

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday January 9, 2024 5:30pm
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 (by Zoom)
Councillor Harris McNamara

Regrets: None

Staff Present: Glenn Horne, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk
Allison Duggan, Director of Finance
Shirlyn Donovan, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Others Present: Gallery
Shannon Long, Town of Antigonish
John Heseltine, Stantec
Jamie Burke, Stantec

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 5:30pm.

In-Camera Items

Moved and Seconded

*That the Committee of the Whole adjourn to an in-camera session to discuss
Litigation and Personnel Matters at 5:31 pm.*

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the in-camera session adjourns at 5:47 pm.

Motion Carried

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 December 12, 2023 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden McCarron called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of December 12, 2023.

Moved and Seconded

That the minutes of December 12, 2023 be approved as presented.

Motion Carried

Business Arising from the Minutes

Mr. Horne provided an update on the posting of the Community Transit Review RFP being posted earlier today, with

Delegations

There were no delegations.

Continuing Business

Tourism Strategy Implementation & Marketing Levy Bylaw

Mrs. Donovan and Ms. Long provided an overview of the proposed marketing levy as a follow-up to the presentation on the Tourism Strategy that was provided at the September Joint Council meeting. A proposal to introduce a 3 percent marking levy to the accommodation price. The estimated levy collection between the Town and County, based on information provided by DEANS, was shared. The funds collected

by communities in Pictou area are proposed to go to DEANS, but funds collected in the Antigonish area are proposed to be reinvested in the local area.

Mrs. Donovan shared a number of examples of accommodation situations that would be subject to or exempt from the marketing levy. An example of the by-law and information package proposed to be provided to registered accommodation providers in the community was reviewed. A proposed timeline for registration, by-law consideration, and committee development was shared.

The floor was opened for questions from Council. A question was asked about how campsites are considered under the proposed by-law. Deputy Warden MacFarlane expressed a concern with the added expense for small businesses in the community in the sector, particularly after the impact of Covid travel restrictions. Councillor McNamara and Councillor Mattie also expressed their concerns with the by-law after consulting with operators in their district; including Airbnb operators. Councillor MacLellan asked a number of questions about registration requirements, language about the length of stay in the proposed by-law, and information around the repercussions for non-compliance noted in the by-law.

Staff shared that the Town has passed their by-law, and Ms. Long shared some questions received by their team since that by-law was passed. Mrs. Donovan provided clarification that the presentation provided tonight is only for Council's information, for staff to receive direction on how to proceed with the service provider consultation regarding the by-law. Councillor MacDonald asked a question about the plan of what to do with the funds that are collected. Mrs. Donovan reviewed the plan to work with the Town and St. FX to create a position dedicated specifically to tourism-related initiatives in the community.

Deputy Warden MacFarlane noted that he had concerns with sending the information package out as written. Councillor Brophy shared that he was curious to hear the feedback from service providers. Councillor Dunbar noted that he has received questions about why restaurants have not been included in the levy collection. Councillor Deveau has heard from providers in his district about other concerns, like roads, and shared how he has seen similar charges when travelling in other communities.

Warden McCarron noted that he has also received a lot of calls from those who are not enthusiastic about the proposed levy. A question was asked about how operators were engaged in the Tourism Strategy development. He also feedback shared from businesses that do their bookings online, their past experiences with the Visitor Information Centre, and suggested review of the information in the consultation package regarding language, outlining definitive benefits, and discussions about restaurants and their contribution if benefitting from tourism events.

Further questions were asked about Pictou area by-laws under consideration, marketing, registration, land use and required upgrades to facilities, and the expected advantages to operators. Staff noted that the hope is that funds will be utilized for event attraction, to bring additional revenue to the sector that will indirectly benefit the operators. Discussion followed regarding how to share information in the consultation package. Mr. Horne noted that staff will take some time to assess the consultation package before sending it out to the accommodation operators.

Questions were asked about DEANS investment and engagement with Council. Councillor Mattie shared a comment about accessibility requirements for accommodations.

Review of Updated Boundary Review Scenarios

Mr. Heseltine provided an overview of the process for the revisions to the maps that were presented to Council at the last Committee of the Whole meeting and selected for the second phase of consultation, subject to revisions based on their feedback. He explained that a map based on Scenario 3 from the Phase 1 report, which is labelled as Option B, was created to reflect the suggestions and comments made by Council during their review of the maps in December. Option A remains the same as Scenario 1 from the Phase 1 report, which was selected by Council to proceed to the next stage of consultation with the public. Mr. Horne noted that the next step is to take these maps forward to the public in the next phase of consultation.

An opportunity was given for members of Council to provide their comments on the two maps that were prepared for the second phase of consultation:

- Councillor MacLellan had concerns with Option A for District 1 but feels that Option B is workable.
- Councillor Brophy expressed that he prefers Option B.
- Councillor Dunbar also prefers Option B. He feels that there could be some more tweaking to the maps before a final submission is made. He shared the range of population within a district that could be within the +/- allowance.
- Councillor Stewart did not have any further comment on the options proposed.
- Councillor Deveau has concerns with Option A and supports Option B when it comes to keeping communities together.
- Councillor MacDonald interesting in hearing the public consultation comments.
- Councillor Mattie has a concern with the range of changes made to District 8, and would like to see it stay with a minimum change from what the boundaries currently are. He is also interested to see what public says.

- Councillor McNamara asked several questions about the numbers for the individual districts, particularly about why some districts, like District 6, are shown on the negative side of parity. Mr. Horne noted that consideration of approved development applications was also into the proposed boundaries.
- Warden McCarron noted that his district is looking at significant change as well, but that these changes reflect the movement of population in the community.

Councillor Mattie expressed that he expects that there will be growth with the hydrogen proposals happening in the Strait and asked whether that potential growth factored in as well? Mr. Horne clarified that it was known/approved developments that have permits or approvals in place.

Mrs. Schumacher provided some preliminary information about consultation next steps, specifically regarding plans for three evening open houses at the end of January. These consultation sessions are planned to take place at the community centres in Heatherton and St. Andrews, as well as the Municipal Office. Councillor McNamara made a suggestion to look at an additional session in Havre Boucher. Staff will work with the consultant to explore opportunities for additional sessions if that is the wish of Council.

Further questions were asked about how the public will be notified about meetings. Staff reviewed the different methods of advertising utilized in the last round of consultations that will be looked at again. Questions about timeline timelines for the submission to the UARB were asked and Mr. Horne provided a general outline of the timeline submission to the UARB. Warden McCarron thanked Mr. Heseltine and Mr. Burke for attending the meeting.

Endorsement of RK MacDonald Nursing Home Corporation By-law Amendments

Mr. Horne spoke to the need for a new motion from Council regarding their endorsement of the amendments to the RK MacDonald Nursing Home Corporation By-law Amendments. These amendments are the same as what was considered by the Committee earlier in 2023, but due to the timing of their approval by the RK MacDonald Nursing Home Board, a new motion dated after September 28, 2023 is required.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends to Municipal Council that approve the September 28, 2023, amendments to the RK MacDonald Nursing Home Corporation Bylaws as amended with the proposed changes to Articles III and IV related to Conflict of Interest.

Motion Carried

New Business

Consideration of Mount Cameron Streetlight Levy

Mrs. Duggan explained the request for reimbursement from S.F. Smith Retirement Living Incorporated for the cost of NSPI streetlights along roadways that were turned over to the Municipality in 2021. The accounts for those streetlights were not turned over to the Municipality until December 2023. Mrs. Duggan explained that the cost of the streetlights would be levied to property owners in the affected subdivision.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves reimbursing S.F. Smith Retirement Living Incorporated \$3,063.50 for NSPI invoices on streetlights that they paid dating back to 2021.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves a \$93.95 streetlight levy for Fiscal Year 2023/24 on 38 properties in Mount Cameron.

Motion Carried

Potential for Increased Usage for Kayaks and Canoes on the West River

Deputy Warden MacFarlane encouraged looking at the West River, with the new access at Trunk 7, for enhanced recreational use in the community. The River Association has been promoting recreational use of the river as well, and Deputy Warden MacFarlane expressed his thanks for their efforts in promoting this feature.

Councillor Stewart expressed a concern about young fishers not being allowed to fish with live bait along the river. A suggestion was made to follow-up with the Department of Fisheries about the restrictions on youth being allowed to use live bait along the river.

Community Events

- Councillor Brophy provided his regrets for missing the New Years Levy due to illness.
- Councillor Deveau also provided his regrets for missing the New Years Levy due to illness. He shared that the 50th anniversary of the Pomquet Winter Festival is taking place this year.
- Councillor MacLellan shared taht yoga classes at the community centre are popular with good attendance.
- Councillor Mattie shared that he attended the New Years event at the fire hall in Monastery.

- Councillor McNamara shared that chair yoga has been happening at the Havre Boucher Community Centre. The community centre is also hosting dart tournaments in the first week of February.
- Warden McCarron attended the New Years Levy, which had good turnout. Pickleball happening in St. Andrews, and over the Christmas break there was a fundraiser held during a 3-day drop in event. Chase the Ace has started in St. Andrews.

Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

Adjournment

Moved

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned at 7:15pm.

Motion Carried



Warden Owen McCarron



Glenn Horne, CAO