


TATAMAGOUCHE WATER UTILITY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Tatamagouche Water Utility Committee was held at the Tatamagouche Fire Hall on August 25, 2020 at 9:59am.

Present:	<p>Councillor Mike Gregory, Chair Mayor Christine Blair Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart Gloria Randall, Citizen Representative Willett Stevenson, Citizen Representative David Scharf, Citizen Representative Heather Maddigan, Finance Manager Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works Anna-Marie Manley, Patterson Law</p> <p>Note: all present were socially distanced by 6 ft, each having their own table and chair. Masks and hand sanitizer were made available.</p>
Approval of Agenda:	<p>Moved by David Scharf Seconded by Willett Stevenson</p>
Approval of Minutes:	<p>The Minutes of the Meeting of August 22, 2019 were approved by the Committee.</p> <p>Moved by Mayor Deputy Mayor Stewart Seconded by David Scharf</p>
Operating Budgets:	<p>Heather Maddigan reviewed the utility budget.</p> <p><u>2019/20 Fiscal Year</u> No significant differences when comparing expected vs budget. Meeting package included audited statements, which are still to be approved by Council. Utility had a budgeted surplus of \$8500, while actual surplus was about \$17,000. This was associated with fewer watermain breaks as compared to previous years. There were no capital expenses, and funds were added to the filter reserve as is the normal approach. Depreciation fund balance \$560,000.</p> <p>There were no questions from the Committee on year end results.</p> <p><u>Three Year Budget</u> No major changes from years past. Fiscal 19/20 was the last year of the water rate study, therefore the three year budget uses the 19/20 rates as a base. Revenue will be kept consistent, expenses will only increase slightly for typical inflationary items. We are budgeting modest surplus over next 3 years. Some minor repair work over the next 3 years will include waste tank repairs, pH equipment changes and replacement of some small treatment pumps. Transmission and distribution expenses have been budgeted conservatively as watermain breaks are hard to predict. For one-off expenses, we budgeted \$5K this year for legal expenses for ongoing UARB submissions around 246 waterline. We had originally intended to do water rate study this fiscal but bumped to next year due to COVID. No traditional capital projects are budgeted in the next 3</p>

	<p>years, but \$75K is earmarked for the anticipated 246 watermain replacement. No other usual items expected, mostly consistent with prior years.</p> <p>The Committee approved the 3-year operating budget with the following motion:</p> <p>That the Committee recommends to Council that the 3-year operating budget for the Tatamagouche Water Utility for years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 be approved”.</p> <p>Moved by Mayor Blair Seconded by David Scharf</p> <p>All in favour</p>
Utility Bill Write off Request – Joyce Mingo	<p>Ms. Mingo has requested that approximately \$850 be written off on her account related to water usage in January/February/March 2019. She related the extra charges to the age of the water meter, however her meter was only replaced in late June 2019, and her April/May/June water bill was consistent with her 2020 usage. The meter being off by 15 L per 1000 L is an allowable level of error per our utility regulations, and would only reduce her bill by \$16. Michelle felt that the bill was reflective of water usage, and that perhaps Ms. Mingo’s tenants had not reported a high usage during that billing period.</p> <p>The Committee passed the following motion:</p> <p>“The Committee recommends to Council that the write-off request from Joyce Mingo be denied, and that she be required to pay her outstanding amount, minus any interest accumulated since the date her request was filed.”</p> <p>Motion: David Seconded: Willett</p> <p>All were in favour</p>
UARB	<p>Anna-Marie provided an update on the UARB’s decision to deny the request for abandonment of the waterline on Highway 246. Her summary was as follows: The hearing on this matter occurred on February 3rd, 2020, with the decision arriving on August 10, 2020. COVID resulted in some delay.</p> <p>The member reviewing the matter was Richard Melanson, who had heard the matter previously during the Wall filing. His second decision flowed from the first. He reviewed two previous decisions for abandonment in the Province, in Chester and Truro/Bible Hill. The Board had high standard for what they wanted to see, and the abandonment would only have been supported by an extreme case of hardship. The additional cost to rate payers wasn’t enough hardship, and financial stability of utility wasn’t in jeopardy. For example, in the Chester case, the rate increased would have been 300%, as compared to the 5.7% in the case of Highway 246. He found that fixing the line would benefit the overall system. The board’s only jurisdiction was to decide on the abandonment itself, and they could not offer direction on future solution. Mr. Melanson’s comments on potential</p>

	<p>solutions were not binding. He noted that any capital expense over \$250K would have to go to board, and suggested using the depreciation fund to install a 50 mm diameter line. The board offered to provide clarity on the Utility's obligation to service future people along the 246 waterline.</p> <p>Councillor Gregory will provide copies of the decision to any committee members who wish to read it. It is also posted in the UARB website.</p> <p>Michelle noted that the installation of a 50 mm diameter line is technically feasible and the work will likely proceed in the Spring of 2021. Now that the matter is closed, Michelle will discuss the other private lines within the utility, and potential agreements with those homeowners.</p>
Words of Appreciation	Councillor Gregory thanked all committee members and staff people for their participation on the Committee over the last 4 years. With the October election, the Committee will require re constitution.
Next Meeting:	TBD pending committee re constitution after the election
Adjournment:	<p>Moved by Willett Stevenson Seconded by Gloria Randall</p>  <p>Michelle Newell, Recording Secretary</p>