

Council Holds First Virtual Meeting

By Maurice Rees

The Shoreline's coverage of Colchester Municipal Council will take a different form due to Covid-19. Council meetings will be conducted from a virtual platform, which will result in our coverage being limited to extracting data from draft minutes, which will be posted within 24 hours of the meeting.

Regular Session of the Municipal Council of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted virtually via Zoom Conferencing, on Thursday, March 26, 2020. In an effort to keep the public informed council has posted a draft version of meeting minutes on www.colchester.ca

Due to a directive by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing pursuant to the provincial State of Emergency related to COVID-19, all Colchester Council meetings must be held remotely by teleconference or on a virtual platform. In order to ensure transparency and honour the commitment for Colchester Council to conduct its business in public, these draft minutes are being posted within twenty-four hours of the meeting. They will not be reviewed and approved until the next regularly scheduled meeting of Colchester Council on April 30, 2020. Until these minutes are formally approved by Colchester Council they cannot be relied on as an official record of the March 26, 2020 meeting.

Council gave its approval to several recommendations from committee meeting of March 12th which included:

Wastewater Collection Truck:

A tender in the amount of \$50,889, excluding HST to Hollis Ford for a 1.5 Ton Truck for Wastewater Collection. Councillor Cooper declared a conflict of Interest and re-



moved himself from the table. Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart Seconded by Councillor Pash.

Queen Street Sidewalk (Tatamagouche):

Council approved a contract with Ian Sinclair for the construction of the Queen Street Sidewalk in Tatamagouche, pending written confirmation from the Village of Tatamagouche that they will reimburse construction costs."

Offer to Purchase Two Lots on Dakota Road, Debert:

Because all information was not disclosed at the March 12th Council Committee meeting regarding the offer to purchase lots on Dakota Road in Debert, Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor, suggested the motion from March 12th recommending the approval of the sale of the properties and granting the CAO the authority to execute a Purchase and Sale Agreement be deferred to April Council Committee when all information is made available. Authority was granted to April Council Committee to approve the presented offer to purchase lands on Dakota Road at a purchase price of \$30,000."

Code of Conduct:

Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart Seconded by Councillor Parker "That Council approves that staff be directed to proceed with establishing processes for handling informal and formal complaints under the Code of Conduct, for Council review and consideration."

Motion Carried. (Councillor Gibbs opposed)

Central Colchester Planning Advisory Committee:

Due to technical difficulties in retrieving the report, on behalf of Councillor Taggart, Deputy Mayor Stewart presented the report to Council from the Planning Advisory Committee Meeting held on March 10, 2020. Brief discussion was held on the issue of bee keeping in Colchester, with clarification being sought on what will be told to those individuals making the initial complaint about bees. Councillor Taggart indicated that this was a one of complaint and the individual with the bees has since moved. Staff carried out an extensive review and recommended using the agricultural provisions in the current By-law to limit where commercial bee keeping activities occur rather than implementing a new by-law to manage the issue. It was noted that the person keeping the bees has relocated to District 7, so could possibly be future complaints.

Nominating Committee:

Mayor Blair indicated the Nominating Committee will be meeting in the next week or so to review applications for the Citizen Representative to the Audit Committee. Council authorized April Council Committee to approve the appointment of the Citizen Representative to the Audit Committee.

Councillors to Report on Rental Evictions

By Maurice Rees

Deputy Mayor Stewart advised that due to the current unprecedented Covid-19 situation, the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) was approached by the residential tenancy board requesting municipalities to assist with gathering information dealing with evictions and residents being asked questions regarding private health matters related to COVID-19.

If residents are being evicted, by written notification, during this time due to non-payment of rent, they are being asked to share the written notification

with their Councillor who will in turn provide copies via email to Wayne Mason, past president NSFM.

Councillors are being asked to share this message through social media avenues to help make residents aware. The CAO indicated that the message can be also posted to the County website and through Facebook to alert constituents that if they are dealing with this type of situation, they can contact their district Councillor and provide them with the written information so that it can be passed on to the provincial government.

Council Writes Off \$9,080 in Bad Debts

By Maurice Rees

Council approved that the property taxes, water accounts, general receivables and interest totaling \$9,080.73, as presented, be written off from information presented by Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services.

Discussion was held regarding outstanding bills being that of property owners or tenants and whether a lien can be placed on property owners for outstanding water utility accounts. Mr. Fraser indicated that the water utilities are regulated by the NS Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) and liens cannot be put on the properties.

Further discussion was held regarding collec-

tion specific to companies that no longer exist. The Municipal Solicitor advised that it would depend on whether it was a partnership or company. If it was just a business name, the individual would still be liable, but if it was an incorporated company that has gone out of business, unless there was a personal guarantee, there would be nothing to go back on. Further discussion on the collection process was held.

Additionally, a question was raised regarding the ability to get around the NSUARB to allow the Municipality to put a lien on properties for outstanding water bills. Staff and the Municipal Solicitor will investigate this. Moved by Councillor Cooper Seconded by Councillor Parker.

Fundy Discovery Centre RFP Decision Delayed

By Maurice Rees

April Council Committee has been authorized to award contract for the Interpretive Concept and Feasibility Study for the Fundy Discovery Site. Paul Smith, Manager of Planning Services, reported that due to operational impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a delay in the review of the RFP responses.

Schedule for future council meetings will remain fluid and because of COVID-19 may be rescheduled. The CAO requested a Maintenance Budget meeting scheduled for April 2, 2020 be cancelled. Municipalities across the province are facing challenges regarding budget processes and staff is currently verifying what is being done. Findings will be reviewed with the Executive Committee as well as reported back to Council with options for consideration.

Referring to the regular

meetings and public hearings, as well as the budget meetings, the Municipal Solicitor advised that council must be mindful of satisfying the public component aspect when considering scheduling such meetings.

Brief discussion was held on Planning Advisory Com-

mittee meetings and Councillor Taggart requested that staff contact developers to explain the current situation and he would advise the citizen members of the committee. Decision on meetings will be brought back to council committee on April 9th.

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