

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday March 26, 2024, Following Asset Management
Council Chambers
Municipal Administration Building
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

Present were: Warden Owen McCarron
Deputy Warden Bill MacFarlane
Councillor Donnie MacDonald
Councillor Shawn Brophy
Councillor Remi Deveau (by Zoom)
Councillor John Dunbar
Councillor Gary Mattie
Councillor Harris McNamara

Regrets: Councillor Mary MacLellan
Councillor Hugh Stewart

Staff Present: Glenn Horne, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk
Shirlyn Donovan, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator
Marlene Melanson, Director of Recreation (by Zoom)
Tammy Feltmate, Director of Sustainable Communities (by Zoom)

Others Present: Gallery
Frank and Lelia Machnik
Rochelle Benoit
Paul Curry

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 6:30 pm.

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 February 13, 2024 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden McCarron called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of February 13, 2024.

Moved and Seconded

That the minutes of February 13, 2024 be approved as presented.

Motion Carried

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

Delegations

Frank and Lelia Machnik – Marketing Levy By-law Feedback

Mr. Machnik provided members of the committee with copies of his notes prior to his presentation. Mr. Machnik raised concerns with the process of notification regarding the proposed marketing levy and outlined several concerns with the proposed levy due to the cost to the visitors and the lack of benefit to operators who are already successfully marketing their establishments. He asked about how rural tourism operators were involved in the consultations that took place when the tourism strategy was developed. Mr. Machnik thanked Warden McCarron and Councillor Dunbar for their assistance in bringing forward his concerns. Mrs. Machnik noted that she has been touch with several fixed-roof accommodation operators, who have a concern with the proposed levy only being applied to those operations. A concern that the tourism study did not include the rural operators was raised, as well as the focus on written publications when so much business is now done online.

The floor was opened for questions from the committee. Councillor Dunbar thanked those presenting and expressed his support for their stand on the proposed levy. Councillor McNamara noted that he has spoken to operators in his district, who have also expressed a concern with the proposed levy and wonder what the benefit to their operations will be. Councillor Mattie thanked the presenters and agreed that the Internet is having an impact on the industry. Councillor Deveau shared the feedback that he has heard from operators in his district, and Councillor MacDonald noted that he had read through the letters included in the summary of consultation and asked a question of staff regarding the intent for the use of the funds that would be collected by the levy.

Rochelle Benoit – Marketing Levy By-law Feedback

Ms. Benoit provided members of the committee with copies of her notes prior to her presentation. She spoke on behalf of her business, Pomquet Beach Cottages, and expressed concern with the proposed marketing levy with particular mention of the increased cost of their clientele, administrative burden and costs, and the limited collection of the levy from one operator type to fund events and marketing that would benefit a variety of operators in the sector.

The floor was opened to questions and comments from the committee. Councillor Deveau expressed his support for the operators, having spoken with Ms. Benoit and others in his district. Deputy Warden MacFarlane agreed with the concern raised about one type of operators being levied for the benefit of the sector. Councillor McNamara expressed his support for operators raising concerns with the marketing levy as proposed. Councillor MacDonald thanked Ms. Benoit for her presentation, and Councillor Dunbar also noted his concern with one sector paying for the benefit of the rest.

Paul Curry – Antigonish Tourism Association

Mr. Curry provided an overview of a presentation that included marketing materials that have been created by the Antigonish Tourism Association to promote the community. Shoulder-season events, such as the Antigonish Jazz Fest, have been created to increase tourist traffic in the community outside of the regular summer travel season. A grant from Tourism Nova Scotia has been acquired and will be used to build a new website to promote the region as a tourism destination.

Mr. Curry provided an overview of the opportunity of the levy, and outlined the intended use of the funds raised by the levy to reinvest in tourism needs in the community. He noted that similar levies are being collected by other communities in Nova Scotia and across Canada. He shared examples of investments by surrounding communities to build the tourist trade in their areas.

The floor was opened for questions from the committee. Councillor McNamara noted that many of the businesses highlighted on the first slide of the presentation were in the Town. He expressed that he felt that the marketing levy should be applied to many of the types of businesses in the tourism sector, and not just fixed-roof accommodations. Discussion regarding the wording of the legislation to allow the collection of the levy from fixed-roof accommodation providers, and not other providers, followed. Councillor Mattie noted that many operators in his community don't open year-round, due to their remote locations and challenges posed by the weather, and they don't see as much of a benefit to their operations. Mr. Curry noted that events to encourage bookings in the shoulder seasons are being considered, and not just for the off-season.

Councillor MacDonald thanked Mr. Curry for his presentation. Councillor Deveau expressed that he has been a supporter of having an event coordinator for the community, but having a marketing levy targeting only a limited number of operators is a concern with many that he has spoken to. He suggested looking at the Town and County hiring a coordinator on a term basis to undertake the marketing exercises envisioned to get a better idea of the likelihood of success. Deputy Warden MacFarlane noted that he appreciates having a tourism and marketing strategy but has a concern with the administration of the levy.

Councillor Dunbar asked for clarification regarding what municipalities in Cape Breton have a marketing levy. He expressed that he agreed with those who had raised concerns with the levy. He asked for clarification regarding the mission of the Antigonish Tourism Association to promote the community, and discussion followed. Councillor Brophy spoke about the impact of marketing for year-round activities when many rural operations are only seasonal.

Warden McCarron thanked Mr. Curry for his presentation and thanked those who provided their feedback on the proposed marketing levy throughout the consultation phase.

Continuing Business

Marketing Levy By-law – Consultation Results

Mrs. Donovan thanked those who came in to present as delegations, as well as the operators who submitted feedback that was included in the agenda package. She noted that staff will leave this information with the committee for further direction of how to proceed.

Status of the Antigonish Consolidation Act

Mr. Horne provided an update regarding the status of the Antigonish Consolidation Act. Councillor McNamara asked for clarification regarding the amendments that were made at the Committee of the Whole House on March 25th. Mr. Horne provided a summary of the changes that were made by the Committee of the Whole House. Further questions were asked by the committee regarding boundaries and the timing that has been proposed.

Councillor Dunbar asked for clarification regarding the change sheet that was posted on the Legislature's website. Councillor Brophy asked whether Councillors would have any ability to provide input in the proposed boundaries when those are being determined. Councillor Dunbar expressed that he feels that Council and the public should have input in the proposed boundaries, and that request should be expressed to the Province.

New Business

Audit Committee Reappointment

Mr. Horne put forward the recommendation that Bobby Mattie be reappointed for a one-year term.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends to Municipal Council that Bobby Mattie be reappointed as the public member of the County's audit committee for a one-year term.

Motion Carried

EDPC Appointments

Mr. Horne brought forward the appointments of Eastern District Planning Commission staff to municipal positions, as outlined in the letter from Mr. Bain dated February 13, 2024. These positions include Building Inspectors, Development Officers, Fire Inspectors, Administrator for Dangerous and Unightly Premises, and Special Constables for the purpose of enforcing the Building/Fire Codes, Dangerous and Unightly Premises, and Land Use By-laws.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves the annual appointments of Eastern District Planning Commission staff to Municipal positions, as proposed.

Motion Carried

By-law Enforcement Officer Appointment – Dog Control Officer

Mrs. Schumacher brought forward a recommendation to appoint the new Dog Control Officer as a By-law Enforcement Officer for the purpose of enforcing the Dog By-law.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council appoint Bern Balawyder as a By-law Enforcement Officer for the Municipality of the County of Antigonish for the purpose of enforcing the By-Law Respecting the Responsible Ownership of Dogs.

Motion Carried

Paqtnkek Powwow Sponsorship Request

Mrs. Donovan spoke to a sponsorship request that has been received from Paqtnkek, in support of their Powwow taking place at St. FX

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council commits to a \$5000 Friendship Sponsorship for the 2024 Paqtnkek Powwow.

Motion Carried

Proclamation – March 26th as Purple Day for Epilepsy Awareness

Mr. Horne read aloud the proclamation.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends to Municipal Council that the proclamation of March 26th, 2024 as Purple Day for Epilepsy Awareness in Antigonish County be approved.

Motion Carried

Community Events

- Councillor McNamara shared that the Havre Boucher community centre have an event booked every night for residents in the area.
- Councillor Mattie noted that on Good Friday, the Monsignor Hall will be holding a fish cake dinner, \$12 adults, \$6 for youth.
- Councillor Deveau shared that a community cleanup is being planned in District 5. Residents will clean-up roadways and have a barbeque.
- Warden McCarron shared that chase the ace is ongoing in St. Andrews, and that curling is winding down after a successful season.

Reports from Inter-Municipal Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Antigonish Heritage Museum Board

- The Board did not have a regular meeting at the beginning of March but are meeting on the 8th of April. Warden McCarron spoke about how engaged the new curator is in the museum operations, and Councillor Dunbar shared that the second Lego contest just ended.

Antigonish Arena Association

- The Board met last week and approved financial statements, where a small surplus was shared. Public commendation of the arena manager, noting a number of challenges that they have had to overcome and successful upgrades that have taken place at the facility. Councillors were recommended to go to the facility to see the positive changes that have been made.

Eastern District Planning Commission

- The Board will be meeting in early April.

Eastern Regional Solid Waste Management Committee

- Meeting on March 28th.

Pictou Antigonish Regional Library

- No report

RK MacDonald Nursing Home

- Next meeting March 28th.

County Paqtnkek Joint Steering Committee

- Nothing to report.

Consolidation Steering Committee

- Nothing to report.

Community Navigation and Physician Retention Services Association

- Had first meeting with the new navigator, who has been in the role for two months.

In-Camera Items

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole adjourn to an in-camera session to discuss Personnel Matters at 8:04 pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the in-camera session adjourns at 8:21 pm.

Motion Carried

Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

Adjournment

Moved

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned at 8:22pm.

Motion Carried

Warden Owen McCarron

Glenn Horne, CAO