

COUNCIL COMMITTEE

The Regular Session of the Council Committee of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted virtually, via Zoom Webinars, on Thursday, September 10, 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 Tom Taggart	District 10
Councillor Wade Parker	District 11

Regrets

Councillor Bob Pash	District 9
---------------------	------------

Staff Present

Rob Simonds, Chief Administrative Officer
 Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development
 Scott Fraser, Director of Corp. Services/Acting Director of Solid Waste
 Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works
 Jennifer Hamilton Upham, Municipal Solicitor
 Tracey Veno, Recording Secretary
 Devin Trefry, Research, Policy and Community Engagement Officer
 Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager
 Jeanette Himmelman, Systems Analyst

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Masters
 Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the agenda be approved with the following amendments:

- Add Item 13b, FCM Sustainable Communities Conference;
- Add Item 13c, Crossing Guard – Cedar Drive and East Prince Street;
- Add Item 14b, Rath Eastlink Community Centre (RECC) and Arenas in Colchester County;
- Add Item 14c, Heavy Traffic and Speeds/Large Numbers of School Children;
- Remove Item 17 in Closed Session.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Deputy Mayor Stewart welcomed members of the public who were in attendance (virtually) for tonight’s meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Councillor Cooper
 Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the minutes of the meetings held on June 23, August 4 and 13, 2020, be approved as presented.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Business Arising from Minutes

There was no business arising from the meetings held on June 23, August 4 and 13, 2020.

ACTION ITEMS

Vacancy on RECC Board

Rob Simonds, CAO, advised Council of an upcoming vacancy on the RECC Board. Nevin Jackson’s term on the Board is nearing completion and he has served the maximum number of allowable terms. Should Council wish to proceed with advertising for the vacancy, given the timing of the upcoming Election, it will likely be the new Nominating Committee that would make a recommendation for the appointment.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Cavanaugh

“That staff be directed to advertise for the vacancy on the RECC Board.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture Tax Exemption Request

Mr. Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services, advised that a request for a tax exemption was received from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture (NSFA) for their property located at 7 Atlantic Industrial Avenue in East Mountain. Following review, staff determined that the NSFA meet the criteria of eligibility under Section 71(2) of the Municipal Government Act, for a tax exemption from Commercial to Residential taxation.

Discussion was held on the roles of the NSFA and support it provides to the farming industry; the organization providing jobs in Colchester County; and if the Municipality should be providing provincial bodies with tax exemptions. Council also discussed whether the NSFA is being utilized solely for NSFA use or if space in the building is being rented out, noting that if it is being rented, then it should be taxed as a business. It was confirmed that currently the NSFA is not renting space out and should this change in the future, Council can review their decision at any time.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture be granted a tax reduction from commercial to residential taxation rate, for their property located at 7 Atlantic Industrial Avenue in East Mountain, PID #20331468 (AAN 07375506).”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Tatamagouche Water Utility Three-Year Operating Budget

Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services, presented the Tatamagouche Water Utility (TWU) three-year operating budget and advised that three-year

budgets are a requirement of the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (UARB). The Tatamagouche Water Utility Advisory Committee recently met to review the budget and recommended that the budget be passed as presented.

Brief discussion was held on the accumulated deficit of the TWU; measures taken to reduce this deficit; and, increased funding in the depreciation reserve. A rate study will be planned for 2020/21.

Moved by Councillor Gregory

Seconded by Mayor Blair

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Tatamagouche Water Utility three-year operating budget (2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23) be approved, as presented.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Debert Water Utility Three-Year Operating Budget

Mr. Fraser presented the Debert Water Utility (DWU) three-year operating budget to Council and indicated that as noted above, is a requirement of the UARB. As of March 31, 2020, the DWU is in an accumulated surplus position of \$185,662, and as such, there should be no increases in the near future.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier

Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Debert Water Utility three-year operating budget (2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23) be approved, as presented.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Art Purchase Program

Mr. Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager, advised Council that the Annual Art Purchase Program usually takes place in November of each year and 2020 would be the 32nd annual show. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the usual venue (NSCC) for this function is not allowing outside events to take place at their facility until at least the new year. Mr. Burgess presented possible options which included proceeding with the program in a virtual platform; sourcing another venue; postponing the event and reassess at a later date; and cancelling the program this year with the option of purchasing two pieces of art during the 2021 Art Purchase Program.

Although virtual platforms seem to work for meetings, Council felt that holding the Art Purchase Program virtually would not be the best option.

Moved by Mayor Blair

Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Art Purchase Program be cancelled for this year and that two pieces of art be purchased during the 2021 Program; and,

That staff ensure that the cost to purchase two pieces of art be covered in the budget for 2021.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Sidewalk, Crowland Drive

Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works, advised that Council had previously requested that the construction of a new sidewalk on Pictou Road from Salmon River Road to Crowland Drive be referred to the Capital Budget process. Following a review by staff, it was determined that Council’s Active Transportation (AT) Strategy does not include the construction of a sidewalk to Crowland Drive. The Director of Community Development has reviewed and scored the proposed sidewalk, in accordance with categories in the AT Strategy. Results of the scoring ranks this sidewalk in the short-term priority category. Estimated costs for the sidewalk would be approximately \$1 million. It was noted that residents on Crowland Drive currently pay the AT area rate. Ms. Newell indicated that since this area reflects more rural development, a multi-use trail should also be considered as an option.

Moved by Councillor MacKenzie
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the sidewalk along Pictou Road from the Salmon River Road to Crowland Drive, be included in the Five-Year Capital Budget.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

It was noted that prior to this project proceeding, it will be brought before Council for discussion on whether it should be a sidewalk or a multi-use trail.

Chantilly Drainage

Ms. Newell provided a detailed overview of this item which included a summary of the drainage issue; location description and ownership; regulatory approval and easement requirements for work to proceed; estimated costs for drainage improvements; and options for consideration.

With the Flood Advisory Committee (FAC) having the expertise and ability to handle this scope of work, discussion was held on whether this work should be referred to the FAC. Councillor Cavanaugh, as Chair of the FAC, expressed serious budgetary concerns with this project falling to the Committee.

Concern was also raised about this being a provincially owned road and the Municipality is having to step up to carry out the work and cover costs when it should be their responsibility.

Moved by Councillor Masters
Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That the Chantilly Lane drainage improvements on private land, subject to necessary regulatory approvals and granting easements, be approved and that it be added to the Capital Budget process.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Capital Budget Approval

Mr. Fraser advised that Council met on September 1st where staff provided a detailed presentation on the Five-Year Capital Budget. The presentation included a review of projects in schedules A and B of the budget; debt ratio projections based on the projects and the financing; as well as projections on area rates and reserves. He reminded Council that this is a living, working document that can be modified as needed.

Concern was expressed regarding a couple of items: the Great Village Sewage Treatment Plant replacement at \$2 million; and equipment for Solid Waste including the rock truck at \$750,000, an excavator at \$350,000 and a loader at \$250,000. With reference to the Great Village Sewage Treatment Plant replacement, there is no issue with the design scheduled for 2021/22, however, the cost for construction listed in 2022/23 at \$2 million is concerning for 60 or less homes, and new innovative solution/alternate systems should be investigated. Regarding the equipment for the Balefill, it was suggested that the Efficiency Study dealing with Municipal Solid Waste in Nova Scotia should be reviewed before committing to this in the budget.

Mr. Fraser advised that due to the age of some of the equipment at the Balefill, there are challenges relative to parts and repairs to the equipment. Staff continue to investigate improving efficiencies, however, operations at the Balefill must be maintained.

Clarification was sought on the sidewalk from College Road along Old Courthouse Branch to Saywood, as it does not appear to be listed in the Capital Budget. Ms. Newell advised that depending on how it is ranked in the AT Strategy, it may not be listed in the Capital Budget as yet. Following a review of the documents, Ms. Newell confirmed that this sidewalk has not been listed in the Capital Budget in the last three years, however, is in the AT Strategy as a medium term priority. The sidewalks currently in the Capital Budget have been prioritized over the medium term projects.

An inquiry was made regarding plans relative to a review of Council strategic priorities. The CAO advised that similar to this term of Council, one of the recommendations that staff will be making to the new Council would be to undertake a review of the strategic priorities early in the term.

Discussion was held on opportunities for Council to review items currently in the Capital Budget before they proceed. It was confirmed that for projects not currently underway and equipment listed in the capital budget, there is always opportunity for Council to review. As previously mentioned, it is a working document that can be changed as per the wishes of Council.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That the 2020-21 Five-Year Capital Budget be approved with the addition of the Chantilly Lane Drainage Project and the sidewalk along Pictou Road from the Salmon River Road to Crowland Drive.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

It was noted that at their meeting on August 27, 2020, Council granted authority to September Council Committee to make a decision on the Capital Budget.

Memorial Gardens Property

Mayor Blair advised that a cheque has been received from a resident who is interested in having a memorial garden for those lost in the April 18th and 19th tragedy and requested that this be referred to staff. Consultation with the Nova Scotia Remembers Community Legacy Group should be part of the process.

Moved by Mayor Blair
Seconded by Councillor Cavanaugh

“That the establishment of a memorial garden be referred to staff for investigation.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Councillor Taggart indicated that he would like to thank the Nova Scotia Remembers Community Legacy Group for all of their efforts and for removing and storing all items from the initial memorial location.

FCM Sustainable Communities Conference

Councillor Taggart advised that the FCM Sustainable Communities Conference takes place every two years. This year it is being held from October 20-22 and will be a virtual conference. Refunds will be granted to any current Council members who register and do not get re-elected. Councillor Taggart confirmed that due to the NS Municipal Elections taking place on October 17th, late registrations will be accepted for Councillors-Elect wishing to attend.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that funding be provided for Councillors and Councillors-Elect to register and attend the FCM Sustainability Conference, being held virtually from October 20th to 22nd.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Crossing Guard – Cedar Drive and East Prince Street

Councillor Gibbs advised Council of some new developments at the Harmony Heights Elementary School and changes made by the Chignecto Regional Centre for Education. The changes have resulted in large number of students gathering at the end of Birch Street and East Prince Street, as well as Cedar Drive. Previous requests for a crosswalk in this area have been unsuccessful and Councillor Gibbs indicated that the situation has worsened with these recent changes. He has received a number of calls regarding speeders and has reached out to the RCMP who have provided a presence in the area. Due to the safety concerns, the request being made this evening is to have Council approve to fund having crossing guards in place, effective immediately, without having to go through the usual process.

Deputy Mayor Stewart reminded Council that this is a meeting of Council Committee, which does not have authority to approve expenditures. Any

decision this evening would have to be a recommendation to Council for the end of the month.

Discussion was held on the process of getting crossing guards; necessary approvals; and how crossing guards are funded. Ms. Newell advised that every year we are required to register crossing guards in school crosswalks on provincial roads with the province. Information clarifying what is required and potential costs could be brought back to the September Council meeting.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That the request for crossing guards at Birch Street and Cedar Drive be referred to staff with information being brought back to Council at the September Council meeting.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Community Trail Funding Program

Two applications were received under the Community Trail Funding Program for the Summer 2020 deadline. The total amount being requested and approved was \$10,561, broken down as follows:

- \$8,100 for the Tatamagouche Area Trails Association for maintenance for the Short Line Trail, pending confirmation of funding from other sources; and,
- \$2,461 for the Tatamagouche Area Trails Association for capital improvements to the Short Line Trail.

Responding to a query on funding, Mr. Burgess advised that there is another application deadline in January and there are additional funds available for these applications.

RECC and Arenas in Colchester County

On the request of Councillor Boutilier, Mr. Burgess provided an update on the status of the RECC and other Colchester arenas which included tentative opening dates; re-opening plans; and restrictions relative to Covid-19. There is a Re-opening/Planning Committee that continue to meet on a regular basis and updated information will be provided as it becomes available. Mr. Burgess advised that this has been a difficult year for the arenas and there may be requests for assistance coming to Council in the future.

Mr. Burgess also advised on other recreational programs that are experiencing setbacks and/or cancellations due to Covid-19.

Heavy Traffic Speeds/Large Numbers of School Children

Having addressed this during discussion under Crossing Guard – Cedar Drive and East Prince Street, Councillor Gibbs withdrew this item from the agenda.

Director’s Report

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

Congratulations were extended to Mannie Withrow on his upcoming retirement.

CLOSED SESSION

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the meeting go into closed session at 8:54 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the meeting reconvene in open session at 9:09 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the meeting adjourn at 9:09 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary