

Municipal Departments Submit Reports to Council

The following Administration report was delivered to Cumberland Council at its March meeting on March 20th.

Tickets and troubleshooting - A high volume of requests continues. In addition to the ticketing system, both IT employees experience 3-5 walk-up requests per day.

Site assessments - Three full hardware inventories were taken at the Community Centre and Springhill public works as well as Parrsboro public works. A tracker form was created and shared with the team and deputy CAO. Many more sites to go but it is critical to complete as this will be used for future hardware planning and remote monitoring.

Hardware deployment readiness - Purchased laptops, monitors, docking stations and peripherals. Storing hardware at both Upper Nappan and Springhill for instant deployment as needed. Staff are preparing "hot spares" to deploy in addition to these new systems for employees that are unable to work due to hardware related issues.

This will minimize downtime for all departments and maximize available cycles for admin time. It is more efficient to deploy a new system than to troubleshoot one for an extended period.

Piloting remote monitoring and management software. Working in evaluation servers for both Kaseya and Ninja one. Testing new best of brand antivirus solution and EDR. This is going very well. Quotes have been provided to Peter. Evaluation from Evan and Patrick will be submitted in March.

We are beginning to implement actions from the DEFCON 6 cyber security audit. For example, two factor authentication is 85-90% complete, we have rolled out the

Beauceron anti-phishing software to a test cohort, and we are turning our attention to password security next.

Community Development
The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) has been re-established, with many returning members. The committee as it stands reaches the requirement of 50% people with disabilities/representatives of related organizations, but it was recommended to aspire for a higher ratio in case a member must step down for any reason, to avoid unnecessary delays. Thus, the call for new members has gone out to the public with some interest, organic or directly sought.

The Joint Action Plan ("the Plan") will be updated by 2025 by the committee with public input. In the meantime, per the Plan's implementation strategy, we are putting together a report to show the public the Plan's progress so far.

Stephanie has been doing a lot of online learning and context-gathering to be as aware as she can be of various accessibility issues. Making documents more accessible is top-of-mind. I am investigating how to make PDFs accessible.

We have a meeting planned for April with Tim Bernard, the Executive Director of the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre. Although they are in Colchester, those are colonial boundaries. They are the Mi'kmaw community nearest to us within Nova Scotia, and it's vital to forge a relationship with them. According to the Treaties of Peace and Friend-

ship, it's customary to bring a gift when we meet, a handmade gift will be prepared.

Kellie and Stephanie touched base about employment policies/practices (EDI & A), starting with how we use inclusive language and networks to promote our jobs.

We will want our staff to receive equity and accessibility training of different types related to their roles as much as possible. Hoping not to reinvent the wheel, I tried a couple of free, pre-existing certificate courses. It didn't feel like it will be the right fit for most of our staff, so the search will continue for appropriate content. If none can be found, it will be developed.

The Food Security Summit in Parrsboro was a good conversation with valuable voices coming together. The goal of the summit seemed to be to establish a Food Security Network across Cumberland. Unfortunately, by the end of the meeting, there was very little interest in getting involved. The next iteration will be in Springhill in early March.

Items in the Poverty Reduction Plan are being reviewed and actioned.

District Grants (as of Jan 31)

Budget Approved Grants: In each budget year the Mayor and each councillor are allocated \$10,000 to be used within their district. Of the \$90,000 allocated, as of February 29, a total of \$4,590.20 had not been allocated

Human Resources & Safety Recruitment

An interview was held for the Protective Services Administrative Assistant position.

The Manager of Financial Services position competition closed in February. Interviews were held.

The Marketing Officer was posted externally, and interviews were held. The position was offered to Clarissa McCully. Clarissa will begin in March.

Interviews were held for the Permitting & Inspection Administrative Assistant position. The position was offered to Tanya Mills.

The Finance & Administrative Clerk was posted internally with no interest. The position was then posted externally with a February closing date.

The Manager of Fire Services was posted internally and externally. The position competition closes in February.

The Teen Centre Coordinator Casual position remains posted externally.

Labour Relations - A tentative agreement with CUPE was struck on December 18, 2023. CUPE has ratified it, and it is being brought to Council for approval at the March Regular Meeting.

Workplace safety - Consultation with staff regarding how to improve safety in the workplace have been rescheduled to late March due to weather.

Performance Reviews - A revamped performance appraisals process and tools will be rolled out in March.

Health and Dental Benefits - We are working with our benefits provider to renew our health and dental benefits for 2024-25.

Communications

We have signed a contract with Voyent Alert to implement a new subscription-based alert system for Municipal notices. It can be

used to notify the public on things such as emergencies, changes to waste collection, road closures, water main breaks, and recreation events. The public opts into the program for free and can tailor the app to receive notifications they want to receive.

Worked with the engagement coordinator to make changes to the Accessible Cumberland website.

Coverage of celebration at Truemanville Volunteer Fire Department for Lyman Bacon.

Articles for Springhill/Parrsboro winter carnivals, the retirement of long-time employee Nelson Bezanson, the new sledge hockey program and new community hockey program in Parrsboro.

Organized the National Flag of Canada Day proclamation with Mayor Scott.

Solid Waste Collection Schedule Changes

The Municipality and Town of Amherst accepted Miller Waste's proposal for a 5-year solid waste collection contract. The proposal by Miller Waste that was accepted included changes to the solid waste collection schedule and routes. These changes included bi-weekly collection of all streams of waste on the same collection day and establishing 10 collection routes.

Municipal staff recently met with the Town of Amherst and Miller Waste to discuss the implementation of the changes to solid waste collection. Based on the proposed delivery time of new collection equipment and seasonal changes in solid waste volumes it was determined that the changes would be implemented November 4, 2024.



A collection schedule will be issued covering April 1, 2024 to October 31, 2024. A

schedule for November 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025 will be issued late summer in conjunction with an education campaign. Miller Waste has agreed to pay for the cost of distributing the second schedule.

Water Meter Installation Nearing Completion

The Municipality has been working with Neptune Technology Group to install water meters in the Community of Springhill. The project will install water meters for each customer of the water utility. As of February 29, 2024 the installation of water meters in the community of Springhill was substantially complete. Munic-

ipal staff worked with Neptune staff to get the word out about the project through social media posts and door hangers to encourage customers to book appointments.

Neptune will return for a week at the end of March to install the remaining meters for any remaining customers.

95% of Property Taxes Collected

The Municipality of Cumberland has reported 95% of the 2023-2024 tax levy has been collected as of February 28, 2024.

Quick Facts regarding Property Taxes:

The 2023 Tax Levy was posted on May 26, 2023 in the

amount of \$25,523,893.89.

The 2022 Tax Levy was posted on June 14, 2022 in the amount of \$23,381,753.07.

The collection rate for the current year taxes is 95.0% (94.9% in 2022).

The next tax sale has been scheduled for March 14, 2024.

Staff started with a total of 66 accounts with a total outstanding balance of \$445,484 (including the 7 adjourned ac-

counts from the November 9, 2023 tax sale). As of February 28, 2024 are now 32 accounts with a total outstanding balance of \$356,193.

Aging	February-2024	February-2023
Current	\$1,272,009	\$1,189,055
One Year	\$416,811	\$383,641
Two Year	\$191,913	\$166,059
Three Years	\$122,755	\$143,426
Four Years & Older	\$670,134	\$618,409
Total Arrears	\$1,401,613	\$1,311,536
Grand Total	\$2,673,622	\$2,500,591

There were 46 tax certificates requested and issued in the month of February. Outstanding water bills as of February 29, 2024 was \$108,161 up from, \$86,861 same dates in 2023.



Alisha Atkinson, Carrina Joyce and Ken Wood hope to see you at the Historic Manning Block.

Black Rock Extending Open Hours

By Sandra Stephenson

When many eateries across Canada are struggling to keep the doors open as they try to rebuild business following CoVid and repaying the loans for emergency CoVid funding from the Feds, Ken Wood, Parrsboro is bucking the trend.

As reported in last issue, February 1st was a red-letter day in Parrsboro, as a new breakfast nook opened its doors to serve local townspeople who have been starved for breakfast-out-of-home since tourist season and the Harbourview Restaurant closed in October, the original Black Rock Bistro and Bar closed last year, around the same time that Gillespie House Inn changed ownership.

Kenneth Wood, a retired contractor, parked a chip truck outside his house in Parrsboro in 2022, and moved it to Main Street in 2023. Now he has leased the long-running Black Rock Bistro in historic Manning Block on Main Street for the new café, where his wife and two or three young locals work with him.

Wood is still experimenting what additional hours will be sustainable, and meet the needs of Parrsboro residents. He's actually started to stay open some days through lunch, one day it was fish chowder or meatloaf, and on Fridays plans to offer an

evening take-out meal.

Alisha Atkinson, runs the kitchen, with Carrina Joyce greeting customers and performing waitress duties. Black Rock Bistro does catering, and in summer hopes to open evenings with a music bar. Located in

Historic Manning Block, 151 Main St. Ph: 902 728 3006 for catering and take-out inquiries.

Ken also owns the chip wagon parked on Main St., open only in summer.

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