

COUNCIL COMMITTEE

A Special Session of Council Committee of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was held in the Courthouse, Truro, Nova Scotia, on April 20, 27 and May 4, 2020.

Attendance

The following Councillors were 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

Also Present

Rob Simonds, Chief Administrative Officer
Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services/Acting Director of Solid Waste
Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development
Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works
Tracey Veno, Recording Secretary
Tim Smith, Manager of Computer and Information Systems

The following staff members were in attendance on April 27th and May 4th:
Devin Trefry, Research, Policy, and Community Engagement Officer
Mark Austin, Economic Development Officer
Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager

Purpose

The purpose of the meeting(s) was to receive a detailed presentation from staff on the draft “maintenance” budget as part of the budget process for 2020-21; and, for Council to give consideration of additions and/or deletions including grant requests from not-for-profit organizations, community event grants and other miscellaneous items.

At the conclusion of the meeting(s), it is anticipated that the operating budget and general tax rates will be set. The decisions made at these Special Council Committee meetings will require Council approval. For the sake of simplicity, each separate motion will not be considered by Council individually, rather the entire package and tax rate as a whole.

Staff Presentation

Mr. Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services, made a presentation on the budget process which included detailed information of impacts on revenue and expenditures; assessment cap and tax rate comparisons; revenue growth areas and future revenue possibilities; transfers to other governments; departmental expenditure review; budgetary pressures; reserve balances; and

contingency funding for COVID-19 impact. The presentation also briefly provided an overview of items to be discussed during the “additions and deletions” meeting. A copy of the presentation was made available prior to the meeting.

**Questions and
Answers/Information
Request**

During discussion, questions and comments of Council included:

- School Board transfer – would there be a reduction in this amount due to COVID-19;
- Establishing an unrestricted reserve for COVID-19 relief; and,
- Cash flow impact due to COVID-19.

Recess and Reconvene

Due to technical difficulties with the Zoom Webinar, Council agreed to recess at 8:42 pm and reconvene Monday, April 27th at 6:00 pm to continue the budget process.

The meeting reconvened on April 27th at 6:00 pm with all Council members in attendance except Councillor Cavanaugh.

Picking up where it was left off from the meeting on April 20th, Mr. Fraser completed his presentation. Following the presentation, Council continued budget discussions with the additions and deletions portion of the agenda.

**Non-Profit Grant
Applications**

Junior Achievement of Nova Scotia

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the request for a grant from Junior Achievement of Nova Scotia be denied.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Brule Community Centre Association

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Brule Community Centre Association.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Masters
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the Brule Community Centre receive a grant in the amount of \$1,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Red Clay Studio Society

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That the request for a grant from the Red Clay Studio Society be denied.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Canadian Mental Health Association – Colchester East Hants Branch

Councillor Taggart declared a conflict of interest and removed himself from the discussion.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Canadian Mental Health Association – Colchester East Hants Branch.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That the Canadian Mental Health Association – Colchester East Hants Branch, received a grant in the amount of \$3,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Earlton Community Centre Association

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Earlton Community Centre Association.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the Earlton Community Centre Association receive a grant in the amount of \$1,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Brookfield Community Assembly

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That the request for a grant from the Brookfield Community Assembly be denied.”

Motion Carried. *(Mayor Blair, Deputy Mayor Stewart, Councillors Gibbs, Gregory and Pash opposed)*

Discussion was held on the defibrillator being portable for use at various events in the community; where the defibrillator will be permanently located; and, the Municipality purchasing a number of defibrillators that could be loaned out for various events throughout the County.

Moved by Councillor Masters
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That staff investigate purchasing defibrillators for portable use at community functions throughout the County.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

MADD Canada – Cobequid Chapter

Moved by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That the Municipality provide a grant to MADD Canada – Cobequid Chapter.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That MADD Canada – Cobequid Chapter receive a grant in the amount of \$3,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Kinsmen Club of Bible Hill

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Mayor Blair

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Kinsmen Club of Bible Hill.”

Motion Carried Unanimously

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That Kinsmen Club of Bible Hill receive a grant in the amount of \$2,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Carma Colchester Chapter

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the Municipality provide a grant to Carma Colchester Chapter.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That Carma Colchester Chapter receive a grant in the amount of \$3,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously

Alton Recreation Centre

Moved by Councillor Masters
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Alton Recreation Centre.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That the Alton Recreation Centre receive a grant in the amount of \$1,500.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

North Shore Senior Citizen’s Association

Brief discussion was held on providing support for seniors and this organization being prepared to get the program up and running as soon as the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. However, due to the current situation and the number of unknowns, some concern was expressed about whether the programs will be able to move forward as quickly as anticipated. Councillor Gregory stated that at the end of the fiscal year, if all funds have not been used, the organization will report that to the Recreation Manager through the grant reporting follow-up. A suggestion was made that for event or program specific grants, due to COVID-19, funds not be released until such time that the events and/or programs take place.

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the North Shore Senior Citizen’s Association.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That the North Shore Senior Citizen’s Association receive a grant in the amount of \$4,800.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Springside Community Centre Association

Moved by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Springside Community Centre Association.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the Springside Community Centre Association receive a grant in the amount of \$10,000, budgeted over two years with full amount being paid in 20/21 fiscal year.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

For information purposes, Mayor Blair advised that an announcement was recently made regarding a \$350 million emergency community support fund for charities and not-for-profits. Organizations should be looking into these funds.

Sunrise Film Festival Society

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Sunrise Film Festival Society.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That the Sunrise Film Festival Society received a grant in the amount of \$2,500.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Northumberland Art Council

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Northumberland Art Council.”

Motion Carried. (*Councillor Pash opposed*)

Moved by Councillor Masters
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the Northumberland Art Council receive a grant in the amount of \$5,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Creamery Square Association

Brief discussion was held on use of funds being operational for continued management of the Grace Jollymore Joyce Art Centre; the hopes of being able to manage the funding of the position on their own; current status of employment of the individual; scheduled events planned for the current year; ability to be self-sustaining; and, keeping funding amounts consistent with Policy.

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Creamery Square Association.”

Motion Carried. (*Councillors Boutilier, Pash, Taggart, and Parker opposed*)

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the Creamery Square Association receive a grant in the amount of \$10,000.”

Motion DEFEATED. (*Mayor Blair, Deputy Mayor Stewart, Councillors Boutilier, Gibbs, Taggart and Parker opposed*)

Moved by Mayor Blair
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the Creamery Square Association receive a grant in the amount of \$5,000.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Pash opposed)*

At this point in the meeting, as per Policy, Deputy Mayor Stewart reviewed the agenda and indicated the meeting would continue for another half hour and then Council can determine whether to continue or recess the meeting, to reconvene at an agreed upon time.

Central Community Centre

Clarification was sought on whether an inspection was carried out by the Building Inspection Department to determine the condition of the building. Concern was expressed regarding putting funds towards the building in the absence of this information.

Moved by Mayor Blair
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Central Community Centre based on contingency of approval of condition of the building through the Building Inspector.”

Motion DEFEATED. *(Deputy Mayor Stewart, Councillors Masters, Cooper, Pash, Taggart and Parker opposed)*

Deputy Mayor Stewart indicated that this item could be revisited when the report is received from the Building Inspector.

Colchester Historical Society

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the grant request from the Colchester Historical Society be denied.”

Motion DEFEATED. *(Mayor Blair, Deputy Mayor Stewart, Councillors Boutilier, Masters, Gibbs, MacKenzie, and Taggart opposed)*

Discussion was held on funds being used for staffing; the Historeum being a great resource; and supporting the request but for a lesser amount. Further discussion was held regarding the \$10,000 annual funding already provided to the Colchester Historical Society with clarification being sought on whether the request before Council is for an additional \$15,000 or an additional \$25,000. It was advised that the additional amount is \$25,000 for the 20/21

fiscal year to offset increased operating costs and maintain a third staff position.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Taggart

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Colchester Historical Society.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Cooper opposed)*

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That the Colchester Historical Society receive a grant in the amount of \$5,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Colchester Community Support Society (Food Bank)

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Colchester Community Support Society.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Given to the situation with COVID-19, concern was expressed on the potential for greater community need and whether the amount being requested would be enough. Council was reminded that a contingency for impacts of COVID-19 would be in the overall budget and Council could consider future requests if the need arises. Additionally, it was noted that the Food Banks are being supported by other levels of government. Brief discussion was also held on the Food Bank serving West Colchester and other communities throughout the County; use of funds; and supporting the request, however, keeping amounts within Policy.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the Colchester Community Support Society receive a grant in the amount of \$5,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Recess and Reconvene

At this point in the meeting, 10:10 pm, Council agreed to recess and reconvene Monday, April 27th at 6:00 pm to continue the budget process.

The meeting reconvened on April 27th at 6:00 pm with all Council members in attendance; Councillor Masters arriving late.

Council continued budget discussions with the remainder of the additions and deletions portion of the agenda.

Truro Tennis Club

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded Councillor Parker

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Truro Tennis Club.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the Truro Tennis Club receive a grant in the amount of \$3,000.”

Brief discussion was held prior to the vote with some members of Council expressing interest in supporting the full requested amount of \$5,000.

Motion Carried. *(Mayor Blair, Deputy Mayor Stewart, Councillors Boutilier, Gibbs and Taggart opposed)*

At this point in the meeting, Councillor Masters arrived.

Debert & Area Community Association

Moved by Councillor Pash
Seconded by Councillor Taggart

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Debert & Area Community Association.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the Debert & Area Community Association receive a grant in the amount of \$5,000.”

Once again, some members of Council expressed interest in supporting the full requested of \$7,500.

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Pash and Taggart opposed)*

Central Community Centre

Discussion was held on the report recently received from the Building Inspector; the condition of the building and costs for continued repair requirements; how often and what the hall is used for; commitment of volunteers running community halls; and these smaller halls providing support to rural communities.

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Central Community Centre.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Mayor Blair
Seconded by Councillor Cavanaugh

“That the Central Community Centre received a grant in the amount of \$5,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

With the completion of the Grants to Non-Profits requests, Mr. Fraser indicated there is a balance of \$40,200 in this portion of the maintenance budget.

**Community Events
Grants**

With the number of unknowns relating to the situation with COVID-19, Council expressed some concern with providing funding for events that may or may not take place. Having stipulations in the motions to address the concerns was discussed.

Living Earth Council

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Living Earth Council.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Masters opposed)*

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That the Living Earth Council receive a grant in the amount of \$1,000, with a stipulation that no monies are released until confirmation is received that the event will take place in this fiscal year.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Masters opposed)*

TataFest

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Cavanaugh

“That the Municipality provide a grant to TataFest.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Cavanaugh

“That TataFest receive a grant in the amount of \$3,000, with no funds being released until confirmation is received for the event taking place this year.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Downeast Bluegrass & Oldtime Music Festival

Debate was held on stipulations attached to previous year’s funding; keeping the event in Colchester; this being a boost for local hotels and restaurants if the event takes place; and use of funds being to offset increased fees at the NS Provincial Commission.

Referring to comments regarding the NS Provincial Exhibition and the increased fees by the Commission, it was noted that it is becoming an issue for more and more events taking place at this venue. The Municipality seems to be picking up the increase and this needs to be addressed with the provincial Minister.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Cavanaugh

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Downeast Bluegrass & Oldtime Music Festival.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Brief discussion was held on funding for a lesser amount than requested; this not being the year to cut back; economic spinoffs for the region; and Municipal commitment for the amount if other funding opportunities for economic relaunch become available for these types of events.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the Downeast Bluegrass & Oldtime Music Festival receive a grant in the amount of \$5,000, conditional on the event taking place this year.”

Motion DEFEATED. *(Mayor Blair, Councillors Masters, Cooper, Gibbs, MacKenzie, Cavanaugh, Pash, Taggart, and Parker opposed)*

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Mayor Blair

“That the Downeast Bluegrass & Oldtime Music Festival receive a grant in the amount of \$10,000, conditional on the event taking place this year.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Colchester Legion Branch 26 – RCMP Musical Ride

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the Municipality provide a grant to the Colchester Legion Branch 26 – RCMP Musical Ride.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That the Colchester Legion Branch 26 – RCMP Musical Ride receive a grant in the amount of \$5,000, conditional on the event taking place this year.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Annual Grants

Mr. Scott Fraser, advised that the annual grants were listed in the materials distributed prior to the meeting. Council does not normally review these nor are motions required. However, North Shore River Restoration was previously approved for \$5,000 for five-years. The five-year term has expired and should Council wish to renew, a motion would be required.

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That North Shore River Restoration receive a grant in the amount of \$5,000 annually for five years”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Other

Flood Advisory Committee

The Flood Advisory Committee has made a recommendation to Council for an amount of \$100,000 to be included in the 2020/21 budget.

Moved by Mayor Blair
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That Council support the Flood Advisory Committee in the amount of \$100,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Municipal Parks Maintenance Tree Replacement Program

Staff are requesting an additional \$5,000 for a tree replacement program for Municipal Parks. This is in conjunction with our climate action plan initiatives.

Brief discussion was held on which areas trees would be replaced and what species of trees. Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager, advised that a lot of trees have been lost over the last couple of years in Nelson Memorial Park, Stewiacke River Park as well as some of the smaller parks including Debert. Tree replacements will take place over the next two to three years.

Moved by Mayor Blair
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That Council approves \$5,000 for the Municipal Parks Maintenance Tree Replacement Program.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Cliffs of Fundy Geopark

Colchester has been actively partnering with Cumberland on the development of the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark. The Municipal partners would both fund \$75,000 per year for the Geopark. Colchester’s portion is reduced to \$65,000 as a result of in-kind donations of office space. The Geopark is a designation that attracts tourists wishing to explore the connections between geology, local communities, culture, and nature. Geoparks are designed to promote tourism and celebrate a region’s uniqueness, and do not prohibit any land use.

Council indicated support for the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark, however, discussion was held on Council receiving a business plan for this initiative. Mayor Blair advised that a business plan is in place and was required for applications for funding from other sources and that this will be brought to the Boards attention. Mayor Blair also noted that an announcement on the UNESCO Designation is expected sometime in July.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Mayor Blair

“That Council approves the request for \$65,000 for the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Active Communities Transportation Program

During previous discussions of Council, interest was expressed in looking at a program for rural communities to enable transportation to recreation facilities for various programs and events. Staff are estimating an initial cost of \$12,000 to begin a program.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That Council approves \$12,000 for the Active Communities Transportation Program.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

RECC Software

Council received correspondence at their April Council Committee from the Chair of the RECC Board. The correspondence relates to mandatory capital upgrades to the facilities Building Management Software. The cost would be shared 50/50 with the Town of Truro, with each paying \$16,250.

Moved by Councillor Masters
Seconded by Mayor Blair

“That Council approves \$16,250 for the RECC Building Management Software.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Mr. Fraser advised that this concludes items that staff have under additions and deletions and with all changes that have been discussed, the budget remains balanced.

Following deliberations, a number of issues were raised relative to budget implications.

School Board Funding – Concern was expressed with the contribution amount for this year due to the situation with the COVID-19 Pandemic. With the school closures, expenses such as fuel and heat costs, substitute teachers as well as other operational costs, should be vastly reduced. Mr. Fraser advised that staff reached out to the Municipal Advisor and there have been no indication of anticipated changes to school board funding. Points of discussion included not being prepared to accept that they have a formula and we have to pay it and writing a letter to the school board to that effect; concerns brought forward to NSFAM relative to the 2.9% increase in school board funding as well as fuel savings not being passed on to municipalities; and requesting a breakdown from the School Board to justify the 2.9% increase.

Library Funding – An increase in annual library funding for the region was previously brought forward to Council. At the time, other municipal units

indicated they would not be opposed to the increase if agreed to by all units in the region. Council agreed and approved the increased funding. Due to the closure of libraries, the possibility of reconsidering was raised by other municipal units.

Policing – A suggestion was made to hold funds aside for the extra officers the Municipality is paying for, as staff were instructed to do last year during budget deliberations. The CAO advised briefly on an overview from the Department of Justice on the timelines for the study being provided to Council at this Thursday's Special Council meeting. A summary of information received relative to regimental numbers for all positions was also provided, and it was indicated that we are confident all positions funded for this year are filled. Additionally, there is one more position as part of the Bible Hill Detachment that is not paid for by the Municipality.

Council Honorariums – Clarification was requested on the calculation for the annual increments for Council honorariums. Mr. Fraser advised that the honorariums for this year were calculated based on the formula as approved by Council last year. The notes in the budget regarding the honorariums were not amended to reflect this change but will be updated accordingly.

Low Income Municipal Tax Assistance Program – A question was raised about having an amount set aside in the budget for potential changes to the Low Income Municipal Tax Assistance Program. Staff recommend that any adjustment could come from the contingency built into the budget for COVID-19. Council indicated overall support for the budget, with robust changes included for this Program.

Reserves – There was discussion on transfer of funds into reserves being held in abeyance until there is a better understanding of the impacts from COVID-19. Some suggestions included transferring funds into a newly established COVID-19 reserve and any funds not used for COVID-19 be proportionately put back into other reserves at a later date; and, placing the funds in the Special Operating reserve, where use of funds would not be restricted. The general consensus was to transfer the funds to the Special Operating Reserve and that staff bring back to Council in approximately six months for consideration of reallocation of funds.

Tax Relief – Discussion took place on various ways to provide tax relief, such as the possibility of lowering rates, including for local businesses. Opportunities through Procurement for local businesses was mentioned and Ms. Newell, Director of Public Works, advised that projects over \$100,000 are bound to the Atlantic Procurement Policy. However, it was indicated when going out for quotes for projects under \$100,000 and equipment under \$50,000, staff will try, whenever possible, to request quotes locally.

The risks of lowering tax rates and potential implications was discussed. Advice from many sources indicate that municipalities should not lower rates.

Moved by Mayor Blair

Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the budget be approved, as discussed and amended; and,

That the allocation of funds as presented, be transferred into the Special Operating Reserve and brought back to Council in six months for consideration of reallocation.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

It was noted that the issue regarding the School Board funding be brought forward at the Special Council meeting on Thursday evening for further discussion and directive.

Adjournment

It was agreed that the meeting adjourn at 8:54 pm.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary