

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

The Regular Session of the Municipal Council of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted virtually via Zoom Webinars, with Council Members in-person, on Thursday, April 29, 2021, at 6 pm.

Roll Call

The roll was called with the following Council members in attendance:

Mayor Christine Blair	
Councillor Eric Boutilier	District 1
Councillor Laurie Sandeson	District 2
Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart, Chair	District 3
Councillor Mike Cooper	District 4 (arrived late)
Councillor Tim Johnson	District 5
Councillor Karen MacKenzie	District 6
Councillor Michael Gregory	District 7
Councillor Lisa Patton	District 8
Councillor Marie Benoit	District 9
Councillor Tom Taggart	District 10
Councillor Wade Parker	District 11

Staff Present

Rob Simonds, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
 Michelle Boudreau, Director of Public Works
 Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development
 Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services/Acting Director of Solid Waste
 Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor
 Tracey Venno, Recording Secretary
 Devin Trefry, Research, Policy, and Community Engagement Officer
 Mark Austin, Economic Development Officer
 Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager
 Paul Smith, Manager of Planning Services
 Mollie MacBurnie-Haas, IT Support Technician

Due to a directive by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing pursuant to the provincial State of Emergency related to COVID-19, all Colchester Council meetings must be held remotely by teleconference or on a virtual platform. In order to ensure transparency and honour the commitment for Colchester Council to conduct its business in public, these draft minutes are being posted within twenty-four hours of the meeting. They will not be reviewed and approved until the next regularly scheduled meeting of Colchester Council on May 27, 2021. Until these minutes are formally approved by Colchester Council, they cannot be relied on as an official record of the April 29, 2021, meeting.

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Sandeson
 Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That the agenda be approved with the following additions:

- Item 11b, FCM Conference;
- Item 11c, Nova Scotia Native Women Association;

- Item 14b, Permanent Memorial.”

Motion Carried Unanimously. *(Councillor Cooper was not available for this vote)*

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Councillor Parker
Seconded by Councillor Boutillier

“That the minutes of the meeting held on March 25, 2021, be approved as presented.”

Motion Carried Unanimously. *(Councillor Cooper was not available for this vote)*

Business Arising from Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes of the meeting held on March 25, 2021.

Standing Committee Reports and Recommendations

Deputy Mayor Stewart, Chair of Council Committee, presented the report from the meeting held on April 15, 2020:

Mentoring Plus Strategy

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart
Seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council approves that the Municipality become a supporting partner of the Mentoring Plus Strategy.”

Motion Carried Unanimously. *(Councillor Cooper was not available for this vote)*

Tax Exemption Request – Truro Horsemen’s Club

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart
Seconded by Councillor Sandeson

“That Council approves that the Truro Horsemen’s Club be granted the tax exemption, the same as all other Community Halls in Colchester County.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor MacKenzie and Patton opposed - Councillor Cooper was not available for this vote)*

At this point in the meeting, Councillor Cooper arrived.

FCM Community Efficiency Financing

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart
Seconded by Councillor Johnson

“That Council approves the Municipality’s contribution to the Solar Colchester program expansion, including the addition of a home energy efficiency retrofit PACE program; and,

That the following Borrowing Resolution, be approved:

**FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES
PROPERTY ASSESSED CLEAN ENERGY FUND FINANCING RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is offering financing to municipalities participating in the Property Assessed Clean Energy program;

WHEREAS in accordance with the program requirements of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Council of the County of Colchester has deemed it appropriate to seek approval from the Minister of Municipal Affairs to take part in the financing offered through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities;

WHEREAS pursuant to Section 81A of the Municipal Government Act, the Municipality has adopted a bylaw fixing and providing for methods of payment of charges consistent with the Property Assessed Clean Energy program;

WHEREAS pursuant to Section 84 of the Municipal Government Act, a Municipality may borrow to cover the annual current expenditures to an amount not to exceed fifty per cent of the combined total of the taxes levied by the Municipality for the previous year and the amounts to be received by the provincial and federal governments.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED

THAT subject to the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Council of the County of Colchester borrow a sum or sums not exceeding \$5,565,400.00 for the purpose set out above; and,

THAT the borrowing of funds will be used to offer a financing program for property owners in Colchester for home energy projects; and,

THAT the borrowing will be under the terms and conditions of the agreement as determined by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

**Debert Aviation Centre
Watermain – Award of Tender**

Michelle Boudreau, Director of Public Works, provided a brief overview of this item noting that the new Debert Aviation Centre requires an upsizing of the existing watermain on Vickers Street from a 150m diameter line to a 250mm diameter line for a distance of 200 meters. The original tender results received exceeded available funds, staff reduced the scope of work and re-issued the tender, with a closing of April 22nd. A summary of this tender result was included in the Action Item.

This is an unbudgeted expense for the Debert Aviation Centre, however, the budget includes a line item for new siding which would be deferred to offset the cost of the watermain.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council approves that the tender for the reconstruction of the Debert Aviation Centre Watermain on Vickers Street be awarded to Ian Sinclair Contracting for a total contract amount of \$133,022 excluding HST; and,

That an internal contingency of \$15,000 be approved, to be spent only on authority of the Director of Public Works.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Keywest Court Paving – Authority to Award

Ms. Boudreau advised that this item is to authorize May Council Committee to award the tender for the repaving of Keywest Court in Truro Heights. The tender closed today, and staff will review the submissions and prepare an Action Item for Council consideration at May Committee.

Council briefly discussed the process for determining which streets get on the list for paving of County owned roads. Ms. Boudreau indicated that as part of the Asset Management process, streets are review every two years. There is limited funds in the reserve for paving and staff try to work within those funds.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council authorizes May Council Committee to award the tender for the repaving of Keywest Court in Truro Heights.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Highway 2 Hilden Sidewalk – Authority to Award

Similar to the previous item, Ms. Boudreau advised that this item is to authorize May Council Committee to award the tender for the Hilden Sidewalk. The tender for this project closes on May 4th and staff will prepare an item for consideration at May Committee.

Councillor Parker inquired about the sidewalk from Old Courthouse Branch to the entrance of Saywood as he thought this sidewalk was ahead of the Hilden sidewalk in the capital budget. Brief discussion was held on the order of the projects in the capital budget and projects in the Active Transportation Strategy. The Mayor suggested that the minutes be reviewed with report back relating to the Old Courthouse Branch to Saywood sidewalk.

Further discussion was also held regarding source of funds for this sidewalk with confirmation that this sidewalk is funded fully through the Active Transportation area rate.

Moved by Councillor Sandeson
Seconded by Councillor Boutillier

“That Council authorizes May Council Committee to award the tender for the Hilden Sidewalk.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Parker opposed)*

Annual Budget Approval

Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services, advised that Council has completed several budget meetings, including grant presentations and additions and deletions. A number of strategic decisions were made during these meetings resulting in a balanced budget. A copy of the draft budget summary as well as an itemized list of additions approved during these meetings was included in the Action Item.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart
Seconded by Councillor Johnson

“That the 2021-22 Operating Budget be approved with the additions and deletions as set out at the Council Committee meetings held on April 12, 19, and 26, 2021, 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:

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 **\$26,029,357** are required for the lawful purpose of the Municipality for the year ending **March 31, 2022**, 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 **2021** 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 **2021** 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, **2021**;

FURTHER RESOLVED that said Council hereby imposes an additional percentage charge of 12% per annum on all rates and taxes remaining unpaid after the 31st day of August, 2021.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Bible Hill Fire Brigade – Recognition

Councillor Boutilier advised that 2021 is the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the Bible Hill Fire Brigade and would like to see recognition of some type by the Municipality. It was also noted that 2021 is the 60th Anniversary for the Salmon River Fire Brigade and the 75th Anniversary for the Brookfield Fire Department was in 2020. Councillor Gregory advised that a certificate was done for the Tatamagouche Fire Department in recognition of their 75th Anniversary two years ago.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Johnson

“That Colchester County Council recognize the anniversaries of the Bible Hill Fire Brigade (75th), Salmon River Fire Brigade (60th), and the Brookfield Fire Department (75th in 2020).”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Policy Review – Grants to Non-Profit

Referring to grants and additions/deletions, Councillor Boutilier indicated Council has discussed in previous years how to make the process better for applicants, staff, and Council. There is ambiguity in some decisions based on criteria in the Policy not being clear enough. He suggested establishing an Adhoc Committee, consisting of three or four Council members and staff to review the Policy and bring back recommendations for Council to be better equipped to deal with applications and make it more efficient and fairer.

Discussion was held on doing a detailed review by a Committee or referring the Policy back to staff for minor tweaking; decision on grant requests being the responsibility of Council; and annual reporting requirements as part of a review. The CAO advised that without a fulsome discussion this evening, staff would benefit from the guidance of Council through an Adhoc Committee. Some concern was expressed regarding doing another review as one was done in 2017 with changes being implemented but the issue is that they are not being adhered to.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That an Adhoc Committee be established consisting of Council members and staff to look at the Grants to Non-Profit Policy, with at least two meetings of the Committee taking place and recommendations being brought back to Council by the end of June.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Parker opposed)*

Councillor Boutilier suggested that four Council members serve on the Adhoc Committee. It was agreed by majority that the Nominating Committee process be used to determine Council representatives and expressions of interest to serve on the Committee be sent to the Deputy Clerk.

FCM Conference

Deputy Mayor Stewart indicated that this is a follow-up to email discussions regarding the cost of \$600 per delegate being a bit steep for a virtual conference. Typically, each Council member has opportunity to attend a conference during the term of Council but not all members attend annually. He suggested the possibility of three or four delegates registering, select the plenaries of interest and having small groups get together in separate areas to observe.

Councillor Taggart advised that although costs seem a little excessive for a virtual conference, the role that FCM plays for municipalities is important. Only registered delegates have opportunity to vote for a Nova Scotia representative to the Board during the FCM Elections, and this year, the 3rd Vice President will be from Atlantic Canada. It is very important that as a Council and as representatives from Nova Scotia, that we have a strong voice.

Brief discussion was held on registration fees covering costs of the conference; submissions of reports from those attending being a benefit to members that cannot attend; and, current restrictions for gatherings may be an issue.

There was general support for the suggestion of gathering in small groups at different locations to observe the plenaries and staff would look into whether this is permitted.

Nova Scotia Native Women Association

Mayor Blair advised that she was approached by the Nova Scotia Native Women’s Association (NSNWA) through Ms. Zabrina Whitman of Kings County, Project Manager for a new Resiliency Centre for indigenous women, along with the Town of Truro Ward 1 Councillor, to attend a meeting to learn about the Resiliency Centre.

The Centre is being planned for the province, scheduled to be located in Millbrook, and has to do with indigenous women lost over the years and the socio-economic benefits for the region. The NSNWA is not asking for financial contributions from municipalities, rather a letter of support as a great Centre to have in the central core of Nova Scotia. It will be supported financially

through the federal and provincial governments, along with Millbrook and Membertou First Nations. The Municipality of Colchester would recognize the Centre as a vital space to address calls to Justice from missing and murdered indigenous women inquiry and as a holistic programming and healing space for indigenous people and communities.

Council discussed receiving a formal request from the organization with some background information and that May Council Committee be authorized to approve once this is received.

Moved by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Sandeson

“That Council grants authority to May Council Committee to approve the request from the Nova Scotia Native Women Association.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Correspondence - ACTION

**Peter Pope, Chair,
Tatamagouche Village
Committee**

A letter to the Mayor dated March 25, 2021, concerning acquiring a portion of the community field in Tatamagouche for development of a new playground.

Speaking as the Councillor for the area, Councillor Gregory indicated that this is a valuable piece of land that is currently owned by the School Board and if declared surplus, the County would have first right of refusal. Concern was expressed that the Village of Tatamagouche would take this on without taking to the community for input. There was a petition years ago regarding a skateboard park that was not received well, and the costs associated with a splash pad would be expensive. He suggested that this letter be referred back to the Village to hold a community meeting.

Concern was also expressed by other members of Council as this would be an expensive undertaking and that community support is needed, as well as the potential financial implications and resources required from the County. Discussion was held on other playgrounds and recreational resources/areas in the community. Mr. Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development, advised that Planning Staff are currently doing an extensive review for Tatamagouche and it would be appropriate to refer this to the Tatamagouche Planning review and have Planners consult with the community and provide feedback. Additionally, if this were to proceed, Mr. Macpherson advised that the Recreation Department would need to be involved.

Discussion was also held on having representation on Planning Advisory Committees and Area Planning Advisory Committees from Village Commissions.

Councillor Gregory reminded Council that the ownership of the community field is with the School Board and again, it is a valuable piece of land that may be out of range to acquire.

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Johnson

“That the Municipality acknowledge receipt of the request from the Village Commission, identifying that to our understanding not an abundance of public consultation has been undertaken on this matter, and that the Municipality’s Tatamagouche Review Committee could serve as a conduit to engage with the citizens.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Deping Chian, Falun Dafa
Association of Halifax**

An email to the Mayor dated April 14, 2021, regarding a proclamation request for 2021 Falun Dafa Day Anniversary.

Moved by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That the proclamation request for 2021 Falun Dafa Day Anniversary be received for information.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Murray Dawson, Local
Arrangements Chairman,
Colchester Legion NS Branch
No. 26**

A letter to Mayor and Council requesting a letter of welcome and a donation for the 55th Biennial Convention of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, being held October 8-11, 2021.

Brief discussion was held on the request for funding/donation and whether funding would be through the Community Event Grants or from the Safe Restart funds where the funds are being requested to offset costs associated with Covid-19. Staff confirmed that municipalities are still awaiting clarification from the provincial and federal governments on allowable uses for these funds. An inquiry was made on putting funds through the Community Event Grants budget and reallocating to the Safe Restart later, if allowable. Mr. Fraser indicated that this could be done.

Moved by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That Council approves support in the amount of \$500 to the Colchester Legion NS Branch No. 26 for the 55th Biennial Convention of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command being held October 8-11, 2021, with source of funds being Community Event Grants; and,

That a welcome letter for the event be sent from the Mayor on behalf of Council.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Sherry Costa-Lorenz, Provincial
Coordinator, Nova Scotia League
for Equal Opportunities**

An email to the Mayor dated April 28, 2021, concerning a proclamation for Access Awareness Week.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart
Seconded by Councillor Parker

“That Council proclaims May 30-June 5, 2021, as Access Awareness Week.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Tiffany Ward, Chair, Nova Scotia
Remembers Legacy Society**

A letter to Mayor and Council requesting the Municipality be a funding partner in support of their funding applications through the United Way’s Inspired by Compassion Fund. In the absence of the Nova Scotia Remembers Legacy Society obtaining charitable status from Canada Revenue Agency as yet, a letter is required for the application from an established charitable entity stating support of the project. The funding partnership would entail the Municipality receiving funding from United Way to pass on the Society, if the application is successful.

The Municipal Solicitor indicated that he would like opportunity to run this by a tax partner before proceeding with this request.

Moved by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Sandeson

“That the letter from the Nova Scotia Remembers Legacy Society requesting the Municipality be a funding partner in support of their funding applications through the United Way’s Inspired by Compassion Fund be referred to the Municipal Solicitor and staff; and,

That authority be granted to May Council Committee to approve the request.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Correspondence - INFORMATION

Development Officer

A copy of the Development Activity Report received from the Development Officer for the month of March 2021. Council agreed to receive the report for information purposes.

Building Inspector

A copy of Building Permit Statistics received from the Building Inspector for the month of Mrch 2021. Council agreed to receive the report for information purposes.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Covid-19 Update

As per the request of Council at the March 26, 2020 meeting, this item serves to provide Council with ongoing operational and administrative updates and implications relative to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Update – Affordable Housing Needs and Supply Study

Paul Smith, Manager of Planning Services, presented a summary of the Affordable Housing Needs and Supply Study Update. Included in his presentation was background information on how the study came to be, the stakeholders involved, and the retention of a consultant, Turner Drake, to complete the housing study. At their last meeting, Council expressed interest in addressing the housing crisis in Colchester. Mr. Smith suggested that with the study being 80% complete, delaying discussions on affordable housing, Council may benefit from the quantitative and qualitative data and recommendations of the study.

Discussion points included an inquiry on the comprehensive study being undertaken including input from areas beyond the urban core; private developer involvement in the study; funding/subsidies available to developers for affordable housing; coordinated effort required between developers, municipalities, provincial government, and industry; issues due to the building code; and increased price of building supplies. Mayor Blair advised that this was one of the topics discussed at the recent NSFM Mayors/Wardens/CAOs virtual meeting where a presentation was received from the Affordable Housing Commission. A copy of the information will be shared when received from NSFM.

Mr. Smith advised that there is a survey, organized by the consultant that is available online at colchesterhousingsurvey.com and has been advertised in local newspapers and on social media. The survey will be available until the end of May. Additionally, the consultant would like to hold a municipal stakeholder session with the Municipality of Colchester, the Town of Truro, and the province, in early June to discuss affordable housing in their respective jurisdictions. Council should identify two to three members interested in participating in this session. It was suggested that the procedure of expressions of interest for the Nominating Committee to review be followed.

Referring back to the survey, a suggestion was made to have this advertised in the next issue of the Colchester Newsletter.

Permanent Memorial

Mayor Blair advised that there was a meeting with Mayors/Wardens of Colchester, Cumberland, Halifax, and East Hants, to discuss a permanent memorial for the victims of the April 2020 mass shooting. There are also ongoing discussions with the Nova Scotia Remembers Legacy Society. Part of the process will include consultation with the families.

Reports from Councillors Appointed to Outside Boards and Agencies

Copies of reports from the Mayor and Councillors were circulated in the package and/or as a separate attachment prior to this evening's meeting.

Other

A question was raised from a member of the public via the online platform about a letter that was sent to Council. The CAO advised that he was not aware of the letter, who it was sent to, or the specifics of the letter. It would be challenging for Council to have a discussion without that information. Mayor Blair advised that it would be looked into and reported back to Council.

CLOSED SESSION

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That the meeting go into closed session at 8:58 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Johnson

“That the meeting reconvene in open session at 9:59 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Negotiations – Tower Site Lease

Moved by Councillor Sandeson
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

“That Council authorizes the CAO to sign the agreement as discussed in closed session.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Deputy Mayor Stewart raised the issue that is not a good practice to engage with public attendees during virtual Council meetings. It is not a practice during in-person Council meeting in Council Chambers and it should not be done on the virtual platform. If it is not part of the agenda, it should not be discussed. The CAO advised that there is a way to disarm the chat mode during meetings and staff will look into whether it can be disabled permanently.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Patton

“That the meeting adjourn at 10:10 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary