

COUNCIL COMMITTEE

The Regular Session of the Council Committee of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted virtually, via Zoom Meetings, on Thursday, May 14, 2020 beginning at 6:00 pm.

Roll Call

The roll was called with the following Councillors in attendance:

Mayor Christine Blair	
Councillor Eric Boutilier	District 1
Councillor Bill Masters	District 2
Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart, Chair	District 3
Councillor Mike Cooper	District 4
Councillor Lloyd Gibbs	District 5
Councillor Karen MacKenzie	District 6
Councillor Michael Gregory	District 7
Councillor Ron Cavanaugh	District 8
Councillor Bob Pash	District 9
Councillor Tom Taggart	District 10
Councillor Wade Parker	District 11

Staff Present

Rob Simonds, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
 Scott Fraser, Director of Corp. Services/Acting Director of Solid Waste
 Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works
 Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development
 Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor
 Tracey Veno, Recording Secretary
 Mark Austin, Economic Development Officer
 Devin Trefry, Research, Policy and Community Engagement Officer
 Tim Smith, Manager of Information Services
 Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager
 Dave Westlake, Emergency Management/Protective Services Coordinator

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Masters
 Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the agenda be approved with the following additions:

- Item # 11b, Security
- Item # 11c, Front Line Workers,
- Item # 11d, Doctor Recruitment
- Item # 13b, Administrative Update;
- Item # 15, Negotiations in Closed Session.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Councillor Taggart
 Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the minutes of meeting held on April 9 and the Budget meetings held on April 20, 27 and May 4, 2020, be approved as presented.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Business Arising from Minutes

There was no business arising from the meeting held on April 9 and the Budget meetings held on April 20, 27 and May 4, 2020,

ACTION ITEMS**Debert Business Park Advisory Committee Terms of Reference**

Mark Austin, Economic Development Officer, advised that following a presentation on a review of Debert Business Park Property Transaction Processes, staff were directed to establish Terms of Reference (TOR) for a committee to deal with land sales and development in Debert. Mr. Austin provided a brief overview of the draft TOR and indicated that staff is seeking input from Council on the draft TOR and next steps.

Discussion was held on the composition of the committee and dealing with matters of a confidential nature; clarification regarding voting members, specifically Mayor or Deputy Mayor; term of appointment to the committee being the same as other committees of Council; delegating authority as a means to expediate processes; and developing a policy that would permit Council Committee to make decision on land transactions in Debert.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Terms of Reference for the Debert Business Park Advisory Committee be accepted with amendments relative to clarification of voting membership and term of appointment.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Budget Approval & Tax Rate Resolution Approval

Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services, advised that Council recently met on April 20, 27, and May 4 to review the budget for 2020-21 and following those meetings, a recommendation was made to approve the budget. If approved, there would be no tax rate increase for this year. The residential rate would remain at \$0.885 and the commercial rate at \$2.28, per hundred of assessment.

It should be noted that at their meeting on April 30, 2020, Council granted authority to May Council Committee to approve the budget and tax rate resolution.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the 2020-21 Operating Budget be approved with the additions and deletions as set out at the Council Committee meetings held on April 20, 27, and May 4, 2020, with the residential tax rate being held at \$0.885, and the commercial tax rate being held at \$2.28; and,

That the following Tax Resolution be approved, as presented:

TAX RATE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the Municipal Council of the County of Colchester is required to levy rates which it deems sufficient to raise the sum required to defray the expenditure of the Municipality of the County of Colchester for the current twelve-month fiscal period;

RESOLVED that pursuant to **Section 72 of the Municipal Government Act**, the Municipal Council of the Municipality of the County of Colchester estimates that sums amounting to **\$25,609,796** are required for the lawful purpose of the Municipality for the year ending **March 31, 2021**, after crediting the probable revenue from all sources other than rates for the abatement and losses which occur in the collection of the taxes for the said year which may not be collected or collectible;

FURTHER RESOLVED that the said Council authorize the levying and collection of a rate of **eighty-eight and one half cents (\$0.885)** on each \$100.00 of the assessed value of the residential and resource property assessed in the **2020** Assessment Roll;

FURTHER RESOLVED that the said Council authorize the levying and collection of a rate of **two dollars twenty-eight cents (\$2.28)** on each \$100.00 on the assessed value of Commercial Property assessed in the **2020** Assessment Roll;

FURTHER RESOLVED that pursuant to **Section 78 of the Municipal Government Act** in lieu of all rates and taxes of the Municipality, an owner of forest property to which the said section applies shall pay tax equal to twenty-five (25) cents per acre on holdings of 50,000 or less and forty (40) cents per acre on holdings greater than 50,000 acres and where an area, village or commission rate is levied for fire protection, the owner shall pay an additional tax of one (1) cent per acre;

FURTHER RESOLVED that the said Council hereby requires payment of said rates to be made to the Tax Collector or Treasurer of the said Municipality on or before the 31st day of August, **2020**;

FURTHER RESOLVED that said Council hereby imposes an additional percentage charge of 15% per annum on all rates and taxes remaining unpaid after the 31st day of August, 2020."

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Disposal of Surplus Parkland –
Peppard Drive, Onslow Mountain**

Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development, provided a detailed overview of this item and indicated that a request has been received from a property owner to purchase a parcel of Municipally owned land adjacent to his property. Also included was a detailed description of the land with accompanying map; options and processes for the disposal of surplus parkland; appraised value of land; challenges regarding future development; and costs incurred to date. Staff's recommendation is to proceed with the sale through private transaction.

Council members expressed concern regarding the possibility of the sale of the land resulting in restricting access to the trail system by all terrain

vehicles. Detailed debate was held with interest in receiving more information before making a decision on this matter. A suggestion was also made about contacting the local ATV Club.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Cavanaugh

“That the disposal of surplus parkland on Peppard Drive, Onslow Mountain, be referred back to staff for more information.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Grants to Non-profit Organizations Policy Amendments

Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager, advised that Council had previously directed staff to amend the Grants to Non-profit Organizations Policy to include requirement of organizations receiving annual grant funding. One minor change was noted, being the inclusion of the word once in the fourth bullet under Presentations to Council.

Brief discussion was held on the maximum \$5,000 cap under this Policy and if changes were necessary due to requests being received for over the maximum amount. No directive was provided on changes as this time.

Moved by Councillor Masters
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that amendments to the Grants to Non-profit Organizations Policy, be approved as amended.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Highway 236 Crosswalk – Award of Tender

Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works, provided an overview of this item indicating that the public tender was issued on April 7th and was advertised on the Provincial and Municipal websites. Three submissions were received by the deadline with S.W. Weeks Construction being the low bidder.

It was noted that at their meeting on April 30, 2020, Council granted authority to award the tender for the Highway 236 Crosswalk.

Moved by Councillor Masters
Seconded by Councillor Cavanaugh

“That Council awards the tender for the construction of the marked crosswalk on Highway 236 at the Cobequid Trail to S.W. Weeks Construction for a total contract value of \$48,000 excluding HST.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Low Income Municipal Tax Assistance Program

Mr. Fraser advised that during budget deliberations, Council requested a review of the Low Income Municipal Tax Assistance Program, with expressed interest in increasing the exemption rebates. A summary of the review was provided along with a recap of suggested changes.

Moved by Councillor Masters

Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Low Income Municipal Tax Assistance Program be approved, as presented.”

Lengthy discussion was held on raising thresholds in addition to the exemption amounts; reversing the thresholds to allow greater exemption amount for single family size; having one threshold and exemption amount for all; and requirements relative to affidavits.

amended motion

Moved by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the wording of Section 8a be changed to read as follows:

In order to be eligible for an exemption, the applicant property owner shall:

submit other such information as specified by the Treasurer, by the second Friday in May or such other date of the fiscal year for which the exemption is sought.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

The amended motion having passed, the original motion was voted on and carried with Deputy Mayor Stewart, and Councillors MacKenzie, Gregory and Taggart opposed.

Covid-19 Property Tax Financing Program Policy

Mr. Fraser indicated that this item relates to Covid-19 Property Tax Financing Program Policy. A copy of the model policy as developed by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) and the Association of Municipal Administrators Nova Scotia (AMA) was distributed to Council for review. Staff is seeking feedback on modifications to the model policy that would be specific to Colchester. There is still a lot that needs to be added such as criteria for eligibility for the program. Some suggested criteria for inclusion would be demonstration of hardship as a result of Covid-19; property owners being in good standing with the Municipality; commercial thresholds; and how to deal with rental properties.

The following points were raised during discussion:

- Under section 5. Administration – concern was raised regarding the set rate of \$25;
- Section 4.2.1 – not relevant;
- Residential Property Application - concern about how to target the right people;
- Comments that it is important to make the process simple for those who need it;
- The possibility of having language included regarding qualifications if receiving funding through other programs;

- How to determine if applicant is enrolled in another program; and,
- Working document to be revised as needed.

Mr. Fraser provided a summary of the borrowing process indicating that once we have determined the amount required through the program for the County, the Municipality can proceed with 1% borrowing through the Municipal Finance Corporation (MFC). A borrowing resolution will be required of Council to access the funds.

