at the next Council session when it's held away from Council Chambers.
- Kyla Dunphy Williams mentioned she emailed council on October 5 and presented the petition regarding the Local Improvement Charge (LIC) By-Law, she also presented a letter. Council acknowledged receipt of the letter.

Ms. Williams had some questions for Council and Warden Morrison said in the interest of time that she may ask her questions but answers to those questions would be provided to her at a later date.

Ms. Williams asked the following questions:

- Where did it (LIC By-Law) come from; how did the conversation begin?
- Could you explain the criteria and methodology around construction of new developments and prioritize infrastructure development? What are the timelines for stakeholder engagement?
- In the draft of the LIC, it says that not-for profits will be exempt, does this include the Ingonish Development Society property?
- Is this LIC by-law a cart before the horse without first having the new proposed Land Use By-Laws in place.
- With rapid acquisition of property, can we look at a way to not financially burden residents? Is Victoria County looking at Land Use By-Laws to control rapid acquisition of property?
- Where are the funds being allocated to and what is the decision-making process for these funds?

On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Longva to accept the Local Improvement Charge By-Law petition from Kyla Dunphy Williams.

Motion Carried.

NEXT MEETING

November 14, 2023, at 2pm.

ADJOURN

Deputy Warden Dauphinee made a motion to adjourn at 4:04pm