

Colchester's Community Development Report

The following is an overview of Community Development Department activity since November 2021 presented to council by Paul Smith, Director of Community Development at council's committee meeting on March 10, 2022

COMMUNITY PLANNING - Tatamagouche Plan Review

Citizen members of the Tatamagouche PAC are working in collaboration with staff to draft the revised Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law, which should be completed by the end of March. Once the drafts are complete, the Committee will review the documents with residents of the Village in April before advancing them to Council for consideration. As well, the Village Commission has appointed one of their members as their representative to the PAC.

Affordable Housing Study:

With the affordable housing study complete, several stakeholders are examining options to deliver affordable housing solutions. In January, the group arranged for a Coordinated Access presentation by Lisa Ryan which examined processes to ensure a consistent approach for those experiencing homelessness to access housing and related services.

Debert Housing Concept:

Community Development in collaboration with Economic Development staff and the Debert Business Park Advisory Committee have finalized a residential concept design for a forty-acre parcel of land in Debert. A community engagement session was held in late January 2022 and many who attended supported the proposed design. Staff are exploring site development options and private sector partnerships as well as planning for servicing upgrades.

Fundy Discovery Site:

Staff have been advised the Municipality's ICIP application has received Provincial approval and will be advancing to the federal approval process. This is a significant milestone and will activate a number of projects that will be needed in support of the federal application.

Over \$3,000 has been raised in memory of former Councilor and Deputy Mayor Bill Masters. This money will be used to help fund a new covered pavilion in the playground.

Architecture 49 and Aldrich Pears have been engaged to begin designing a look-off tower and interpretive elements near

the aboideau. Money was allocated in the 2021 - 2022 capital budget for this purpose.

Salmon River School Property:

A community survey on the future use of the former Salmon River School property was completed, compiled and results posted to the Municipality's website in December 2021. Three design options have been completed based on the survey results which will serve as references when community open houses are conducted in mid-April. A final report and recommendation will be prepared for Council in May 2022.

Wind Turbine By-law Review:

Staff are in the early stages of reviewing Colchester's Wind Turbine By-law and is in the process of completing a jurisdictional scan of requirements used in other municipal units. The key regulatory issues being examined include turbine height, setbacks from property lines, noise levels and decommissioning requirements. A public engagement program will be developed by mid-April which will be designed to seek public input on development standards.

Planning Advisory Committee:

The Central Colchester PAC has two new members: a citizen representative to fill a vacancy and a Village of Bible Hill representative. The Committee has not met yet in 2022 but interest has remained high for several large-scale developments so it is anticipated that applications for some will be made soon, which PAC will be involved with. Also, they will be involved with the review of the Wind Turbine Development By-law.

SUSTAINABLE COLCHESTER

Community Energy & Emissions Plan:

Council received a presentation from Yuill Herbert of Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG) about the Carbon-Free Colchester Community Energy & Emissions Plan at the beginning of February and approved the Plan at the end of the month. Staff are continuing to advance sustainability initiatives and apply for funding. Staff will prepare and bring to Council the first of several "mini-plans" in the next couple months to recommend the Municipality's short-term priorities and develop a budget for implementation.

Carbon-Free Colchester Implementation:

The Municipality's application to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program for fund-

ing for solar panels at the CCWWTF; two arenas, and Tatamagouche library has not yet been approved. The ICIP is a bilateral funding program, so Colchester's application must be reviewed by both the provincial Department of Energy and Mines and Natural Resources Canada.

The Municipality has received \$25,000 in funding from the Province's Low Carbon Communities program to complete a FEED (Front End Engineering Design) study of a deep energy retrofit for a municipal building. Colchester is partnering with the ReCover Initiative, based in Halifax, to study the feasibility of the Dutch EnergieSprong retrofit model on municipal buildings, whereby a pre-fabricated, super-insulated building envelope is installed and mechanical systems are resized to suit.

Staff have applied for funding and support from ICLEI to develop a volunteer engagement program, alongside Solid Waste, that would help to build capacity and interest in the community for the implementation of the Community Energy & Emissions Plan.

Staff are holding virtual events for both Earth Hour on March 26 and Earth Day on April 22. The events will be publicized on social media and the County newsletter and will help to build awareness of climate change and the Municipality's climate initiatives.

Solar Colchester / Cozy Colchester

Since launching in October, more than 100 residents have attended information sessions hosted by staff about Cozy Colchester & Solar Colchester, and all households in the municipality received a mailout in late December about the programs. As of March 1, 280 residents have enrolled in the program, 62 have signed agreements with the Municipality, and 24 have completed solar or retrofit projects. Community members are thrilled about the zero percent financing and the programs are helping homeowners who would not otherwise be able to afford efficiency upgrades.

INSPECTION SERVICES

Building Inspection:

Recruitment efforts are underway for the Assistant Building Official position approved by Council in February 2022. Applications will be received until March 21 and it is anticipated the position will be filled by mid-April.

Leah Benoit was hired on as

Administrative Support Clerk in early January for a 3-year term.

2021 building activity has been very high over the past year with about \$80 million in construction value and this year looks like another busy one.

PROPERTY INFORMATION / GIS

The first phase of the Enterprise GIS Portal architecture implementation has been successfully completed. This will serve as a central data repository, from which the Department can develop tools supporting other municipal business units.

Consolidation and documentation of authoritative data sets has begun and is ongoing. Building collaborative interdepartmental relationships, regarding the sharing and maintenance of data, will allow us to maximize the benefits of the new Enterprise GIS.

Civic Addressing quality control checks have been undertaken, and will continue, to improve accuracy and completeness of geospatial data for our area, and to contribute to the quality of the shared NSCAF data.

Staff have been updating and developing mapping applications for use in Property Information, and by other departments, including EMO, Economic Development, Public Works, Community Development, and Finance.

Future efforts include a continued focus on migrating data into the Enterprise GIS framework, documenting best practices and standard operating procedures for data stewardship, and planning for user adoption of new geospatial tools and applications.

To support informed decision making, the Department has begun engaging with staff from other departments to identify strategies to support their operations through use of GIS, as our Enterprise GIS capabilities develop further.

RECREATION SERVICES

Volunteer Week: From April 24th to April 30th communities across Canada will celebrate National Volunteer Week, a time to celebrate and thank volunteers. The Department is looking for nominations and the deadline is April 4, 2022.

Non-Profit Grants:

The Department has been processing non-profit grants packages however fewer applications and less financial requests have been received. It seems the change in non-profit grant policy has made the process more focused and easier to understand.

Department working closely with arena groups, as restrictions change provincially and understanding the limitations that are in place for COVID protocols.

The Shoreline Tid-Bits

Journal

Three properties added to Nature Trust

On March 8th, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust announced its success in adding three iconic coastal properties to the growing natural legacy to safeguard for all Nova Scotians: a pristine coastal island, a beautiful South Shore beach and wetlands, and stunning Cape Breton coastal highlands.

A public campaign was launched last September to raise the final \$200,000 needed to secure all three lands. Thanks to incredible public support and matching funds unlocked through federal government and other conservation partners, these new protected areas represent a \$1 million victory for coastal conservation across the province.

Video footage, photos, and background information are available at <https://nsnt.ca/media/>

Chair Appointed to Nova Scotia Labour Board

Jasmine Walsh, an accomplished strategic human resources leader and labour employment professional, has been appointed Chair of Nova Scotia's Labour Board. Over a 17-year career, Walsh has been involved in labour and employment issues as legal counsel and advocate, human rights investigator, mediator, chief negotiator, human resources consultant and, most recently, as a key member of Dalhousie University's senior leadership team.

Walsh is currently Assistant Vice-President of Human Resources at Dalhousie. The appointment as Chair is for five years, became effective March 15.

The Nova Scotia Labour Board receives approximately 200 new matters annually. Additional Resources:

Nova Scotia Labour Board:
<https://www.novascotia.ca/lae/labourboard/>

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Parks and Trails:

Municipal parks and trails continue to be quite busy this winter. Many people still using the trails and parks daily for walks, hikes, snowshoeing and family outings.

Winter weather has caused several trees to come down in all parks and green spaces. This has kept the parks crew quite busy and the Department will continue with tree planting in the spring in various areas.

Hearts Haven Memorial Park has received lots of donations and support to date. Plans for the park has been ongoing with an anticipated construction start in the mid to late spring.

The Big Belly garbage cans have arrived and will be installed in the spring, this will make garbage cleanup much easier for the Department.

Active Communities:

Step into spring is planning to move forward in the end of March 2022 which encourages people to start to walk in the spring for an 8-week challenge and hopefully continue the activity into the future.

Multisport Program had to pause for a short period of time (December until end of February) due to Covid19 restrictions. Activities resumed on February 27 and will run until the end of June.

Partners in Cumberland and Colchester just finished hosting

the Fundy Shore Winter Carnival including areas from Parrsboro to Debert. Many of the events were held virtually but hoping next year the event will have more in person activities.

The Department has also partnered with the South Colchester Health Board to encourage youth (specifically in schools) to do a daily wellness challenge within the school, for the months of February, March, and April. Prizes will be awarded.

Facility Access and Learn to Skate for Grade 2's has been slowly progressing because of COVID restrictions, but staff is hoping schools will be able to get youth to recreation facilities from March until June.

The Department is just finished updating the MPAL plan (Municipal Physical Activity Leadership Plan). The Plan needs to be renewed every 5-6 years for which the Municipality receives \$25,000 from the Province each year. The Plan will be presented to Council within the month.

The Recreation Departments in Colchester, Truro, Stewiacke, and Bible Hill have partnered to host the Annual Easter Egg Hunt on April 9 at the various locations: Victoria Park, Bible Hill Rec Park, Dennis Park in Stewiacke, Nelson Park, Fundy Discovery Site and Debert Recreation Fields.

Additional \$150 for Vulnerable Nova Scotians

The Province will provide \$13.2 million to vulnerable Nova Scotians to help them address the immediate impact of rising fuel prices on the cost of living. The support package announced on March 24, includes:

- A one-time payment of \$150 to all current income assistance recipients, including Disability Support Program participants receiving income support; for example, a single parent on income assistance with three children will receive \$600;
- A one-time payment of \$150 to all currently eligible recipients of the Heating Assistance Rebate Program; the payment is expected to be made by the end of April;
- \$1 million to Feed Nova Scotia to distribute among their 140 food banks province-wide and
- \$200,000 to local food banks across the province which

are not part of the Feed Nova Scotia network.

Payments to eligible recipients of income assistance and the Disability Support Program will be processed last week of March. People who receive assistance through this year's Heating Assistance Rebate Program will automatically receive the extra \$150 payment.

People are still able to apply to the program until March 31 at: <https://www.novascotia.ca/heatinghelp> and through Access Nova Scotia, and Community Services and MLA offices.

"Record high fuel prices have created challenges and put financial strain on many Nova Scotians, especially those with low incomes," said Colton LeBlanc, Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. "We recognize the impact this is having so we are increasing the rebate we give through the Heating Assis-

tance Rebate program so we can provide more financial help."

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Deadline for the June issue of

is May 18