

June 7, 2021

The Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou met by video-conference on Monday, June 7, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Dist.	1	Clr. Don Butler
	2	Clr. Deborah Wadden
	3	Clr. Darla MacKeil
	4	Clr. Mary Elliott
	5	Deputy Warden 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

Donn Fraser, Solicitor, Mac Mac & Mac
Brian Cullen, CAO, Municipal Clerk-Treasurer
Logan McDowell, P. Eng., PMP, Director of Public Works & Development
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 invited Councilors to pray or reflect, as may be their preference, to help Council focus and properly do the work of the Municipality.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Council observed a moment of silence in memory of the 215 indigenous children whose remains were discovered at a former residential school in Kamloops, B.C. and for 4 members of the Afzaal family who were the victims of a hit and run incident in London, Ontario.

AGENDA

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

Motion carried.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS & DEVELOPMENT

Warden R. Parker introduced Logan McDowell to Council as the new Director of Public Works & Development and welcomed him to the Council meeting.

MINUTES

It was moved by Clr. D. Parker and seconded by Clr. Butler that the minutes of May 3, 2021 be approved as circulated.

Clr. Wadden informed Council that she attended the virtual FCM Conference where money will be available for charging stations for electric vehicles. She pointed out that it would not hurt to look into the issue.

Warden R. Parker advised that the Climate Change Advisory Committee will be meeting later in the week and will pursue that issue.

Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence was received and acknowledged from the following:

- (a) Min. of Lands & Forestry – Confirmation the passage of an amended Biodiversity Act and advising that Government intends to designate 61 more wilderness areas, nature reserve and provincial parks to protect Nova Scotia’s unique biodiversity and habitats. Consultations on this will take place virtually over a period of 60 days.
- (b) Letters/Notes of appreciation for funding (uncirculated) have been received from NRHS (bursaries/grad. exp.)

RESOLUTION – MUNICIPAL GRANTS

Clr. Thompson presented a resolution to Council as follows:

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED by the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou that Council approve the payment of the following Municipal Grants:

Municipal Services:

D02	Woodburn Cemetery	\$ 3,700.00	Stone Mtnce. & Groundskeeping
D06	West Riv. Fire Dept. Aux.	2,300.00	Hall Improvements
D07	West Riv. Fire Dept. Aux.	2,300.00	Hall Improvements
D07	Union Ctr. Comm. Hall	1,000.00	Operating Expenses
D07	Middle River Birch Hill Cem.	3,000.00	Driveway/Pkg. Improv., Gate, Op. Exp.
D07	Gairloch Cemetery	1,194.85	Lawn Mower
D07	Forest Hill Cemetery	1,824.75	Maintenance Expenses
D07	Hill Cemetery	3,000.00	Stone Mtnce @ Hill & Caledonia Cem.
D11	Trustees Springville Presb. Ch.	2,875.00	Heat Pump @ Church Hall
D11	Bridgeville Community Club	2,000.00	Operating Expenses
D11	Plymouth Fire Department	1,500.00	Equipment Purchases
D11	Plymouth Fire Dep. Ladies Aux.	950.00	Catering Equipment
D11	ER Valley Com. Dev. Assoc.	1,500.00	Newsletter Expenses
D11	Garden of Eden Cemetery	<u>400.00</u>	Operating & Maintenance Expenses

\$ 27,544.60

DATED at Plymouth, NS this 7th day of June, 2021.

(Sgd.) Andy Thompson
Larry Turner

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Thompson and seconded by Clr. Turner that the preceding resolution be adopted as presented.

Motion carried.

RURAL BROADBAND PROJECT UP-DATE

The CAO reported that over the last month they have been renewing the project with an acceleration plan with some change directives in overall design but no impact on budget. The Phase 1 fiber build make ready process has pressure being put on NSP but it makes more sense to look at a buried solution instead of the make ready process. It would improve deploying of the network and he informed Council that the Rapid Response Fund Project is still on track for a November completion. In the next few weeks, a communication plan will be available for the citizens that the project will reach. The infrastructure will serve a few homes in every community. The project was reviewed and audited by third party experts but it has been held up by the make ready process. Equipment and materials have been accelerated. They looked at project sites and put some effort into that and most of the co-location agreements are at the point of signature in the new few days. The next steps are the make ready and watchdog of that process. Some of the make readies should be in by July but the project has to work where burying the fiber will take place. Construction has to start immediately and construction partners have been looked at and are available for the project. Most of the tower sites have been secured and some may require consultation. Applications for Industry Canada licenses have been submitted for the wireless component for communicating between towers. All sites have been surveyed and are clear from any interference. The equipment is ready to order from various suppliers and any supply chain issues caused by COVID have been addressed. We will have more visual aids so it will show the progress of the project. A number of sites are co-location agreements so it makes no sense to overbuild.

Warden R. Parker commented that project is very complex with a lot of moving parts and inquired about the amount of fiber that would be buried and the CAO estimated 6 to 7% of the fiber build.

Clr. Wadden referred to the rapid deployment and asked if Council will get a list of residents to be served and the CAO replied that he will be able to provide maps of the areas.

Clr. Wadden asked when fiber may be ready to connect and the CAO explained that it is the connection to poles that is holding the project up.

Clr. Wadden asked if there would be extra costs because the project has been delayed for quite a long time and the CAO replied that the equipment has already be purchased.

Clr. Wadden advised that she has major concerns with this project and pointed out we are already behind. She has heard at the FCM Conference that Colchester & Colchester Counties are much further ahead.

With the make readies taking so long for Phase I, Clr. Palmer asked if other phases of the project will have the same experience which will prolong the anticipated completion.

The CAO explained that the major concern is that the make readies are taking far too long and they are looking at ways to move that process along.

Clr. Palmer commented that he does have concerns with this project and hopes that it will pay for itself.

Warden R. Parker asked about the make readies of the project and the CAO replied that it is a complicated process. Our municipality is not unique to other entities building networks across the Country with blockages at every jurisdiction.

Clr. Dewar commented that the whole project has been up in the air since they met with Develop N.S. who was supposed to provide funding for Phase 1 of the project but they have since changed their mind.

Warden R. Parker reported he was speaking to the new Minister of Municipal Affairs about Pictou County not being treated fairly by Develop Nova Scotia. The Minister informed him that he would task some people to look into the issue and why it happened.

Clr. Thompson reported that there is fiber from Thorburn to Goshen already and the CAO responded that they were not speaking with Aliant on that issue. There is another company in the River John area that provides internet services and he asked the amount of fiber provided. The CAO responded he is not sure if they are getting 5G service at this time.

Warden R. Parker pointed out that we want all Pictou County to have internet service not just some areas of the County.

Clr. Thompson reported there are a lot of issues and residents are concerned about the amount of money that is being spent.

Clr. Wadden pointed out the MacAulay Road in River John has 5G service and restated her concerns that this project is taking too long.

CHAIR

At the request of Warden R. Parker, Deputy Warden Murray assumed the chair.

FIRE LIAISON COMM. FUNDING OPTIONS FOR FIRE DEPTS.

The CAO reported that the Fire Liaison Committee has been reviewing several recommendations contained in the Fire Services Review over the past number of months. The Committee has met with the fire chiefs to review the study recommendations and the focus came down to three issues; funding, a coordinator, and dispatch services, with the two latter being somewhat intertwined.

Dispatching

The fire study recommended that the dispatching of departments should be a more automated process, based upon criteria such as equipment, location, nature of the call which would enhance the current automatic aid system. The current system is based upon the principal that each department has the next adjacent department called to respond to structure fires based upon what is the chief's preference. While the current system works it can be enhanced. During a meeting with the chiefs a department was called to a structure fire and the adjacent departments were dispatched. The fire in Lyon's Brook had Caribou and River John dispatched to assist Scotsburn. West River, Alma, Pictou, Abercrombie, and likely New Glasgow all would be closer than River John. The rural districts are large and to have a set response system such as the automatic aid, does not necessarily address the on the ground needs. The Town of New Glasgow provides automatic aid to several departments and as one chief said it makes since for some the infrastructure closer to the Towns, but a ladder truck is not necessary to fight a single storey structure fire.

There are currently 4 different dispatch services being used in Pictou County. Most of the departments are using the Stellarton Dispatch service and there have been several instances of dissatisfaction with the level of service. The fire service believes a uniform dispatch service throughout the county would be best; however, getting all departments to agree will be problematic. The issue of dispatch and moving to a more practical solution requires a lot more study and could become a primary task for the position of the coordinator.

Coordinator

The fire service in Pictou County provides an exceptional service in fighting fires; however, the fire study found that many of the departments lacked the capacity to handle the administrative functions associated with running complex organizations. They are volunteer based, and many aspects related to records management, administrative tasks, training coordination are lacking. The report recommended the hiring of a coordinator to assist the local fire chiefs with many of the administrative tasks associated with a volunteer organization. This would include training programs, assisting with procurement, records management as well developing programs to enhance the services provided. There was consensus at the meetings that this was endorsed by the departments if the position was not running the departments and taking away from the local authority of the chiefs. That was not the objective of the position. This would be a new position created within the Municipality's organization to deal with public safety. A sample job description is attached. The position would be funded by the Municipality.

Funding

When the Municipality embarked on the fire review one of the core issues was the funding of the smaller departments (Pictou Landing, East River St. Mary's, East River Valley, Blue Mountain and Barney's River. The issue of funding is by far the most contentious and challenging issue facing the fire service. One of the core concepts of debate is around level of funding provided to the fire service. The fire review completed by Fire Underwriters suggests that we have a structural problem, not a financial problem with too many departments and excess equipment within Pictou County and that fixing the structure will allow for proper funding of all departments. That synopsis is at least at a political level a hard road or path to follow. The Municipality when compared to other in Nova Scotia does not appear to be providing a significant difference in funding to comparable municipalities.

Provincial Stats				
	Population	Area	Total Spend	Per Capital
Municipality of Kings	47404	2094	\$2,548,300	\$53.75
Cumberland	19402	4255	\$2,200,000	\$113.39
East Hants	22453	1786	\$2,823,000	\$125.72
Lunenburg	24863	1759	\$3,491,400	\$140.40
Pictou	20692	2797	\$2,289,600	\$110.65

The issue around funding and potential solutions are endless. There are an infinite number of solutions that could be tabled and the benefits of one over the other can be simple or complex. There have been several proposals shared with the departments, and issues identified with each. Some of the comments provided have been very constructive to help shape the models. This report will not provide historical proposals but will rather focus on two models as discussed at the last fire Liaison Committee meeting.

The current year fire levies per department are as follows:

Table 1

2020/2021 Fire Levy Distribution					
Distribution:	Total	Acres	Total Levy	Truck Grant	
Abercrombie	\$ 111,347.78	\$ 45.56	\$ 111,393.34	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 115,393.34
Alma	\$ 152,062.51	\$ 210.37	\$ 152,272.88	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 156,272.88
Barney's River	\$ 75,699.84	\$ 260.34	\$ 75,960.18	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 83,960.18
Blue Mountain	\$ 31,004.96	\$ 144.56	\$ 31,149.52	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 47,149.52
Caribou District	\$ 164,016.81	\$ 185.96	\$ 164,202.77	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 168,202.77
East River Valley	\$ 58,286.91	\$ 216.75	\$ 58,503.66	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 70,503.66
East River St. Mary's	\$ 7,316.32	\$ 34.92	\$ 7,351.24	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 23,351.24
Eureka	\$ 126,194.52	\$ 430.01	\$ 126,624.53	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 130,624.53
Linacy	\$ 115,514.15	\$ 48.37	\$ 115,562.52	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 119,562.52
Little Harbour	\$ 164,315.84	\$ 51.66	\$ 164,367.50	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 168,367.50
Merigomish	\$ 120,697.08	\$ 412.73	\$ 121,109.81	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 125,109.81
Pictou Landing	\$ 49,922.50	\$ 16.03	\$ 49,938.53	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 61,938.53
Plymouth	\$ 123,819.20	\$ 461.62	\$ 124,280.82	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 128,280.82
River John	\$ 151,473.50	\$ 456.97	\$ 151,930.47	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 155,930.47
Scotsburn	\$ 182,904.97	\$ 251.88	\$ 183,156.85	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 187,156.85
Thorburn	\$ 145,304.46	\$ 159.69	\$ 145,464.15	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 149,464.15
West River	\$ 168,831.44	\$ 428.97	\$ 169,260.41	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 173,260.41
Total Levy Distributed	\$ 1,948,712.78	\$ 3,816.39	\$ 1,952,529.17	\$ 112,000.00	\$ 2,064,529.17

Each of the proposals which will be presented here are based upon a common principal of bringing the five previously mentioned departments up to a set level of funding of \$90,000 with East River St. Mary's receiving \$45000 due to its cross jurisdictional set up the District of St. Mary's. The projected levies for the 2021 year are based upon the 5 departments receiving assistance through an equalization formula raising their levies to 20 cents. The 20-cent figure was chosen as the highest levy outside of these five is 20 cents.

The first proposal to review is what shall be referred to as the **Abercrombie Proposal**, which builds upon a proposal presented to the Fire Chiefs. The model has the 12 larger departments contributing 5 percent to an equalization fund that will allow the five departments to achieve the level of funding noted above.

Table 2

Distribution:	Abercrombie Proposal							
	Projected 2021	Acres	Total Levy	Equalization Contribution	Total Levy	Equalization/truck	Total Payable	Net Change
Abercrombie	\$ 105,717.94	\$ 45.56	\$ 105,763.50	\$ 5,288.18	\$100,475.33	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 104,475.33	10,918.01
Alma	\$ 149,468.80	\$ 210.37	\$ 149,679.17	\$ 7,483.96	\$142,195.21	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 146,195.21	10,077.66
Barney's River	\$ 79,437.29	\$ 260.34	\$ 79,697.63		\$ 79,697.63	\$ 10,302.37	\$ 90,000.00	6,039.82
Blue Mountain	\$ 39,254.40	\$ 144.56	\$ 39,398.96		\$ 39,398.96	\$ 50,601.04	\$ 90,000.00	42,850.48
Caribou District	\$ 169,191.24	\$ 185.96	\$ 169,377.20	\$ 8,468.86	\$160,908.34	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 164,908.34	3,294.43
East River Valley	\$ 73,120.04	\$ 216.75	\$ 73,336.79		\$ 73,336.79	\$ 16,663.21	\$ 90,000.00	19,496.34
East River St. Mary's	\$ 9,087.20	\$ 34.92	\$ 9,122.12		\$ 9,122.12	\$ 35,877.88	\$ 45,000.00	21,648.76
Eureka	\$ 128,517.12	\$ 430.01	\$ 128,947.13	\$ 6,447.36	\$122,499.77	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 126,499.77	4,124.76
Linacy	\$ 117,522.64	\$ 48.37	\$ 117,571.01	\$ 5,878.55	\$111,692.46	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 115,692.46	3,870.06
Little Harbour	\$ 210,013.80	\$ 51.66	\$ 210,065.46	\$ 10,503.27	\$199,562.19	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 203,562.19	35,194.69
Merigomish	\$ 125,937.39	\$ 412.73	\$ 126,350.12	\$ 6,317.51	\$120,032.61	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 124,032.61	1,077.19
Pictou Landing	\$ 52,555.60	\$ 16.03	\$ 52,571.63		\$ 52,571.63	\$ 37,428.37	\$ 90,000.00	28,061.47
Plymouth	\$ 125,985.80	\$ 461.62	\$ 126,447.42	\$ 6,322.37	\$120,125.05	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 124,125.05	4,155.77
River John	\$ 154,245.10	\$ 456.97	\$ 154,702.07	\$ 7,735.10	\$146,966.97	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 150,966.97	4,963.50
Scotsburn	\$ 185,728.16	\$ 251.88	\$ 185,980.04	\$ 9,299.00	\$176,681.04	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 180,681.04	6,475.81
Thorburn	\$ 146,896.12	\$ 159.69	\$ 147,055.81	\$ 7,352.79	\$139,703.02	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 143,703.02	5,761.13
West River	\$ 172,203.37	\$ 428.97	\$ 172,632.34	\$ 8,631.62	\$164,000.72	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 168,000.72	5,259.68
Total Levy Distributed	\$ 2,044,882.01	\$3,816.39	\$2,048,698.40	\$ 89,728.56		\$ 198,872.87	\$ 2,157,842.71	

The Abercrombie proposal generates \$89728.56 in equalization bring the level of funding of the five departments up to the desired objective. The impact on each department is highlighted in red in Table 2 when compared to the 2020/2021 funding levels.

The second proposal being presented for consideration shall be referred to as the **Scotsburn Proposal**. This model has each of the 12 departments forgoing their truck grants of \$4000 and then paying 2.2 percent towards an equalization fund to achieve the level of funding for the five smaller departments.

Table 3

Distribution:	Scotsburn Proposal							
	Projected 2021	Acres 2021	Total Levy 2021	Equalization Contribution 2.2%	Total Levy	Equalization		Net Change over 2020/21
Abercrombie	\$ 105,717.94	\$ 45.56	\$ 105,763.50	\$ 2,326.80	\$ 103,436.70	\$ -	\$ 103,436.70	\$11,956.64
Alma	\$ 149,468.80	\$ 210.37	\$ 149,679.17	\$ 3,292.94	\$ 146,386.23	\$ -	\$ 146,386.23	\$9,886.65
Barney's River	\$ 79,437.29	\$ 260.34	\$ 79,697.63		\$ 79,697.63	\$ 10,302.37	\$ 90,000.00	\$6,039.82
Blue Mountain	\$ 39,254.40	\$ 144.56	\$ 39,398.96		\$ 39,398.96	\$ 50,601.04	\$ 90,000.00	\$42,850.48
Caribou District	\$ 169,191.24	\$ 185.96	\$ 169,377.20	\$ 3,726.30	\$ 165,650.90	\$ -	\$ 165,650.90	\$2,551.87
East River Valley	\$ 73,120.04	\$ 216.75	\$ 73,336.79		\$ 73,336.79	\$ 16,663.21	\$ 90,000.00	\$19,496.34
East River St. Mary's	\$ 9,087.20	\$ 34.92	\$ 9,122.12		\$ 9,122.12	\$ 35,877.88	\$ 45,000.00	\$21,648.76
Eureka	\$ 128,517.12	\$ 430.01	\$ 128,947.13	\$ 2,836.84	\$ 126,110.29	\$ -	\$ 126,110.29	\$4,514.24
Linacy	\$ 117,522.64	\$ 48.37	\$ 117,571.01	\$ 2,586.56	\$ 114,984.45	\$ -	\$ 114,984.45	\$4,578.07
Little Harbour	\$ 210,013.80	\$ 51.66	\$ 210,065.46	\$ 4,621.44	\$ 205,444.02	\$ -	\$ 205,444.02	\$37,076.52
Merigomish	\$ 125,937.39	\$ 412.73	\$ 126,350.12	\$ 2,779.70	\$ 123,570.42	\$ -	\$ 123,570.42	\$1,539.39
Pictou Landing	\$ 52,555.60	\$ 16.03	\$ 52,571.63		\$ 52,571.63	\$ 37,428.37	\$ 90,000.00	\$28,061.47
Plymouth	\$ 125,985.80	\$ 461.62	\$ 126,447.42	\$ 2,781.84	\$ 123,665.58	\$ -	\$ 123,665.58	\$4,615.24
River John	\$ 154,245.10	\$ 456.97	\$ 154,702.07	\$ 3,403.45	\$ 151,298.62	\$ -	\$ 151,298.62	\$4,631.85
Scotsburn	\$ 185,728.16	\$ 251.88	\$ 185,980.04	\$ 4,091.56	\$ 181,888.48	\$ -	\$ 181,888.48	\$5,268.37
Thorburn	\$ 146,896.12	\$ 159.69	\$ 147,055.81	\$ 3,235.23	\$ 143,820.58	\$ -	\$ 143,820.58	\$5,643.57
West River	\$ 172,203.37	\$ 428.97	\$ 172,632.34	\$ 3,797.91	\$ 168,834.43	\$ -	\$ 168,834.43	\$4,425.98
Total Levy Distributed	\$ 2,044,882.01	\$ 3,816.39	\$ 2,048,698.40	\$ 39,480.57		\$ 150,872.87	\$ 2,160,090.70	

The Scotsburn Proposal has the 12 departments contributing \$39480.57 to an equalization fund Along with \$48,000 from the truck grants also being contributed. The impact to each of the twelve departments is highlight in red in Table 3 when compared to the funding levels of 2020/2021.

Table 4 below will depict the difference between the two models and the impact on each of the departments. The Scotsburn Proposal has two parts to the calculation, the first being a uniform charge of \$4000 and then a second contribution based upon a fixed percentage. The Abercrombie model has all departments contributing at a fixed rate of 5 percent.

Other considerations for the various models are that the departments can not change their rates for a period of three years. The departments will potentially see year over year growth from the assessment roll; however, they cannot raise their current rates to offset the amount they are contributing to equalization or the loss of their truck grants.

Distribution:	Scotsburn	Abercrombie	Net Change
	Model Funding	Model Funding	
Abercrombie	\$ 103,436.70	\$ 104,475.33	1,038.62
Alma	\$ 146,386.23	\$ 146,195.21	191.02
Barney's River	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	0.00
Blue Mountain	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	0.00
Caribou District	\$ 165,650.90	\$ 164,908.34	742.56
East River Valley	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	0.00
East River St. Mary's	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	0.00
Eureka	\$ 126,110.29	\$ 126,499.77	389.48
Linacy	\$ 114,984.45	\$ 115,692.46	708.01
Little Harbour	\$ 205,444.02	\$ 203,562.19	1,881.83
Merigomish	\$ 123,570.42	\$ 124,032.61	462.20
Pictou Landing	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	0.00
Plymouth	\$ 123,665.58	\$ 124,125.05	459.47
River John	\$ 151,298.62	\$ 150,966.97	331.66
Scotsburn	\$ 181,888.48	\$ 180,681.04	1,207.44
Thorburn	\$ 143,820.58	\$ 143,703.02	117.56
West River	\$ 168,834.43	\$ 168,000.72	833.71
Total Levy Distributed	\$ 2,160,090.70	\$ 2,157,842.71	

Recommendations

The Fire Liaison Committee is making several recommendations for Council direction they are as follows. The discussion around the recommendations is contained in the draft set of Minutes from the May 25, 2021 Fire Liaison Committee meeting which are attached for convenience.

1. That the Fire Liaison Committee recommends that both the Abercrombie and Scotsburn funding proposals be forwarded to Council for debate and decision.
2. That the Fire Liaison Committee recommends to Council that a Fire Coordinator be hired to assist the fire departments

Clr. Turner reported he had a lot of input from the Abercrombie Fire Department where they had a proposal based on a 5-cent deduction on the levy that would go into an equalization fund. The executive of Abercrombie Fire Department looked at the proposal and they decided on 5% instead of 5 cents.

Warden R. Parker reported that this has been a long process and he has a great respect for all the fire departments and fire chiefs. This is about funding and fairness between the 17 fire departments. We need to bring the 5 struggling departments up to certain level of funding so that they are sustainable. He advised that the study has shown that there is adequate funding for the departments but the distribution of those funds is an issue so we have to look at redistributing a small amount of money to these departments. In his opinion, the Abercrombie proposal is the fairest proposal.

Clr. Palmer stated that he too has a lot of respect for firefighters but he has a problem with Council intervening in the business of a not-for-profit organization. The County provides insurance and the truck grants for the fire departments. Area rates are collected from the residents in their areas and paid to the departments. The fire study did not do anything for the fire departments and they did not agree on the Abercrombie model. He felt strongly that the fire departments should come up with a solution to the funding

issue. He asked the proposed salary for Fire Coordinator and the CAO replied in the \$70,000 to \$80,000 range. Clr. Palmer expressed his opinion that we should not be intervening in each department because they are run independently; instead, we should go with what was proposed at the May 25th meeting. He suggested giving the issue back to the fire departments to come up with a solution and asked the Solicitor if Council can arbitrarily increase the area rate for the 5 small fire departments to 20 cents when there is a policy in place that says the departments need to have a public meeting first before coming to Council for final approval on a rate increase.

The Solicitor replied he would have to look at that issue before giving Clr. Palmer an answer.

Clr. Dewar pointed out that fire departments are also first responders and we are asking too much from them.

Clr. Wadden informed Council that she was allowed to sit in on two of the Fire Liaison Committee meetings on May 11th and May 25th and was somewhat taken aback by how the chiefs were treated by this Committee. On May 11th there were two options proposed to the Committee and members were told they had to make a decision that evening. The chiefs advised that neither option was acceptable. Suddenly an Abercrombie proposal was on the table and the chiefs were advised that they had to make a choice that night. Again they were told by the chiefs that they could not vote on the Abercrombie proposal as the chiefs had not seen it to give their approval. They were told Council needed an option in time for their budget discussions and begrudgingly gave two weeks for the chiefs to meet on this proposal. At the meeting on May 25th the chief representatives advised the Committee that no option was acceptable to the chiefs but because they wanted to show good faith, they put forth a proposal that basically would give up the truck fund monies which amounts to \$48,000 and Council could show their good faith by putting up the rest. This would carry through for one year and by then the chiefs hoped to have an agreed solution by April 2022. There was never a vote taken on this proposal and it was turned down by the Councillors, primarily Warden Parker. The chiefs tried to explain that they could not speak to any other proposal on all the chiefs' behalf but that fell on deaf ears. That is when the Scotsburn proposal came forward and again the chiefs explained that they could not vote on behalf of the remaining chiefs as they had not agreed to this proposal. Again this comment was ignored by the Committee's Council members, and we are here tonight with this resolution which again I will state "does not have the support of the 17 fire chiefs". Our fire departments must set their rates in February for our Council especially if planning a rate increase. These fire departments are well into their budget year and are being told our Council will be taking money from their agreed budgets so that underfunded departments will be looked after. I can speak on behalf of the two departments I represent, Little Harbour and Pictou Landing. - when they discuss their core rates they work closely with their budgets, not wanting to put additional strain on their residents. First to Pictou Landing who are one of the underfunded departments - I have been advised by both their chief and past chief, this issue needs to be done right and should not be forced through just to get it done. They want a solution that will work and the only way to do that is through organized negotiations with the right people at the table. This issue is not new or unique to Pictou County. These underfunded departments are not going to fold up right away if this proposal takes another year. Now to Little Harbour - again middle of their budget year and we are taking upwards of \$10,000 from this department. I know our Warden has stated "this won't bankrupt you" but it most definitely will put constraints on them that should not happen. Like all our Fire Departments, Little Harbour is a well-run, organized fire department and this Council is looking to upset this. Their fire rates were increased by 2cents this year as they are saving towards a new fire truck within the next year or so. If this resolution is passed by Council, this puts our truck purchase in jeopardy as the money they increased to is being clawed back by this Council. None of the fire departments are being given the chance to recoup any of the monies lost to this proposal as rate increases are frozen for 3 years. Robert you are a small business owner, can you honestly say taking a \$10,000 hit on your current budget wouldn't hurt. Again probably not bankrupt you, but still cause pain. An issue totally overlooked by our Liaison Committee is the amount of fund raising done by most departments. Why should they bother to raise funds if this Council is only clawing money back from them? What is the incentive to keep doing this? Look at the time spent training or looking after equipment and fire halls. Where is the encouragement to do any of this? This fund raising does more than just buy much needed equipment. In Little Harbour they donate to the Foodbank, have donated to our Pickleball Committee, Muscular Dystrophy and much more. Fire departments are very community minded organizations and are always ready to step forward. Little Harbour has recently donated \$5,000 of older equipment to their sister station Pictou Landing. This is how teams work! Please do not consider railroading them with this resolution tonight. You have poked a bear that didn't need poking. My residents are upset that the monies they recommended

for their own fire departments are being callously taken from them. This has been a year of COVID restraints. We cannot meet with our fire chiefs, our fire departments or our residents. This resolution tonight is totally unacceptable. You talk of being an open and transparent Council, but I just do not support that. Look at the problems I had just to observe a committee meeting of Council, let alone dare to ask for a report. The solution we are looking to come up with for underfunded departments has to be done openly and transparently to succeed. This Committee is pitting fire departments against each other. We have a mutual aid system that that is second to none. You are jeopardizing this organization. This issue needs to be fixed by the fire departments with guidance from this Council not pushed through kicking and screaming. As far as the coordinator's position is concerned, the fire chiefs feel this position should be put on hold and I say listen to your fire departments. If this is a Council decision as you have said at the May 11th meeting, then why did it have to be part of this recommendation to Council? As a Councillor I will not support our Council hiring a Coordinator. This is an expense we do not need right now. If you are serious about wanting a Coordinator to work with fire departments then again this is no way to force this position on them. This person will be a well-paid individual ordering volunteers around. How long will our volunteers accept that? Again, you are just poking the bear. We have paid \$65,000 for a fire study that was supposed to address this issue, but it went badly off the tracks and became a study on the insurance needs of the departments now sitting on a shelf. We did an insurance study a couple of years ago for \$30,000. That one wasn't even completed. We have spent almost \$100,000 for nothing and yet you rejected a proposal brought forth by our chiefs that was acceptable and would only cost this Council \$40,000. If our fire departments are so flush as some of you believe then explain to me why so many of them apply for MSG money every year to help balance out their budgets for buying equipment. I think you are sadly off your mark that we take in enough money for all departments to thrive. This issue needs much more work. We should not be robbing Peter to pay Paul. I will not support such a resolution that only serves to attack fire departments who are the very backbone of our communities.

Clr. Butler reported that he has been a member of the Fire Liaison Committee and the topic of funding the fire departments came up. The study took much longer than planned and it became the job of the Committee to reach out to the fire chiefs and seek their input as they move forward. They communicated with the chiefs on different occasions. As they presented their path forward, they listened. They first suggested a fund be built up and the chiefs disagreed. The Committee listened to the chiefs and they presented a proposal to the chiefs that they rejected. The 2 proposals presented came from fire departments and it has not been an easy task but they felt they were the best to come before Council.

Clr. Boyles reported that the Abercrombie proposal should be the only proposal brought forward this evening. Abercrombie put a good proposal together and he told the firemen to put some proposals together to bring to the Committee. These 5 departments cannot wait another year and he feels they are being bullied.

Clr. Thompson reported 3 of the 5 small departments are in his area and he has serious problems moving forward with any funding proposal. He also felt that we should not be hiring a Coordinator until we have this problem solved.

Clr. D. Parker reported we did agree to do a fire study and he is in touch with 3 fire departments quite frequently. We as a Council have a duty to provide oversight and one way to do that is a Fire Service Coordinator that will help with financial statements and bulk purchase of equipment. He informed Council that he has no hope that the fire departments will ever come up with a plan. Equalization is a well-established governmental principle where money is taken from some who have more and given to those who have less. The province has an equalization fund and the County receives a small amount of that fund. The Abercrombie model moves a little closer to equalization but it is not perfect. The growth in this County is not even because it is based on assessment where there is growth along the shore. Our capital budget is spent on "J" class roads, water and sewer and some on sidewalks and his district has zero of all of those things. We are looking at locking in the highest possible rate for 5 of these districts and he was not sure that was a good thing. You are there on a Committee to bring forward concerns but it is getting all the information to those involved.

Clr. Elliott informed Council that she has been very disappointed on what she has been hearing and she would also feel better if this was an in-person meeting. Meetings of Council are open to the public in the Council Chambers but since COVID our meetings are held virtually. She realizes no fire department wants to part with their funding and she also realizes this is not a new issue. We have people who feel they do not know what is going on in their community because technology prevents people from being involved. These issues could be resolved if community members attended fire department monthly meetings so they

would know what was going on. It is not a funding issue but a distribution problem because we have enough funding for the fire departments in the Municipality. We are here to help the smaller departments who are trying to survive and make sure they do not have to close. We are responsible to make sure the taxpayers money is being spent in the best interest of the residents. Sitting on a Committee gives one the benefit of being able to speak on behalf of the group they are there to represent. Accountability is a must and all departments should have equal opportunity and resident should have the best service provided. Municipal taxes pay to have fire departments and a Coordinator will be paid for by the Municipality. A good communication is necessary with a Coordinator and a job description was provided to Committee members. Council has the power to make this decision and no department will have anything taken away but funding has to be shared. Council will not make the residents pay more; it is not the County's money it is the residents of Pictou County.

Clr. MacKeil stated that she lives in a district that is a "have" department and has worked closely with the chief through the entire process. It has not been easy and she wants to say thank you to all the chiefs. She lives in a district located along the shore where the assessments are high. Every penny they take in is spent appropriately with their futures in mind. No matter where you live in Pictou County you deserve the same fire service. No departments wants to lose money but at the same time we need to come up with something to help the smaller departments. She asked where the \$48,000 funded by Council would come from and the CAO replied that Administration would require Council's direction during budget deliberations. She expressed preference to move forward with the Abercrombie proposal since it is important to help these smaller departments. Regardless of the option chosen, the funds will be coming from our taxpayers. The Coordinator position is a resource for fire departments and could provide guidance for new firefighters.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Butler and seconded by Clr. D. Parker that the Abercrombie proposal be accepted by Council.

Clr. Wadden asked how we can go forward with this motion when the increase in area rates for the 5 departments have not been approved in their respective coverage areas as our policy requires. She asked the Solicitor for clarification on this issue before Council votes on the motion.

The Solicitor advised that the way the policy stands he would not be comfortable giving any advice this evening.

Clr. Wadden asked why we can put the rate up for the smaller departments so she has concern moving forward with this motion.

Clr. Thompson asked how Council could consider this policy when it will break Council's policy on fire department area rates.

The Solicitor recommended that Council discuss the matter in closed session.

CLOSED SESSION

Council met in closed session at 9:27 p.m. to discuss matters relating to legal advice eligible for solicitor-client privilege.

OPEN SESSION

Council resumed in open session at 9:40 p.m.

Clr. Thompson read Section 4(d) of the Fire Department Area Rate Policy as follows:

"A fire department wishing to adjust its area rate for the next fiscal year shall notify the Chief Administrative Officer or their member of Council of its intention to adjust the rate by February 28th of the preceding fiscal year"

Clr. Thompson stated that in his opinion the motion was off-side with the policy and the requirement to hold a public meeting to explain the rate increase which has not been possible due to COVID gathering limits.

MOTION TO TABLE

It was moved by Clr. Turner and seconded by Clr. Wadden that the motion to accept the Abercrombie proposal be tabled until such time as COVID-19 gatherings limits reach or exceed 30 people.

The motion to table was defeated. (Nay Votes: Clrs. Butler, MacKeil, Elliott, D. Parker, Boyles, Dewar, Deputy Warden Murray & Warden R. Parker)

The original motion carried. (Nay Votes: Clrs. Wadden, Palmer & Thompson)

MOTION – FIRE SERVICES COORDINATOR

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. Butler that Council approve the hiring of a Fire Services Coordinator.

Warden R. Parker reported if this process has shown us anything there is a great amount of separation between the departments. We need someone to help tie the departments together but it has to be the right person. Council will be paying for this position and the position will be helping with other areas as well. The fire chiefs have to assist in hiring this person so that we get the right person to help our departments come together on a lot of issues.

Clr. Wadden reported that she is very curious how the Warden is going to fill that position and advised that there is no appetite in the fire service to work on dispatch issues.

Clr. Butler reported a that Fire Services Coordinator had wide support from the fire chiefs and that is one of the reasons why it was brought forward tonight.

Clr. Turner recalled that the meeting in Alma had wide support for a Fire Services Coordinator from the chiefs.

Clr. Elliott agreed with Clr. Turner's recollection, adding that it was explained how the chiefs would be involved with the hiring to ensure that the successful candidate was someone who could work with the fire departments.

Clr. Boyles also recalled that there was agreement by the chiefs that a Fire Services Coordinator would be a great thing for our fire departments.

Clr. D. Parker reported the need for a fire coordinator will work if people use an open mind and over time the departments will realize it will benefit them.

Clr. Palmer asked what authority the Municipality has over a not-for-profit organization and the CAO explained that the MGA gives Council the power to set policy. The CAO reported that this position can help the departments by assisting them with different issues.

Clr. Thompson reported the idea of a Fire Coordinator is not considered a good idea among the fire departments and we could use that money to help the smaller departments.

Clr. Wadden asked will the fire departments be forced to work with Fire Coordinator and the CAO replied that we have policy regarding fire departments. The CAO reported the coordinator would work with the departments.

Motion carried. (Nay Votes: Clrs. Wadden, Palmer, Thompson & Dewar)

CHAIR

Warden R. Parker assumed the chair.

DIALYSIS CLINIC @ ABERDEEN HOSPITAL

Clr. Boyles reported that he has been approached by people on dialysis treatment who have concerns about local capacity to receive care since the Aberdeen Hospital no longer has a dialysis clinic and the Sutherland-Harris Memorial Hospital generally has a waiting list which requires patients to travel to

other facilities. He was asked by the residents that Council send a letter to the Premier and Minister of Health that a dialysis clinic be put in the Aberdeen Hospital.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. Dewar that a letter be sent to the Premier, Minister of Health (with copies to the MP, the 3 MLAs and the local towns) asking for the establishment of a dialysis clinic at the Aberdeen Hospital.

Clr. Wadden expressed a preference to have the Pictou clinic improved rather than establishing another clinic in New Glasgow.

Motion carried. (Nay Vote. Clr. Wadden)

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no community announcements. .

EMERGENCY RESOLUTIONS

There were no emergency resolutions.

REFERRALS TO COMMITTEES & COUNCIL

Clr. MacKeil reported she brought up the issue of human trafficking in Pictou County and asked when that will be put on the agenda for discussion.

Warden R. Parker reported they will try to put it on a future agenda.

ADJOURN

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. Dewar that the meeting adjourn.
Motion carried. (10:19 p.m.)

Robert Parker
Warden

Carolyn MacIntosh
Deputy Municipal Clerk