The CAO indicated that if Council should adopt this model policy in principle, staff's understanding from discussions this evening is that Council would like a degree of simplicity to lower the burden and to optimize the program for those who need it most. Staff will, through continued consultation with other municipalities, try to customize the policy to meet the needs specific to Colchester and bring back revisions to Council for review and consideration.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Masters

"That Council Committee recommends to Council the model policy, as presented, be accepted in principle."

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Security

Council previously approved the cost of having Commissionaires provide security in Portapique for a two week period. The CAO reported that this week the Commissionaires indicated that they will be donating their services for this time period. Councillor Taggart requested Council approval to have the Commissionaires in place for an additional period to allow time for the clean-up of the properties. The Building Inspector expects that the clean-up should be completed by the end of next week.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

"That Commissionaires be retained for an additional seven days to provide security in Portapique, to allow time for properties to be cleaned up."

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Front Line Workers

Councillor Boutilier suggested that Council recognize Frontline Workers by placing a thank you sign in a prominent location in each district in the County.

Discussion was held regarding size of some of the districts in the County being quite large with concern expressed that one sign per district may not be sufficient. Further discussion was held on sign size, costs, and possible locations,

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that Colchester County place one ‘Thank you ALL Frontline Workers’ sign in each district of the County.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Cooper, Gibbs and Parker opposed)*

Councillor Boutilier suggested that the Thank you message could be in the centre of the sign with the Municipal logo and crest in the top corners, and the Nova Scotia and Canada flags be in the bottom corners.

Doctor Recruitment

Councillor Masters addressed this item indicating that he heard an announcement on the radio regarding Yarmouth getting six new doctors. A report or update on the doctor recruitment for our region was requested. Concern was expressed that enough is not being done and that we should have our own recruiter.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Alert Ready

Dave Westlake, Emergency Management/Protective Services Coordinator, presented a detailed report on Alert Ready, the Canadian and Nova Scotia Emergency Alert System. The report included timelines of implementation, requirements of carriers, partners involved, and types of emergencies for which alerts are issued. A copy of the report and accompanying documents were included in the package for this evenings meeting.

COVID-19 Update

As per the request of Council at the March 26th Council meeting, this item serves to provide Council with ongoing operational and administrative updates and implications relative to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Administrative Update

Referring to an announcement earlier this week relative to Municipal Elections proceeding as scheduled, the CAO advised that the appointment of the Returning Officer and Assistant Returning Officer have been secured. Mr. Guy Wheeler, who has served as Returning Officer in Provincial Elections, has accepted the position of Returning Officer. Ms. Dawn Graham, who worked the 2016 Municipal Election, will be returning as the Assistant Returning Officer. This information has been reported to the Province.

Director’s Report

A report from the Director of Public Works was circulated in the package for tonight’s meeting.

Discussion was held on the high volume of wipes showing up in pipes and treatment plants. It was suggested that a front page article be included in the next newsletter. Increased amount of wipes at the Great Village Treatment Plant was also noted and Councillor Taggart indicated that he would look into this.

Further discussion was held on the possibility of solar panels at the Central Colchester Wastewater Treatment Plant and, an update was requested on a couple of sewer issues. It was noted that the sewer issues were discussed at past Council meetings in closed session and any updates on these should also be provided in closed session.

Moved by Councillor Gregory

Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That the agenda be amended to include updates on two legal matters in closed session.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Taggart

“That the meeting go into closed session at 9:30 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the meeting reconvene in open session at 9:50 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Negotiations

A motion was made by Councillor Parker and seconded by Councillor Gregory that a letter be written to the Department of Justice asking that the report as previously requested, be provided with a deadline of June 30, 2020 for a response.

The CAO provided information relative to the timelines indicating that the Department of Justice had not begun the process of the review back in January as Council had requested other information. Council, by consensus at the May 7th Special Council meeting, agreed that the Municipality proceed with the Policing Review. Confirmation was received this week that the Minister has approved the request for the review.

Further discussion was held and with the debate moving towards issues of public security, it was recommended that the meeting return to closed session.

Moved by Mayor Blair
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the meeting go back into closed session at 9:56 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Mayor Blair

“That the meeting reconvene in open session at 10:00 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Having received advice in closed session, Deputy Mayor Stewart advised that the motion, as noted above, was out of order. This motion refers to directive

of Council in closed session at the May 7th meeting. This evening is a meeting of Council Committee and it does not have authority to overturn a motion or directive of Council. Council agreed to defer this to the next meeting of Council.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That the CAO write the letter as discussed in closed session, as soon as possible, to the RCMP to verify staffing on the night of April 18, 2020, and that the letter be copied to Minister Furey.”

Motion Carried. (*Mayor Blair, Councillors Cooper, Gibbs, Cavanaugh and Pash opposed*)

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That the meeting adjourn at 9:54 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary