

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday November 28, 2023
Following Asset Management Committee
Council Chambers
Municipal Administration Building
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

Present were: Warden Owen McCarron
Deputy Warden Bill MacFarlane
Councillor Mary MacLellan
Councillor Donnie MacDonald
Councillor Hugh Stewart
Councillor Shawn Brophy
Councillor Remi Deveau
Councillor John Dunbar
Councillor Gary Mattie
Councillor Harris McNamara

Regrets: None

Staff Present: Glenn Horne, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk

Others Present: Gallery
John Heseltine, LPP MCIP, Stantec (by Zoom)

Call to Order – Chairman, Warden Owen McCarron

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole was called to order by the Chair, Warden McCarron, at 5:52pm.

Approval of Agenda

Warden McCarron called for any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as presented.

Motion Carried

Approval of November 14, 2023 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden McCarron called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of November 14, 2023.

Moved and Seconded

That the minutes of November 14, 2023 be approved as presented.

Motion Carried

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

Delegations

There were no delegations.

Continuing Business

Resignation of the Deputy Warden

Mr. Horne shared with the Committee that he has received the resignation of Deputy Warden Stewart, to step down from his role as Deputy Warden and remain Councillor for District 3. Mr. Horne welcomed Councillor Stewart back to the Council Chambers after his absence. Warden McCarron thanked Councillor Stewart for his support during his duration in the role. Councillor Stewart provided his thanks to Council and his community for their support.

Warden McCarron then opened the floor to nomination for the role of Deputy Warden. Councillor MacFarlane was nominated for the role of Deputy Warden. There were no further nominations.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Councillor Bill MacFarlane be elected to the position of Deputy Warden for the remainder of the 2020-2024 council term.

Motion Carried

Letter of Support for Antigonish Affordable Housing Society

Mrs. Schumacher provided a brief review of the draft letters that have been prepared to support the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society's applications for funding for their second phase of development on Appleseed Drive. Consensus was given by the Committee provided to provide the letters of support as drafted.

Decision on Boundary Review Scenarios for Phase-2 Consultation

Mr. Horne welcomed Mr. Heseltine to the meeting and gave a brief overview of the process to date. Mr. Horne noted that he would facilitate the discussion about the selection of options to take forward to the second phase of the boundary review to

allow Warden McCarron to participate in the discussion. Mr. Horne noted that Mr. Heseltine was on hand to answer any questions and to provide feedback on any suggestions that came forward throughout the discussion. He then invited each councillor to provide their feedback on the options and ask any questions following their review of the larger maps provided the week before.

Councillor Brophy noted that District 4 changes in every scenario. He feels that a lot of investment has happened in District 4 and would not like to see that change to a different district if the boundary was redrawn. He feels that the new district in that area would be very rural in nature and would like to keep some urban profile in that district.

Councillor Dunbar reviewed the proposed scenarios in detail when the larger maps were provided and felt disappointed where Heatherton and area are chopped up and placed into other districts. He has concerns where the community is split and grouped in districts that extend quite far to the Guysborough line and Lochaber. Would like to see ten districts but have adjustments made to keep more of Heatherton together beyond just the village.

Councillor Stewart felt comfortable that with ten or eight districts.

Councillor Deveau noted that of all of the proposals, Pomquet is chopped up except for the option that chops up Heatherton area. Councillor Deveau provided some background on the designation of the community to obtain Acadian status for the school and noted that many feel that Pomquet is the heart of Acadian culture in the County. Additional information was shared about the community and cultural centre, funding from Heritage Canada for that development, and he feels that Pomquet should be treated like a community of interest and kept together in the review process.

Mr. Heseltine asked a question for further clarification from Councillor Dunbar about what he considers the area that should be considered for grouping with Heatherton. Councillor Dunbar shared the area names of many of the smaller communities around Heatherton that identify with Heatherton. Clarification was sought whether Meadow Green, Black Avon, Frasers Grant, Summerside, Bayfield and Paqtnkek were all areas that tend to group with Heatherton.

Councillor McNamara shared that he talked to UARB, and feels that with Strait of Canso opening up may see growth in that district. He reviewed some statistics from the survey, the process of the review to date, and discussed how the majority of survey respondents noted a preference for ten districts. He quoted the phase one report and municipal website posting.

He feels that there should not be options for the number of councillors other than ten, and raised concerns that there will be less public engagement if the same question is asked again. The various options for ten districts are within the allowed variance, and he recommends proceeding with two ten-district options.

Mr. Heseltine agreed that considering different options of ten councillors is reasonable given how clearly it was supported in the public survey. This is one of the reasons why they created three different options for a ten-member council.

Councillor Mattie noted that he understands that there will be change. He noted that Monastery and Tracadie operate as a hub, and he has concerns with the eight-councillor option where Monastery and Tracadie are split. His preference for the ten-councillor option with minimum change.

Mr. Heseltine asked some questions for clarification.

Councillor MacLellan had thoughts similar to what Councillor McNamara shared. She feels that a ten-councillor scenario would be the best. The proposed land area of District 1 is quite large in some of the scenarios. Her preference is Option 3. She has some concerns with the district being too large and how much travel that requires of a representative in that area.

Councillor MacDonald noted that District 2 is not significantly changed but would be good to go back to the community with two options to consider.

Deputy Warden MacFarlane echoed Councillor Deveau's comments about Pomquet as an Acadian community and could be considered as a community of interest and be allowed to have a smaller population than the other districts. He raised some concerns with communities in District 10 now being split. He suggested looking at a ten-district and a nine-district option to take forward, and the scenario with ten and a minimum variance would be his preference.

Warden McCarron noted that he looked at the overall benefit to the community as a county. Significant impacts are proposed to District 6 in the different options put forward. He gave example of changes to the boundary configuration made eight years ago to pull part of District 6 into District 7 to meet variances. The population is moving towards the urban area around the town, which is having an impact of the boundaries. He noted the previous comments made about communities of interest, particularly Pomquet's Acadian population, and noted Deputy Warden MacFarlane's suggestion to use the Pomquet River as a boundary. He suggested looking at the 10-district option with minimum variance, or look at 9 districts, and then make adjustments to the proposed boundaries and plan for trends for population shift in years to come. He expects substantial change to come in population movement in the community. He shared the example of when Meadow Green was proposed to move to District 7 in a past review, when the public made representation to have things adjusted so that they could stay in District 6.

Mr. Heseltine shared his agreement of the importance of the public consultation process.

Mr. Horne then asked the Committee if there could be some agreement on looking at moving from five scenarios to two to move to public consultation. He noted that he heard that Council wants to take a ten-district option forward. There was consensus to eliminate Scenario 2, Acadian Option, leaving Council looking at whether to take Scenario 1, Minimum Variance, or Scenario 3, Minimum Change, forward as ten-district options, with adjustments to the boundaries before finalizing what goes forward for public consultation.

- Minimum Variance – Scenario 1 – 6 in favour
- Minimum Change – Scenario 3 – 4 in favour

Through a show of hands, it was decided that Scenario 1, Minimum Variance will proceed to the second phase, with adjustments.

Mr. Horne asked whether there was a desire to proceed with Scenario 4, 8 districts. Consensus for the option to reduce to 8 districts not to proceed to the second phase of consultation.

Mr. Horne asked if there was a desire to consider Scenario 2 – Acadian Option, proceeding. Consensus that this option is not favoured to proceed to the next phase of consultation.

Mr. Horne noted that he was now looking for the Committee to choose between looking at taking forward a second 10-district option, or the 9-district option, with the understanding that any boundary option going forward will need adjustments before the public consultation process. He also noted that any option needs to preserve the Acadian community. Councillor McNamara shared that he feels that the people have picked 10 councillors, and the second phase of consultation is only meant for the consideration of the boundaries.

The question was asked of Mr. Heseltine whether in his experience, a municipality must only proceed with one option for the number of districts in the second phase of consultation. He shared that in his experience, some have proceeded with different options for the second phase of consultation.

- Minimum Change – Scenario 3 – 6 in favour
- Nine District Option – Scenario 5 – 4 in favour (with the map adjusted based on the Committee's feedback)

Through a show of hands, it was decided that Scenario 3, Minimum Change will proceed to the second phase, with adjustments. To summarize, this means that two ten-district options will proceed to the next phase of consultation.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves taking Scenario 1, 10 Districts with Minimum Variance and Scenario 3, 10 Districts with Minimum Change, forward to the second phase of public consultation for the Boundary Review, subject to further refinement to incorporate the suggestions of the Committee.

Motion Carried

Mr. Heseltine was thanked for joining the meeting and for his assistance in the process to date.

New Business

Consideration of Extended Producer Responsibility Opt-in

Mr. Horne spoke to the Extended Producer Responsibility Opt-in outlined in the memo in the agenda package and noted that all municipalities have to make a decision about whether to opt-in or out by January 1st. Opting-in would mean that for the next 18 months, work with program administrators can take place to help to understand changes to blue bag program.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends to Municipal Council that the Municipality of the County of Antigonish Opt-In to the provincial Extended Producer Responsibility for paper, packaging, and packaging-like products program.

Motion Carried

Community Events

- Councillor Mattie shared that on December 10th Santa is coming to Tracadie Fire Hall with opportunities for photographs for pets and kids. New Years Dance is planned to take place at the Fire Hall.
- Councillor MacLellan shared that on December 2nd Santa is coming to Arisaig. Additional activities are planned for the Arisaig Hall. On November 15th had an emergency measures meeting in Arisaig, and it was well attended and worthwhile for community information. Also had a meeting regarding the windmill project proposed for District 1.
- Councillor MacDonald shared that on December 2nd, Santa will be at the Mini Trails Community Centre.
- Deputy Warden MacFarlane shared that he attended the Christmas on Main event on Friday evening, and Santa Claus Parade on Saturday. Convocation at St. FX is taking place this weekend.
- Councillor Brophy attended the Christmas on Main event on Friday evening.

- Councillor Dunbar shared that on Friday December 1st, the Heatherton Group Home is holding a fundraising concert. The Santa tour is coming to Heatherton on December 3rd.
- Councillor Stewart had no updates.
- Councillor Deveau shared that Santa is coming to Pomquet on December 3rd. A Christmas meal for District 5 seniors is planned to take place on December 3rd.
- Councillor McNamara noted that the Saturday night dinner and dance for those aged 50+ is sold out. On December 2nd Havre Boucher is having the light tour, with 20 floats registered so far and a number of children's activities planned. Johnnie Boucher concert on the last Sunday of each month. 45 card plays on Tuesday nights, darts on Thursdays. The Community Centre is having a draw in the community called the Toonie Chest – up to 1600 people participating. This has been a very successful fundraiser in the community, and Councillor McNamara gave a shout out to the volunteers running this event.
- Warden McCarron shared that the Santa Tour is taking place on December 2nd and 3rd. In St. Andrews, the SASHA tree lighting will take place on Dec 1. Fall convocation is taking place at St. FX this weekend. Lights of Love at the RK MacDonald is planned to take place on Sunday Dec 3rd. Christmas on Main and the Santa Claus Parade were well attended. Curling is up and running in St. Andrews.

Reports from Inter-Municipal Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Antigonish Heritage Museum Board

- Saturday December 16th holding a volunteer thank-you event. Asking for RSVPs by December 8th.

Antigonish Arena Association

- Nothing new to report. Councillor Stewart commented on the positive feedback regarding improvements that have been made to the arena to create an accessible seating section.

Eastern District Planning Commission

- The Board had a board meeting last week, with the next one planned for the end of January. EDPC Eastern Plan review had a public meeting and good feedback was received.

Eastern Regional Solid Waste Management Committee

- The next Board meeting is planned to take place on the 25th of January.

Pictou Antigonish Regional Library

- Nothing to report.

RK MacDonald Nursing Home

- Working on accreditation with the walk-through with the Board early in December. The Board is meeting on Thursday November 30th.

County Paqtnkek Joint Steering Committee

- Nothing to report. Warden McCarron read through the results from the recent election at Paqtnkek and asked that letters of congratulations be sent to the Chief and each member of Council from Municipal Council.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends to Municipal Council that letters of congratulations be sent to Chief and Council recently elected at Paqtnkek.

Motion carried

Consolidation Steering Committee

- Nothing to report.

Community Navigation and Physician Retention Services Association

- Nothing to report.

Warden McCarron shared that he met with a group that is helping with relocations by supplying furniture, which is looking for a surplus building for storage of donations. Members of the Committee were asked if they knew of anywhere that they could point this group in the direction of.

Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

In-Camera Items

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole adjourn to an in-camera session to discuss Potential Litigation and Contract Negotiations at 7:15 pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the in-camera session adjourns at 8:01 pm.

Motion Carried

Adjournment

Moved

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned at 8:02pm.

Motion Carried



Warden Owen McCarron



Glenn Horne, CAO