

A meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers at Baddeck on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 2:00PM with Deputy Warden Dauphinee in the Chair.

### **COUNCILLORS PRESENT**

District #1 – Paul MacNeil

District #2 – Perla MacLeod

District #4 – Barbra Longva

District #5 – Fraser Patterson

District #6 – Larry Dauphinee, Deputy Warden

District #7 – Jackie Organ

District #8 – Norman MacDonald

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

Alix Redden, CFO

Heather Ross, Financial Analyst

Jessica Klein, Communications

Leah Shanks, Recorder

### **OTHER**

Keith Bain - MLA

*Roughly 25 members of the public were present.*

### **ABSENT**

District #3 – Bruce Morrison, Warden

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

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

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA

*On Motion of Councillor Longva, Seconded by Councillor MacNeil that the agenda for October 17, 2024, be approved.*

*Motion Carried.*

**PRESENTATION** – Financial Statements for 2023/2024 year end – Rob Wadden (Grant Thornton)

Mr. Wadden presented the water utility, nonconsolidated and consolidated financial statements. <C:\Users\SteffMacLeod\OneDrive - Strait IT\Desktop\F2024-Municipality-of-Victoria-Consolidated-FS-FINAL-Signed.pdf>

## Questions/Discussion

CAO MacEachen notes that there was a \$2 million deficit 10 years ago, and it is now down to \$400,000.

Councillor MacNeil questions whether water rates would be able to come down once that deficit is fully paid off.

CAO MacEachen explains that ideally, we would see water rates reduce, as long as we continue to take on large customers. This can be seen with the extension of the waterline in Ingonish.

Councillor Patterson questions the Canada Community Building Fund, why is there such a variance in the budgeted amount and the actual amount.

CAO MacEachen states the accounting practice is to take that into revenue when it is spent. We have allocated \$565,000 from the Community Building Fund money to be spent on trails this year. We have only spent \$265,000 this year, due to timing. We can only take it into revenue to account for the expense.

Councillor MacLeod asks what happens if Ingonish wastewater comes in under budget, does the difference go back to the Province?

CAO MacEachen explains that it would, but we are on track to spend the full grant and more.

***On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor MacDonald to approve the Victoria County Non-Consolidated Financial Statement, for the year ending March 31, 2024.***

***On Motion of Councillor Organ, seconded by Councillor MacLeod to approve the Victoria County Water Utility Financial Statement, for the year ending March 31, 2024.***

***Motion Carried.***

***On Motion of Councillor Longva, seconded by Councillor MacDonald to approve the Victoria County Consolidated Financial Statement, for the year ending March 31, 2024.***

***Motion Carried.***

### **APPROVAL OF September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 MINUTES**

***On Motion of Councillor MacDonald, seconded by Councillor MacLeod to approve minutes of the September 16th, 2024, Council Meeting.***

***Motion Carried.***

### **APPROVAL OF September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 MINUTES**

***On Motion of Councillor Longva, seconded by Councillor MacNeil to approve minutes of the September 19th, 2024, Special Council Meeting.***

***Motion Carried.***

## CAO REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

### OLD BUSINESS:

- Contacted Keith Bain on groomer and Highland Manor land. Both are moving forward. Steps in place on transfer.
- Sept 28 British Home Child Day - Courthouse was lit up for the event, as well as for Truth and Reconciliation Day
- Lawyer is in process of subdividing land in North Shore for FD building/washroom and working on the Highland Manor adjoining lands owned by the Province.

### FINANCE:

- Audit is complete for another year – thank you to everyone involved for effort and patience and to Heather for taking the lead.
- 60-day letters have gone out for next tax sale by public auction – November 26 at Inverary Inn
- Draft Financial Condition Indicators were sent out for 2022-23 – uncollected taxes are now down to 5.7% - target is under 10%!!
- Lots of interest lately for septic lending program – reminder the max amount to borrow has changed from \$10k to \$15k. Check website or call Alix for info.

### WASTE MANAGEMENT:

- Construction and demolition haul tender has been posted both locally and on the procurement site. The haul is scheduled for the end of October.
- Tender closes Thursday, October 17th.
- The heating/lighting tenders close on October 11th.
- The new F-450 is expected to be ready for delivery toward the end of the month.

### WATER:

- Second quarter meter reads are under way. People will receive their water bills in the next week.
- We are waiting on SCADA work to be completed by Lynk to continue with the second production well in Bucklaw and on further construction by the well drillers. Greg is following up on this.
  - CBCL has said all work is expected to be completed by the end of October.
- The water tower in Ingonish was inspected and it needs to be coated due to areas that were compromised years ago. This work will not be completed until the new fiscal year (Spring '25).

- The cost for this work is \$45,000.00

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

- **CBP Investors Summit:** Scheduled for 24 October – We are sponsoring the Amoeba Cruise.
- **Offshore Wind Green Energy Engagement:** 29 October, 2:00-4:00pm at Ingonish Fire Hall
- **EV Feasibility Study:** Extension has been granted until the end of October; final report is under review.

**TOURISM:**

- Hosting the Advisory Group in-person meeting with Cabot Trail 100 on October 15th here at Council Chambers.
- Work towards meeting STEP Ingonish Recommendations and will be planning Public Launch of STEP Report in Late November.
- Arranging visits with new tourism operators and following up with their requests for information. North Shore, Cape North, Dingwall, Bay St Lawrence areas recently visited. Will be out again for winter operators also. Contact Colleen to request a visit if a new (last 3 years) operator.

**RECREATION:**

- Have encountered issues around how CBVRCE is booking school gyms.
- Working to schedule and build winter multi-activity programming
- Final stages of Fall Walking Series

**TRAILS:**

- Meeting with NS Communities Culture and Heritage Trails project manager to share our trails development plans and see some of the recent work.
- Ongoing work on Big Hill area trail upgrades. This will be ongoing into December.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:**

- Work in Baddeck with BABTA and a group interested in reviving and hosting a Winter Event known as The Silver Dart Ball as well as other winter activities for the area.

**HR/JOBS:**

- Posted two jobs – Public Works Clerk and Community Development Coordinator – close Friday, October 18

**OTHER:**

- Village sent a letter that they will no longer be plowing the sidewalks in the Village (attached staff report)
- Council signature - Strait IT IMA
- Jones Street extension - maybe coming into our hands, to be taken over. Could develop an alternate exit.
- Exploring with neighbouring Counties doing an IDEA Plan.... Will keep the new Council up to date
- Attending meetings to get going on developing our Coastal Protection Action Plan, and Bylaw.
- Marketing levy – we are going to be sending letters to all registered Short-Term Rentals and partnering with neighbouring Municipalities to start handing out Summary Offense Tickets. The first step is a reminder.

**Council Orientation Working Group**

- Dates selected and candidates given notice:
  - Wednesday, October 30, 2024, 5 p.m. – Swearing in ceremony at Municipal Building in Baddeck. This is a public event, friends and family welcome.
  - Tuesday, November 5, 2024, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (subject to change) – Councillor training sessions at Municipal Building in Baddeck.
  - Thursday, November 14, 2024 (morning) to Friday November 15, 2024 (ending around 1 p.m.) – Facilitated session “Municipal Council Governance Orientation and Priorities Retreat” at the Iona Heights Inn in Iona.
- Working on orientation binder (contact sheets, department profiles, budgets, code of conduct, policies, etc.)

**Questions/Discussion**

Councillor MacLeod states that the fees collected by the school for rentals go back into the sports in the school, for example new volleyball nets.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee expresses that it may be a benefit for new councillors coming in to attend the Investors Summit, if there are spots still available for them to attend.

Councillor Longva asks about the offshore wind meeting in Ingonish on October 29<sup>th</sup> from 2-4pm, whether that will be advertised on the website.

Councillor MacLeod asks for clarification on the situation regarding the Village of Baddeck and snow clearing on the sidewalks.

CAO MacEachen explains that the County has paid the Village \$8,000 per year since 1999 for this service, this year the Village has requested \$24,000 to continue providing this service. Municipal staff have requested a breakdown of the cost and rationale for the increase and haven't received it. We received letter, dated September 25, 2024, from the Village Manager and Commission Chair which announced the termination of the Village public works plowing and salting the sidewalks. In response to this situation, municipal staff researched municipalities across Nova Scotia with incorporated villages, 7 of these municipalities indicated that the villages provide this service, and one, Chester clears their own sidewalks. Currently, we don't know where the money paid to the Village goes, this has also been requested. Potential solutions include assuming responsibilities for sidewalk maintenance, although we don't have equipment and staffing, or to continue to follow up with the Village for a breakdown and come to an agreement.

Councillor MacDonald expressed concern that the Village hasn't submitted the breakdown as requested, this seems like an ongoing issue.

A past chairman of the Village asked to speak to Council. He stated that he believed that originally there was an agreement made between the Municipality and the village, to plow the new sidewalk on the southern side on Main Street. He is not sure how it evolved into the plowing of all sidewalks. He expressed that there is concern for liability, based on the current state of the sidewalks. It is a lot of responsibility to maintain them, while creating additional hazards. The Village, Municipality and the Province need to collaborate on who owns them, and who's going to maintain them. He stated that he doesn't think it's on the mandate of the Village.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee expresses concern about an ongoing pattern of agreements that have been made in the past with the Village but have not been put into writing.

Honorable Keith Bain MLA addresses the Council and states that the Province of Nova Scotia does not build or maintain sidewalks.

Jen MacDonald, Chair of the Village Commission, expressed that the Village is a separate municipal unit, and that is why they receive gas tax transfer. St. Peters and Bible Hill are good examples of where this happens in other locations, it is not exclusive to Baddeck and the Village.

CAO MacEachen clarified the Commission chairs comments that it has nothing to do with the Village being a Municipality, and that non-for-profits are also eligible for gas tax transfers.

Jennifer MacDonald states that the Village is no longer interested in doing Village snow plowing. They may bid on the contract if the Municipality posts a request for proposal.

CAO MacEachen updates Ms. MacDonald the on conversation she missed regarding snow plowing. She requested detailed budget from the Village regarding what they cover in their area rate.

*Deputy Warden Dauphinee called for a 15-minute recess @ 3:11pm. Returned at 3:28pm*

## **DISTRICT CONCERNS**

***On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee seconded by Councillor MacNeil to rescind the following Motion made at the July 22, 2024, Council meeting:***

***On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor MacNeil to recommend that the County offer the Village of Baddeck Option 3 from the report.***

***Option 3. It is recommended that the Municipality provide:  
\$50,000 as a one-time direct funding contribution to be funded through the  
Municipality's Operating Reserve  
Maximum of \$150,000 loan at 5% for up to 5 years. VOB annual loan payment: \$34,646  
Total interest revenue earned by Municipality: \$23,231.***

***Motion Carried.***

***On Motion of Deputy Warden Dauphinee, seconded by Councillor Patterson, rescind all agreements with the Village of Baddeck, and all agreements be re-negotiated.***

***Motion Carried.***

## **DISTRICT 1**

- Councillor MacNeil went on a tour of the roads with Steve MacDonald, great discussion regarding road conditions, is hopeful that these issues will be resolved before winter. He



advises the new council to have a meeting with Steve MacDonald as soon as possible to address this.

- Councillor MacNeil expresses this will be his last council meeting, gave thanks to his fellow council members and staff through the years. He also gave thanks to his wife Stacey, and his children. And thank you district 1 for supporting him.

#### **DISTRICT 2**

- Councillor MacLeod expressed the need to be mindful at the next election in 4 years, that our population is aging. Voting on the phone or internet is useful, but not everyone is capable. She had numerous members of the public asking her to help with voting. Just a reminder that candidates cannot assist members of the public with voting, and to refer questions to Blair.
- Thank you to the Council, 8 years have been a nice ride and gave thanks to fellow Councillors.

#### **DISTRICT 4**

- Councillor Longva expresses her delight, privilege and honour to represent district four, and she wishes all candidates running in this election all the best in the next four years. She is hopeful they can resolve some big issues. Today is her last day on council. She appreciates seeing the members of the public in attendance and hopes that the increase in attendance will continue at all future council meetings.

#### **DISTRICT 5**

- Councillor Patterson expresses his gratitude; Thanks everybody for all the experiences, he enjoyed 99% of his time on council so far.
- Councillor Patterson expresses that he is still a member of Federation of Canadian Municipalities Board of Directors. Advocacy days are held in Ottawa, and the deadline for registering is before the next council meeting. We visit MPs to discuss the issues that we are concerned with at the Municipal level. This is a direct line to the Federal law makers. One of the things being worked on is changing the way that municipalities receive funding and with the infrastructure deficits we see nationally, we are looking for the Federal Government to step up and contribute more to the infrastructure of the County. He would like to attend if re-elected.
- While visiting district members during this election, he heard good things about telephone voting. Also, consistent topics were the roads and primarily with waterfront properties are taxes. The new council should be mindful of finding ways to reduce people's taxes.
- Councillor Patterson gives a shoutout to Blair Gallop, he has been great at solving issues with voting and excellent communication.

***On Motion of Councillor Patterson, seconded by Councillor Longva to encourage the new Council to invite a member of the Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education to an upcoming Council meeting for clarity on auditorium fees.***

***Motion Carried.***

#### **DISTRICT 6**

- Deputy Warden Dauphinee voiced his appreciation for the support he has received over the past 16 years from the council and the residents of district 6, as this was his last Council session.

#### **DISTRICT 7**

- While visiting district members on her campaign, Councillor Organ heard similar concerns

***On Motion of Councillor MacDonald, seconded by Councillor Longva, \$1000 of the district 8 budget be allocated accordingly;***

***\$1000 Cabot High School in support of Cabot High School for the Outdoor Volleyball system.***

***Motion Carried.***

regarding the lack of in-person voting stations for this election. Especially for the seniors who are not tech-savvy and are looking for a paper ballot.

- Councillor Organ expresses her gratitude for the council members.

#### **DISTRICT 8**

- Cabot High School, recipient of a Wellness Grant from the Community Health Board, are in the process of having an Outdoor Volleyball System which is a substantial cost, which they are looking for funding for.
- Councillor MacDonald expresses that it has been a privilege to represent District 8, he can't stress how important it is for everybody in Victoria County to vote. People need to decide who they want to be their representative. He wishes the County success going forward with the next council

#### **MOTIONS**

Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law:

- Councillor Dauphinee expresses that he doesn't see what is going to change if we postpone it, but he understands that a lot of people would like to see it postponed. He expressed concern that he received from residents who have purchased land and are concerned about what will happen next door. Right now, there is no protection against new neighbours opening a pig farm, junkyard or a multi-level hotel.
- Councillor Longva expressed that based on the strong outcry here today and the petition online, she wants to let the new council decide and postpone the second reading.
- Councillor MacNeil expresses that he wants to postpone the second reading based on public hearing today.
- Councillor Organ said that she wants to postpone based on public hearing and resident concerns, but with the stipulation that it is dealt with before the deadline of December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Councillor MacDonald expressed concern about how can we expect the new council to review and make changes before the end of December, when it took this council 3 years. He does agree with Councillor Organ that it can't continue to be delayed. He asked what the Province's stipulations are, where are the other municipal units in the province at with this by-law?
- CAO MacEachen states that there are 47 Municipalities in the province, and 8 have not completed it. We have passed the deadline and have had three extensions. The Province have already done a preliminary review of it. The Province says there needs to be substantial reasoning for granting another extension.

- Councillor MacLeod said that she was ready to say yes. She has changed her opinion, not based on the petition due to the fact that a number of those who signed the petition are from Ontario and the United States, but for the people locally, with understanding that the public need to get more engaged with their districts.

***On Motion of Councillor Organ, seconded by Councillor Patterson to postpone the Second reading of the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law, with the stipulation that the incoming council handles it by the December 31, 2024, deadline.***

***Motion Carried.***

***On Motion of Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor MacDonald to renew the Inter-Municipal Agreement creating the Strait Municipal Technology Services Association.***

***Motion Carried.***

***On Motion of Councillor MacDonald, seconded by Councillor MacNeil, streetlight request for the following civic address; 1974 Cabot Trail, regarding safety issues.***

***Motion Carried.***

***On Motion of Councillor Patterson, seconded by Councillor Organ if a member of the newly elected Council is a member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, they will be permitted to attend Advocacy Days in Ottawa.***

***Motion Carried.***

***On motion of Councillor MacDonald that \$1000 of the district 8 budget be allocated accordingly;***

***\$500 St. Paul Island Museum in Dingwall, and \$500 North Highland Nordic in Cape North.***

***Motion Carried.***

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

Fences Arbitration Committee made a site visit on October 3, 2024, with Ken Oakes was very helpful, appointee from Federal of Agriculture. He toured the fencing with the landowner, He suggested they increase the voltage of the electric fence. We were satisfied that farmer is making efforts to contain his cattle. Report forwarded to staff. The situation in Middle River is going well.

The Annual General Meeting for Victoria County Transit was held today, October 17, 2024.

## QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Loretta Doyle states that this is the second council meeting she has attended that covered qualified financial audits. She questions why Highland Manor isn't providing a budget and wants to know how that is being addressed.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee states that this issue is being looked after, it will be included in the next financial audit.

Jennifer MacDonald as follow up from conversation today, read an email thread to the CAO on October 9<sup>th</sup> from Roman, the Village Manager. She wanted it to be recorded that the Village Manager did provide the information that was requested, in advance of the council meeting. She also expresses as a resident; new councillors need to be responsible for their own communication with their district members. Burden is on the local councillors not members of the public. Expresses gratitude to councillors for their time and effort while on the council.

Elmore MacKinnon addresses the council with a thank you for postponing and using common sense.

Honourable Keith Bain, MLA regarding the discussion on the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law. He clarifies that the Minister of Housing has the ability to refuse an extension. He reminds everyone in attendance and listening to the live stream, that part of the responsibility comes back on the residents of Victoria County. Residents need to make sure the new council hears their concerns about the Land Use By-law.

Alana Gale-Perry expresses that the major issue is lack of communication, and this is the reason why residents are upset and feel uninformed. Most residents and landowners of Victoria County are still not aware of this By-law. No one reads the Cape Breton Post, Facebook posts do reach some residents, but there must be means of communication. Communication needs to be improved between residents and council, how do we inform the public about the documents and as soon as possible. We are still leaving with the same issue that we had before.

Deputy Warden Dauphinee states that the newly elected council is going to have to find a way to get this information out there. We did do a mail out to all homes, but it probably should've been sent out to everyone on the tax list. A lot of the time we send stuff out, nobody reads it.

Richard makes a recommendation to council to start a planning advisory committee immediately and not wait until the zoning is in place. And that they reach out to the eastern planning district, as there is a lack of communication with them as well.

Darryl Hamilton expresses his concern about the restrictions. His family wants to move to Victoria County because of flexibility, and he wants to have freedom back. He thinks that the government has too much power, telling us what to do with our property, what to do with our land.

Henry Fuller is a long-living resident in Victoria County. This is a new era, new councillors, as taxpayers we have a responsibility to make sure our wishes are carried out. He expresses concern about the lack of town meetings over issues like this. He questions who is going to manage and administer these by-laws and the cost to that. There should be a planning community for this county.

## **NEXT MEETING**

November 15, 2024, in Iona.

## **ADJOURN**

Deputy Warden Dauphinee made a motion to adjourn at 4:10pm.