

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

The Regular Session of the Municipal Council of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was held in the Courthouse, Truro, Nova Scotia, on Thursday, March 26, 2020.

Roll Call

The roll was called with the following Councillors in attendance:

Mayor Christine Blair, Chair	
Councillor Eric Boutilier	District 1
Councillor Bill Masters	District 2
Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart	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)
 Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works
 Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services
 Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor
 Tracey Veno, Recording Secretary
 Paul Smith, Manager of Planning Services
 Dave Westlake, Emergency Management/Protective Services Coordinator
 Mark Austin, Economic Development Officer
 Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager
 Tim Smith, IT Manager
 Kelly Gratto-McCarthy, Human Resources Specialist

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Masters
 Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the agenda be approved with the following amendments:

- Remove #7, Municipal Election – Advance Poll Dates;
- Add #12b, Cell Phone Service;
- Add #14, Negotiations in Closed Session.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Councillor Masters Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the minutes of the meeting held on February 27, 2020, be approved as presented.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Business Arising from Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes of the meeting held on February 27, 2020.

**Standing Committee Reports
and Recommendations**

Deputy Mayor Stewart, Chair of Council Committee, presented the report from the meeting held on March 12, 2020:

Wastewater Collection Truck – Award of Tender

Councillor Cooper declared a conflict of Interest on this matter and removed himself from the table.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That Council approves that staff be authorized to award the tender for the purchase of a 1.5 Ton Truck for Wastewater Collection to Hollis Ford in the amount of \$50,889, excluding HST, with source of funds being the Public Works Vehicle Reserve.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

At this point, Councillor Cooper returned to the discussion.

Queen Street Sidewalk (Tatamagouche) – Award of Tender

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That Council approves entering into a contract with Ian Sinclair for the construction of the Queen Street Sidewalk in Tatamagouche, pending written confirmation from the Village of Tatamagouche that they will reimburse construction costs.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Offer to Purchase Two Lots on Dakota Road, Debert

As all information was not disclosed at the March 12th Council Committee meeting regarding the offer to purchase lots on Dakota Road in Debert, Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor, suggested that the motion from March 12th recommending the approval of the sale of the properties and granting the CAO the authority to execute a Purchase and Sale Agreement be deferred to April Council Committee when all information is made available.

Discussion was held on current zoning in Debert; land sales being for residential use versus commercial; and, concerns with existing processes for approval of land sales in Debert being too lengthy and causing delays for developers. Referring to the current lack of clarity relative to the processes for the sale of lands in Debert, Rob Simonds, CAO, indicated that staff would look into the processes for a more simplified and systematic approach.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That authority be granted to April Council Committee to approve the presented offer to purchase lands on Dakota Road at a purchase price

of \$30,000.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Code of Conduct

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart
Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That Council approves that staff be directed to proceed with establishing processes for handling informal and formal complaints under the Code of Conduct, for Council review and consideration.”

Motion Carried. (*Councillor Gibbs opposed*)

Central Colchester Planning Advisory Committee Report from meeting held on March 10, 2020.

Due to technical difficulties in retrieving the report, on behalf of Councillor Taggart, Deputy Mayor Stewart presented the report to Council from the Planning Advisory Committee Meeting held on March 10, 2020.

Brief discussion was held on the issue of bee keeping in Colchester, with clarification being sought on what will be told to those individuals making the initial complaint about bees. Councillor Taggart indicated that this was a one of complaint and the individual with the bees has since moved. Staff carried out an extensive review and recommended using the agricultural provisions in the current By-law to limit where commercial bee keeping activities occur rather than implementing a new by-law to manage the issue. It was noted that the person keeping the bees has relocated to District 7, so could possibly be future complaints.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That Council accepts the Central Colchester Planning Advisory Committee Report from meeting held on March 10, 2020.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Nominating Committee

Mayor Blair indicated that the Nominating Committee will be meeting in the next week or so to review applications for the Citizen Representative to the Audit Committee. Staff is seeking authorization for April Council Committee to approve the appointment.

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That Council authorizes April Council Committee to approve the

appointment of the Citizen Representative to the Audit Committee.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

Annual Account Write-offs (2019/20)

Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services, advised that staff present account write-offs annually in preparation for year end. A summary of the collection process was provided as well as the recommended write-offs for the 2019/20 fiscal year.

Discussion was held regarding outstanding bills being that of property owners or tenants and whether a lien can be placed on property owners for outstanding water utility accounts. Mr. Fraser indicated that the water utilities are regulated by the NS Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) and liens cannot be put on the properties. Further discussion was held regarding collection specific to companies that no longer exist. The Municipal Solicitor advised that it would depend on whether it was a partnership or company. If it was just a business name, the individual would still be liable, but if it was an incorporated company that has gone out of business, unless there was a personal guarantee, there would be nothing to go back on.

Further discussion on the collection process was held. Additionally, a question was raised regarding the ability to get around the NSUARB to allow the Municipality to put a lien on properties for outstanding water bills. Staff and the Municipal Solicitor will investigate this.

Moved by Councillor Cooper Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That Council approves that the property taxes, water accounts, general receivables and interest totaling \$9,080.73, as presented, be written off.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Interpretive Concept and Feasibility Study, Fundy Discovery Site – Authority to Award at Council Committee

Paul Smith, Manager of Planning Services, reported that due to operational impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a delay in the review of the RFP responses for the Interpretive Concept and Feasibility Study for the Fundy DiscoverySite. The Staff Selection Committee are requesting that Council grant authority to April Council Committee to consider and approve awarding the contract.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That Council grants Council Committee the authority to consider the award of the Interpretive Concept and Feasibility Study contract at its meeting on April 9, 2020.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Future Council Meetings / COVID-19

The CAO advised that there is a Maintenance Budget meeting scheduled for April 2, 2020 and is requesting Council approval to cancel that meeting and refer to staff to identify other potential dates and options relative to revisiting

the budget process. Municipalities across the province are facing challenges regarding budget processes and staff is currently verifying what is being done. Findings will be reviewed with the Executive Committee as well as reported back to Council with options for consideration.

Referring to the regular meetings and public hearings, as well as the budget meetings, the Municipal Solicitor advised that we must be mindful of satisfying the public component aspect when considering scheduling such meetings.

Brief discussion was held on Planning Advisory Committee meetings and Councillor Taggart requested that staff contact developers to explain the current situation to them and he would advise the citizen members of the committee.

Council agreed that the April 2nd Maintenance Budget meeting be deferred, and information will be brought forward to the Executive Committee and to Council Committee at their meeting on April 9th.

Correspondence - ACTION

Julie Hay, Stewiacke Visitor Information Centre

Letter to the CAO dated March 10, 2020, requesting additional funding to assist with extending the season for the Visitor Information Centre.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the letter from Julie Hay dated March 10, 2020, requesting additional funding to assist with extending the season for the Stewiacke Visitor Information Centre be referred to budget deliberations.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Mark Furey, Minister of Justice and Chuck Porter, Minister of Municipal Affairs

Letter to the Mayor dated March 9, 2020, concerning forming an accessibility advisory committee and having an accessibility plan in place by April 1, 2021.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs Seconded by Councillor Taggart

“That the letter from Mark Furey, Minister of Justice and Chuck Porter, Minister of Municipal Affairs, dated March 9, 2020, concerning forming an accessibility advisory committee and having an accessibility plan in place by April 1, 2021, be referred to staff.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Cincy Johnson, Colchester Legion Pipes and Drums

Email to the Mayor dated March 16, 2020, regarding previously approved grant funding for Colchester Legion Pipes and Drums' participation in the 75th Anniversary of the Celebration of the Liberation of the Netherlands.

Moved by Councillor Parker Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That funding in the amount of \$15,000 previously granted to Colchester Legion Pipes and Drums for their participation in the 75th Anniversary of the Celebration of the Liberation of the Netherlands, be returned to the

Municipality and that the group reapply if the trip is rescheduled for a later date.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Tod White, Truro Homeless Outreach Society Treasurer and Director of Future Planning, Social Media, Fundraising and Grant Writing

Email to the Mayor dated March 25th requesting assistance for the Truro Homeless Outreach Society (THOS).

Lengthy discussion was held regarding the request for assistance with the following points being raised:

- Availability of other funding opportunities via provincial and federal governments;
- THOS plans for addressing overcrowding/social distancing;
- Recognition of the need for support but noting it should not be the Municipality’s responsibility solely, it should be a shared responsibility with others including the Town of Truro, and the provincial and federal governments;
- The need for addressing the issue of homelessness from a broader perspective;
- The potential need to help the broader community, not just one organization; and,
- Homelessness being an issue across the Country and not just due to COVID- 19.

Concern was also expressed regarding the COVID-19 pandemic impacting many businesses and individuals and until we are able to proceed with our budgeting process, we should be reluctant to make any such decisions without a concrete plan and knowing what our resources are.

The CAO indicated that to effectively deal with homelessness, it must be a round table discussion and complete community effort with other partners coming to the table.

Moved by Councillor Cooper Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That a letter be sent to the Premier, Minister of Health, Chief Medical Officer of Health, and the Member of Parliament, regarding what funding is available for homeless shelters and the need for assistance to help keep the homeless safe.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Correspondence - INFORMATION

Development Officer

A copy of the Development Activity Report received from the Development Officer for the month of February 2020. Council agreed to receive the report for information purposes.

Building Inspector

A copy of the Building Permit Statistics received from the Building Inspector for the month of February 2020. Council agreed to receive the report for information purposes.

**Adrienne Murray, Land
Management Advisor,
Indigenous Services Canada**

Letter to the CAO dated March 4, 2020 regarding the addition of land to Millbrook.

Moved by Councillor Taggart Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That a letter be sent to Millbrook First Nations requesting an update on the status of the addition of reserve lands.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Waye Mason, Halifax Councillor
and NSFM Past President**

Email dated March 22, 2020, regarding residential tenancy issues.

Deputy Mayor Stewart advised that due to the current unprecedented situation, the NSFM was approached by the residential tenancy board requesting municipalities to assist with gathering information dealing with evictions and residents being asked questions regarding private health matters related to COVID-19. If residents are being evicted, by written notification, during this time due to non-payment of rent, they are being asked to share the written notification with their Councillor who will in turn provide copies via email to Waye Mason. Councillors are being asked to share this message through social media avenues to help make residents aware.

The CAO indicated that the message can be also posted to the County website and through Facebook to alert constituents that if they are dealing with this type of situation, they can contact their district Councillor and provide them with the written information so that it can be passed on to the provincial government.

INFORMATION ITEMS

**Community Park Funding
Program – Winter 2020
Application**

Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager, provided a summary of this item including the applications received and the approved funding amounts, pending confirmation of other funding sources.

Clarification was sought regarding sufficient funding being in the budget to support the applications. Mr. Burgess indicated that funding would be from the next budget year from the Community Parks Program Reserve. Concern was expressed regarding committing funds from a budget that has yet to be approved. Staff indicated that they would confirm what funds are available in the current budget and would report back.

Responding to queries on children being permitted to use the school playgrounds after school and on weekends, and whether there is signage at the schools acknowledging the Municipality's contribution, it was confirmed that use of the playgrounds outside school hours is part of the stipulation with our funding. Regarding signage, Mr. Burgess indicated that he thought some of the schools do have signage, but he would investigate this to ensure signage is in place.

COVID-19 Update

This item provides Council with a comprehensive update on operational implications and adjustments, broken down by department, relative to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The CAO indicated that this is meant to be a high-level

overview of operational and administrative considerations since COVID-19 has become more significant for our organization, community and province. Staff have been meeting with Executive over the last week or so and will continue to do so to keep them well informed. Staff continue to meet on a daily basis doing regular check-ins and updates.

On a request to have continued reports on a bi-weekly basis to all of Council, the CAO advised that we would do our best to make updates at each meeting of Council or Council Committee.

Cell Phone Service

Councillor Cooper raised the issue of cell phone circuits being busy. As some people no longer have land lines, this can be a significant issue.

Dave Westlake, Emergency Management/Protective Services Coordinator, advised that this information had previously been brought to his attention, it was forwarded to the Provincial Emergency Management. A preliminary response was received but a follow up will be done to request more information. Once received, the information will be circulated to Council via the CAO.

Reports from Councillors Appointed to Outside Boards and Agencies

Copies of reports from the Mayor and Councillors were circulated in the package or placed on table for this evenings meeting.

CLOSED SESSION

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

That the meeting go into closed session at 8:56 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gibbs
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the meeting reconvene in open session at 9:18 pm.”
Motion Carried Unanimously.

Referring to discussions in Closed Session, concern was expressed regarding the length of time it takes to deal with inquiries from developers relative to land sales in Debert.

The CAO proposed that similar to discussions earlier this evening, staff will look into developing a type of flow chart that would map out the process to expedite and have clear delineation to make decisions to shorten timelines and facilitate sales in Debert for Council consideration. Councillor Taggart inquired about the timeline to receive this. The CAO advised that this is one of many priorities and will commit to getting it through as quickly as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Gibbs

“That the meeting adjourn at 9:30 pm.”

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Motion Carried Unanimously.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary