

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

Emergency Municipal Council Meeting- Minutes

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

6:00pm

Zoom Meeting

Councillors Present:

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

Also Present:

Virtual Gallery

Call to Order- Chairman, Warden Owen McCarron

Warden McCarron called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

Approval of Agenda

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

Min # 2024-009

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as presented.

Motion Carried

Confirmation of Decision on Consolidation with the Town of Antigonish

Warden McCarron asked Glenn Horne to review the motion. Before the motion was read, Councillor Brophy declared a Conflict of Interest due to his employment with the Town of Antigonish and muted himself for the remainder of the discussion on the matter.

Mr. Horne then read out the motion for the benefit of Council.

Min # 2024-010

Moved by Deputy Warden McFarlane

Seconded by Councillor MacDonald

Municipal Council confirms its October 20, 2022, request that the Provincial Government consolidate the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Town of Antigonish into one municipal unit through special legislation.

A call was put forward for discussion on the motion.

Councillor Dunbar asked to speak on the matter. He noted that since 2021, he has listened to those in the community as the subject of consolidation was reviewed. He expressed his concerns with the public consultation sessions, with particular mention of the session in Heatherston. Having listened to his constituents, he voted “no” in 2022 and will be doing so again this evening.

Councillor McNamara reviewed his notes with his concerns regarding consolidation. A five-year plan and financial questions were his concerns that he feels are still unanswered. He noted that some of those that he has heard from don't have a concern with consolidation, but with the process. He noted a question that he received from a resident asking why there wasn't a vote being put forward to the public about the question of consolidation. He noted that a percentage of people wanted a plebiscite, he expressed his concerns with holding the meeting by Zoom and what access challenges that presents and feels that there wasn't enough notice provided for Council to prepare to make a decision. He noted the financial position of the Municipality and feels that residents should get a break on their taxes instead of spending money on the subject of consolidation.

Councillor Mattie shared that he spoke to many residents in District 8 throughout the process. He echoed that many that he spoke to aren't against consolidation but have concerns with the process. He felt that the exploration process was rushed and has not changed his mind. The residents in District 8 don't feel that they have enough information in the process, and he will be voting “no” again.

Councillor MacDonald recognized the constituents in the online gallery. He noted that the subject is sensitive but feels that the time is right for consolidation. He read through several notes regarding what he feels will be the benefits of consolidation, including pooling of resources, and the removal of duplication and redundancies.

Councillor MacLellan shared that she is not against consolidation and has looked into it and sees positive results that can come from it. She noted, however, that she has heard from a number of residents who are not against consolidation but are against the process.

She has tallied the responses from those whom she has heard from and will be consulting that feedback when making her vote.

Councillor McNamara asked whether the Antigonish Utility was in a deficit, and if the solar garden was over budget, and the expense to ratepayers for those utilities. He noted that information with those details wasn't shared to allow Council to determine the impact of those numbers on future budgets.

Councillor Dunbar shared that many in his district were both for and against consolidation, but a majority of those that he spoke to want a plebiscite to be able to have their say.

With no further discussion on the motion, the question was called.

Voting in favour of the motion:

- Councillor Hughie Stewart
- Councillor Remi Deveau
- Councillor Donnie MacDonald
- Warden Owen McCarron
- Deputy Warden Bill MacFarlane

Voting against the motion:

- Councillor John Dunbar
- Councillor Mary MacLellan
- Councillor Gary Mattie
- Councillor Harris McNamara

Motion Carried

Warden McCarron thanked Council and the virtual gallery for their attendance and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Adjournment

Min # 2024-011

Moved

That the Council meeting adjourns at 6:18pm.

Motion Carried

Warden Owen McCarron

Glenn Horne, CAO