

Cumberland County Council Notes



Council approves 2023 capital projects

Cumberland County is preparing for the 2023 construction season by approving a number of capital projects around the municipality. Approving the capital budget early allows municipal staff to get the best pricing and optimal availability of contractors.

There are about 32.4 km of roads in Parrsboro and 36.3 km of roads in Parrsboro the municipality is responsible for. Roads normally have a life of 20 years, so it's prudent to repave about a kilometre of roads in each municipality each year.

The Municipality of Cumberland conducted a survey of asphalt condition in 2020 and used the ranking of pavement conditions along with infrastructure age/condition to identify a preferred list of roads for paving. The intent is also to avoid roads where the underground infrastructure is due to be replaced in the next several years.

Capital projects approved for 2023 include the Junction Road rehabilitation, with an estimated cost of \$6 million; the Athol Road water line replacement, with an estimated cost of \$1.44 million; the installation of water meters at \$1.2 million; Springhill capital paving, estimated at \$755,688 and Parrsboro capital paving, estimated to cost \$461,709.

Capital paving in Springhill includes: Black River Road (Civic Number 118 to McGee Street), Princess Street (Main to Sproule), Starr Street (Cowan to Herrett), Highland Street (Herrett to west end), Church Street (Crossin to south end), North Street (Junction Road to former town boundary) and Dunn Street (Herrett to west end). Capital paving in Parrsboro includes: Farrell Road (Upper Main to Templar) and Templar Street (Farrell to Civic 79).

The municipality is also moving forward with the installation of water meters in Springhill.

The use of water meters promotes water conservation and accountability for water usage with each resident. It also makes residents aware of how much water they consume and charges them accordingly. Springhill water utility users are presently billed on a flat rate basis, although there are currently 50 metered customers in the community servicing industrial accounts, some commercial accounts and institutions.

Water meters have been installed in both the Pugwash and Parrsboro water systems. There are currently 1,553 customers of the Springhill water utility.

Cumberland providing \$12,500 grant

The Municipality of Cumberland is providing \$12,500 to the Advocate and District Development Association for upgrades to the Log Building (community centre) in Advocate Harbour.

The total budget for the project is \$25,000 and includes putting a new roof on the building.

The community centre serves the surrounding area, including Advocate Harbour, Fraserville, Apple River and Salem.

Ad Hoc Committee Formed for fire services

Council passes a motion to establish an ad hoc committee to review and provide feedback to council on the proposed service model changes relating to the provision of fire services in Cumberland County.

The Municipality of Cumberland conducted a fire service review in 2022 with Goudreault and Associates completing a report that exceeds 1,000 pages and made a number of recommendations designed to improve the provision of fire services in Cumberland County.

Council's motion allows the review committee to examine the delivery of fire protection services and the viability of implementing changes to the fire services model proposed by council.

Dates changed for March council meetings

Cumberland municipal council is changing the dates of its March committee of the whole and regular meetings.

Normally, council meets the third and fourth Wednesdays of the month. However, with March Break occurring during the third week of March (March 13-17), many staff and councillors will be taking time off to be with family.

As a result, the March committee of the whole meeting will be held Wednesday, March 22, with the regular council meeting on Wednesday, March 29.

Fire Departments each get \$5,000

The Municipality of Cumberland is recognizing the work of its volunteer fire departments during last fall's post-tropical storm Fiona with a one-time payment of \$5,000 each.

The storm rolled through Cumberland County, and most of Nova Scotia, overnight Sept. 23 with the wind and rain levelling large swaths of forestland throughout the county, knocking over utility poles and downing power lines.

Most of Cumberland County was without electricity following the storm with some locations having to go without electricity for extended periods of time. Cumberland County 16 fire departments responded to the challenge by establishing comfort centres that allowed people to stay warm, charge their electronic devices, get a cup of coffee or tea and socialize with neighbours.

During the storm, the province's 911 emergency system was down temporarily. Fire departments stayed open as a location for people to go to report an emergency.

Volunteers, including those from the county's rural fire departments, also conducted wellness checks when needed, delivered fuel and generators for EMO and provided updates on conditions around the county.

While some fire departments submitted invoices for expenses, most did not. The municipality wants to be inclusive of any claim of compensation and to treat all departments equally. The total cost of the initiative will be \$80,000. The funding will come from general reserves.

\$6 Million to Rehabilitate Junction Road in Springhill

The Municipality of Cumberland is including more than \$6 million in its 2023-24 capital budget for the long-awaited rehabilitation of Junction Road in Springhill.

Junction Road is the main entrance into the community from the Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 2 from Amherst. However, its condition has continued to deteriorate with surface cracks and bumps from the underlying 1930s concrete road.

The underground infrastructure is also at the end of its useful life.

The project includes the following: Compete renewal of the streetscape with new, urbanized right-of-way, including sidewalks on both sides, concrete curb and gutter and new asphalt; Replacing the aging watermain; Replacing sanitary sewer within the right-of-way to remove storm water from the system and Installing a new stormwater system and replacing ditching with curb and gutter.

Replacing the sanitary sewer and provision of a storm sewer will allow for separation of combined flow, elimination of inflow from catch basins between Maple Street and Main Street and reduce infiltration of groundwater from deteriorated pipe/joints.

The net result will be a reduction in the volume of sewage directed to the wastewater treatment plant, which will reduce costs and environmental concerns and fewer residential concerns such as basements backing up, flooding and discharges.

Cumberland County selling surplus Springhill property

The Municipality of Cumberland is selling a piece of property in Springhill to Jamie Merritt for \$13,000 plus any applicable taxes and the proviso that the purchaser acknowledges that the sale of the land does not imply pre-approval by the municipality for any specific use.

Council had declared the land at 213 Main St., Springhill, to be surplus. Three bids were received to a tender call for the property.

Cumberland County awards contract to Miller Waste

The Municipality of Cumberland is awarding Miller Waste System Inc.'s the contract for solid waste collection in the county. The bid from Miller Waste includes a Christmas tree collection every January, bi-weekly collection of one bulky item garbage, annual special collection of construction and demolition debris (metal and bulky garbage), leaf and yard waste special spring pickup and weekly pickup of eight yard organics bins within the municipality.

The total value of the five-year contract is \$12.6 million.

The municipality's 10-year solid waste collection contract expired March 22 and a one-year extension was negotiated. After ongoing discussions, a joint request for proposals was issued by the municipality and the Town of Amherst. The intent of the joint RFP was to gain efficiencies and create opportunities to align contracted services within the region.

Three proposals were submitted and Miller Waste's alternate proposal scored the highest. The alternate proposal required both the Municipality of Cumberland and the Town of Amherst to select this option.

The proposal makes changes to how solid waste is collected curbside. Collection zones and days will be changed to create a more even distribution of work in the collection schedules.

It is anticipated these changes will result in fewer late or incomplete collection days during times of peak collection volumes.

The change that will most impact residents is moving to a bi-weekly collection of all three waste streams. In this proposal, residents will place all streams of waste curbside (garbage, organics and recyclables), property sorted, every two weeks for collection.

The above changes are to be implemented April 1, 2024.

The request for proposals did ask to include costs for weekly collection through the summer and all year, but the price tags came in at an extra \$313,478 and \$497,186 respectively. Staff did not recommend this option. The cost of the contract is higher than the extension by \$513,451.

Three-year agreement with Cumberland Business Connector

The Municipality of Cumberland has agreed to enter into a new three-year agreement with the Town of Amherst and the Cumberland Business Connector. The exiting five-year agreement with the Connector expired on March 31, 2022.

Following discussion, the Town of Amherst has approved the agreement and the Connector is ready to sign as well. Changes to the agreement seek to improve communication and increase municipal input into the Connector's strategic priorities.

Council approves change to land-use bylaw

Cumberland municipal council has approved second reading of an application to amend the land-use bylaws to change a property near Wentworth from rural resource to recreational residential to permit construction of a subdivision of recreational cottage lots on the Valley Road.

The subject property is approximately five kilometres west of Wentworth. The subdivision will be built on a newly built private road on the adjacent property.

The property is currently running as an unmanaged wood lot. Neighbouring properties are mostly forested lots and a few neighbouring dwellings zoned as agricultural. A public hearing was held on December 14 with no submissions.

Cumberland County amending workplace wellness policy

The Municipality of Cumberland is amending its workplace wellness policy following a staff review that found the policy does not include a statement from council authorizing the administration of the wellness subsidy program.

The program was previously administered by the wellness committee, but was on hold while the review was being completed. The program's purpose is to provide funding to help municipal employees take ownership for their physical, mental and emotional health, improving their overall health and wellbeing.

Budget Increased for Springhill Access System

The Municipality of Cumberland is increasing the budget of the Springhill access system project from \$94,000 to \$127,300 to include the design, supply, fabrication and installation of access catwalks, platforms, ladders, anchor points and retractable lanyards at the Springhill water treatment plant.

Access systems were included in the original plant construction, but some of the higher maintenance and inspection locations do not have ready access. This project will reduce the risk of falls, handling/lifting of temporary equipment and human error in temporary setups.

The project was identified as a priority in the 2022 Clear the Deck report.



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