

April 6, 2020

The Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou met by teleconference on Monday, April 6, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Dist.	1	Clr. Don Butler
	2	Clr. Deborah Wadden
	3	Clr. Darla MacKeil
	4	Clr. Ronald Baillie
	5	Deputy Warden Wayne Murray
	6	Warden Robert Parker
	7	Clr. David Parker
	8	Clr. Larry Turner
	9	Clr. Peter Boyles
	10	Clr. Randy Palmer
	11	Clr. Andy Thompson
	12	Clr. Chester Dewar

IN ATTENDANCE

Brian Cullen, CAO/Municipal Clerk Treasurer
Karen Cornish, Deputy Municipal Treasurer
Carolyn MacIntosh, Deputy Municipal Clerk
Sueann Musick, Communications Officer
Jane Johnson, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Warden R. Parker called the meeting to order and requested that Councillors take a moment of silence in memory of the people who lost their lives to the COVID-19 virus and to pray or reflect, as may be their preference, to help Council focus and properly do the work of the Municipality.

AGENDA

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. D. Parker that the agenda be approved as circulated.

Motion carried.

It was noted that the Financial Services and Property Services Committees did not meet in March, consequently there were no reports from those committees on the agenda.

MINUTES

It was moved by Clr. MacKeil and seconded by Clr. Thompson that the minutes of March 2nd and March 30, 2020 be approved as circulated.

Motion carried.

COVID-19 – STATUS UP-DATE

The CAO reported that we have moved beyond the education phase and the focus is now on communications because it has become apparent that people are becoming numb to the messaging on COVID-19. The Communications Team will be working on ways to change the messaging going forward. There are no real operational issues identified at present and the police have been busy dealing with calls regarding social distancing compliance. The number of cases in the province continue to climb and there

is now evidence of community spread so it is imperative that people practice social distancing. The newsletter has gone to the printers and the discussion on flyer distribution in stores is no longer being pursued for the concerns previously raised. The banners are expected to arrive mid-week.

The CAO noted that PPE continues to be an issue; the order filled by the Province was only 70% complete. Masks remain a major issue. There is a company in Stellarton attempting to produce masks using a 3D printer but these masks are not certified by Health Canada. Similarly, there is a company in Ontario prepared to manufacture N95 masks but Health Canada has not been efficient in turning around the necessary approval.

Clr. Dewar reported that he received a call from a Fire Chief in his area who asked if there were rooms available at hotels for firefighters if they need to isolate from families.

Clr. Butler asked the number of people in Pictou County diagnosed with COVID-19 and the CAO replied that the numbers are released by health zones in Nova Scotia.

Warden R. Parker asked if the Aberdeen Hospital may be considered a backup for a COVID-19 center.

The CAO advised that the Aberdeen Hospital was never intended to be a COVID-19 center. COVID patients are being sent to hospitals in Truro and Antigonish. Unfortunately, last week a nurse at the Aberdeen tested positive for COVID-19 which has led to a temporary shutdown of the Women & Children's Unit. Pregnancy and delivery care is now being provided at hospitals in Truro or Antigonish. In the event that there is a surge of COVID-19 patients, the NSHA is presently looking at alternative sites for non-COVID patients and the Wellness Center has been assessed for that purpose.

The Communications Officer reported that she was speaking with Nicole LeBlanc today on behalf of the Citizens for a Healthy Pictou County. They are making signs and 1 sign will be erected near the hospital and signs will be distributed to each municipality.

Clr. MacKeil asked if the Sutherland Harris Hospital has been identified as an alternative site and the CAO responded that they may be able to send some people to Pictou but it only has a small capacity.

Warden R. Parker reported that he has recorded 3 Public Service Announcements that should be broadcasting on the radio stations in the near future.

RESOLUTION – COVID-19 POLICY

Deputy Warden Murray presented a resolution to Council as follows:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) assessed COVID-19 as a pandemic;

WHEREAS on March 22nd, the Province of Nova Scotia declared a State of Emergency to help contain the spread of COVID-19. The State of Emergency will be in effect for 14 days and may be renewed. The emergency order is valid until April 5, 2020.

WHEREAS as a result of the pandemic the Municipality of the County of Pictou must alter some of its policies and practices to aid in response to the pandemic and help contain the spread of COVID-19;

THEREFORE be it resolved by the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou that Council adopt the following policy with respect to COVID-19:



COVID-19 POLICY

1) Purpose

- a) To provide direction and alter administrative provisions of certain municipal policies enacted by the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou.

2) Policy statements

- a) The following changes to policy are hereby enacted in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:
 - i) POLICY #2001-07-08 MUNICIPAL VEHICLES: All sections pertaining to staff use of vehicles are hereby suspended, until otherwise directed by the Chief Administrative Officer.
 - ii) POLICY # 2017-01-44 LANDFILL VOUCHER PROGRAM POLICY: Section 2 is hereby amended to state that Vouchers shall be made available during the period of June 1st through November 30 of the fiscal year.
 - iii) POLICY #2019-12-11 LOW INCOME TAX EXEMPTION POLICY: Section 5 is hereby amended to establish the deadline for the 2020/2021 fiscal year until April 30, 2020.
- b) The aforementioned policy amendments shall remain in effect until May 31, 2020 unless repealed by Municipal Council at an earlier date.
- c) This policy may be extended and or amended by the Municipal Council at a duly called meeting of the Municipal Council.

DATED at Hardwood Hill, NS this 6th day of April, 2020.

(Sgd.) Wayne Murray
Chester Dewar

MOTION

It was moved by Deputy Warden Murray and seconded by Clr. Dewar that the preceding resolution be adopted as presented.

Motion carried.

RURAL HIGH SPEED INTERNET PROJECT

The CAO reported that he has a conference call tomorrow with the Canada Infrastructure Bank and he will follow up on the project with them. He had a conference call with NOVA Communications who informed him Plexus has shut-down field operations for 6 weeks. He is working with NSP and Bell on pole agreements and is also working with our insurer on the proof of insurance certificates that are required. Since Council's last teleconference call, he has reviewed the information posted on our website about the project and finds it to be factual in that it indicates that Council has approved \$25 million that is in the capital budget for this fiscal year. There has been no formal decision on fiber rich and \$11 million has been approved for Phase I. He acknowledged that some updating of information could be implemented for the benefit of the public. The CAO advised that he received a report from Terry Dalton, i-Valley that shows that over that last year since launching the internet performance test, there have only been 47 tests that met CRTC standards. The CAO indicated that very few communities would meet CRTC standards and in

regards to COVID-19 response tracking at the staff level the majority of our people are only getting sub-par results.

Clr. Boyles reported that he received a call from a resident wanting more information about the 5G network as it relates to potential radiation dangers.

The CAO confirmed that our network will be designed as a 5G network. There are groups out there lobbying against 5G technology due to radiation fears. Under Health Canada, Safety Code 6 the verified bandwidths are not an issue and it operates within Industry Canada guidelines.

Clr. Palmer pointed out that the article should be worded another way because it does create confusion around the project and the level of commitment by the Municipality.

Warden R. Parker suggested the Communications Officer could do a story on the service levels and explain that fiber rich model provides a much better service to residents and business.

Warden R. Parker reported that he has received several letters of support for our project which he intends to pass along to Develop NS.

COST SHARED PROGRAM FOR SUB-DIVISION (J CLASS) STREETS

Council discussed the availability of additional funding from Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal under the Cost Shared Program for Subdivision (J Class) Streets. This funding is outside the existing signed 3-year agreement. The Department is dividing the funding proportionately based on km of paved J-Class roads per municipality and will be asking municipalities to cost share 50/50 on the program. If Council is interested in participating in this additional funding opportunity a list of potential roads must be submitted before April 17th with a commitment to fund 50% of the costs.

The CAO referred to a list of potential paved roads that he had circulated separately to Council, noting that the cost estimate of our share would be based on \$348,000 a km based on the number of roads in the other program.

Clr. D. Parker asked how much our share of \$10 million was and the CAO replied it varies from year to year. He also reported that he is not familiar with the current condition of the roads on this list, suggesting that perhaps Councillors could provide details on the roads in their respective districts.

Clr. Palmer pointed out that roads that were repaved in 2008 and later should not be looked at as they have not yet reached their useful life expectancy. For the roads that are submitted, TIR will have an engineer assess the condition of the roads to determine eligibility for cost-sharing. Clr. Palmer suggested that some consideration be given to the New Row in his district which was paved prior to 1990 but was significantly damaged from heavy truck traffic as part of the highway twinning project.

Deputy Warden Murray reported that it would be nice to know the money we have to spend on these roads before moving forward as this is going to be a particularly challenging budget year.

Warden R. Parker suggested each Councillor send in a few roads from their areas and then someone from staff could look at them. We may decide not to move forward but we would then have a list for future.

The CAO informed Council that he could also ask the Department for a delay on the submission deadline for this program, given the current COVID-19 focus.

BUDGET PROCESS

The CAO reported that in the coming days he and Karen will be discussing the budget process and management of the Municipal Services Grant Program and expect to have recommendations for Council on moving those processes along.

Warden R. Parker reported that residents are waiting on information on deferral or postponement of taxes.

The CAO pointed out that municipalities are waiting on the province and there is only a small window of 2 weeks for them to decide before our internal operations are affected. We will have to make decisions on interim bills that are usually sent out in April. The AMA sent out information to the CAO's regarding the estimate on what people will pay, impact on cash flows and the water utility and relief around it. We will have to have something to submit to the UARB on deferral of due dates.

Warden R. Parker asked if Council wants to meet in 2 weeks for the Finance and Property meetings or were there other suggestions.

The CAO recommended that matters be directed to the Committee of Council as a Whole for the foreseeable future, with a meeting scheduled on a weekly (Mondays). Council meetings could continue as scheduled on a monthly basis with recommendations from COW as necessary.

AGREED – FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that Council meet every Monday until the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Clr. Thompson reported there will be an impact to community halls because this is the time of year they make their money. He asked if we could do something in the budget process to provide some financial relief in that regard, possibly through the MSG Program.

Clr. Boyles reported that the IT Department had installed a program on his iPad and he asked if Council will be using it.

The CAO responded that Microsoft Teams was installed on Councillors iPads and it will be an option for how we move forward with meetings. The meetings can be done virtually and by video conference and he pointed out we will be testing it over the next week.

Clr. Wadden reported her March 24th ratepayers meeting has been cancelled and she asked if there was any information moving forward.

The CAO reported there will some form of application process to submit to Councillors soon and reminded Council that under the Municipal Services Grant Policy Council can approve any project in the electoral districts.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTIONS (UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUIRED)

Clr. D. Parker reported that on March 31st the Riverview Board sent a letter to Dr. Strang who indicated facilities such as Riverview Residential Center are not health care facilities. We have to be very clear these residents deserve as much care as everyone else. He will ask to send a letter at the next meeting to Dr. Strang and the Premier pointing out these facilities are not equipped as health care facilities.

ADJOURN

It was moved by Clr. MacKeil and seconded by Clr. D. Parker that the meeting adjourn.
Motion carried. (8:40 p.m.)

Robert Parker
Warden

Brian Cullen
Municipal Clerk