

# REES' Pieces

## Should they have? Yes? No?

April is always a difficult month for elected officials, especially municipal councillors. They are similar to university students cramming to get everything done. With busy schedules, plus dedication to municipal responsibilities, they have to work with staff to plan for summer / fall activities; review the previous year; look ahead to determine what else is needed; do some long range planning and set the budget for the coming year.

The budget process started with public meetings inviting the non-profits to make presentations on their grant request. This year requests for non-profit grants from Colchester's community groups totaled more than \$500,000. A difficult position given the budget allotment was in the range of \$100,000.

Then council scheduled "additions and deletions" meetings to review the applications, see what might have been missed, then allocate monies to a number of groups. Two evening sessions didn't get the job done, so a third one was scheduled for April 20th. I was only able to attend the meeting on the 20th, when councillors were under pressure to complete the allocations and balance the budget.

Deliberations were done in a committee meeting and will not be ratified until council's monthly meeting (tomorrow) Thursday, April 27th. Since all discussions form a recommendation to council, it's not for me to reveal the results, and to be the first one to advise a community group of the decision. I can say some non-profit grants were denied, other were allotted significantly less than requested.

It's conjecture, but from attending the final meeting, it appears in certain areas reserves have been used to get a job done and council deciding not to allocate as much to reserves as in the past.

Before balancing the budget, two motions were put before the committee to raise taxes, but were defeated. One called for an increase of one cent on each of residential and commercial. The second proposed a one cent residential and half a cent on commercial. With both motions defeated, council started looking where cuts were possible. They reduced budgets of three regular programs by \$300,000 to balance the budget.

Long serving Deputy Mayor Bill Masters was emphatic reserves need to be constantly increased, and at no time should they be lessened. He sternly advised council, "I'll tell you right here, if you don't continue to increase reserves, this council will be in trouble in 10 years. I know I've been there, when we had to raise taxes".

He then introduced a motion to raise taxes by one cent on residential accounts with the proceeds allocated to increase the reserves. The motion was defeated.

Now back to the question in the heading of this column, "Should they have? Yes? No? Nobody likes to see taxes raised, but with a very progressive council, a number of money saving, some even long term money makers, anticipated, it would have been a wise decision to slightly increase taxes allocating the money to reserves.

Just like maintenance on a vehicle, taxes should be increased slowly and by small amounts, as long as council ensures efficiency in all departments.

I will commend councillor, Tom Taggart, he has asked for a review to see if there is good "bang for the buck" for non-profit grants, expenditures on trails. Although he specifically didn't reference it, I can see a request coming forward from someone to review all programs, over the coming months all.

It came as a complete surprise on April 5th when Cape Sharp Tidal announced they would have to remove the turbine in Minas Passage and take it to Saint John to repair the turbine control centre. About the same time it was discovered in seven weeks following it's deployment in November until December 31st, NS Power had purchased 5.4MWh (5400KWh) of electricity produced by the turbine.

Immediately I went and checked electricity bills for my own house for the billing cycles of February and April 2016. My residential consumption over the two invoices totaled, 5,768 KWh, approximately 6.8% more than the turbine uploaded to the grid.

Most disappointing results for such a mammoth operation, even though it was in the commissioning phase.

**Maurice**

# Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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## OP-ED

### Your Editorial Misses the Whole Point

April 15, 2017

Dear Editor:

As a Parrsboro resident, I wanted to comment on your editorial on the FORCE project. It misses the whole point of the research project, is inaccurate in a number of its assertions, and frankly, paints a somewhat biased picture of the project. Here's why:

#### 1. The output:

You're correct that 5.4 MWh is a small amount of energy production, but I don't find this surprising or unacceptable, given the current stage of the research. The objective of the project is to test the feasibility and economics of tidal power, to measure the environmental impact of ongoing energy production in the passage, and to establish an understanding of the impact on the local community as a whole, NOT to achieve significant commercial power production at this stage. The turbine is currently designed to produce 2 MW, which would power far more than just one home, as you assert, if it ran continuously in a commercial production environment. It is very likely that the turbine only ran for very limited periods during the 7 weeks it has been in the water while the teams made adjustments to it. The Minas Passage is a very harsh environment, so you have to expect shut-downs and delays when developing such a complex technology. BUT THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT! It's an experiment. The whole reason they are working on the project is to determine if there is commercial potential - which, by the way, has not been definitively established as yet either. You have to expect a myriad of pitfalls, breakdowns, and redesigns during a project like this - you don't just drop a turbine into the water and start producing vast amounts of power! I don't think your editorial comments give enough consideration to the incredible complexity and difficulty of an engineering project like this. What do you expect?

#### 2. The economics:

As for the \$30 million budget for the project, again, keep in mind that this is a research project that is operating to establish the feasibility and economics of tidal power, to measure the environmental impact of ongoing energy production in the passage, and to establish an understanding of the impact on the local community as a whole. At no time has anyone claimed that the status of the project included serious commercial production of electricity at this stage. Furthermore, the majority of funding has come from the many privately-owned companies and consortiums testing various methods of energy capture in the Minas Passage, not the NS government. Public money has amounted to a relatively small percentage

of the whole investment. As in any energy research, a significant investment of capital is required to establish the economics and safety of any new development - just look at the cost of developing an oil and gas project - billions of dollars! Again, by this measure, the research happening in the Minas Passage right now is a relative bargain, and taxpayers are not footing much of a bill, but stand to gain enormously if/when the project is successfully taken to market. Your assertion that Nova Scotia taxpayers are footing an enormous bill - "\$\$\$\$-Millions it cost to build, install and operate, most of it paid by Nova Scotia Taxpayers" - is simply wrong and suggests an unwelcome bias on your part.

As for the current state of the project, there is enormous opportunity for local businesses to supply FORCE and it's consortiums with many goods and services throughout the supply chain. It's already had a positive effect of the local economy, and there is potential for a lot more, regardless of whether or not it ever reaches commercial production.

#### 3. Green politics

Nova Scotia has become a leader in green energy in the past few years. It's hard to believe that our little province, with its aging population and sluggish economy could achieve this, but it's true! What a great achievement for Nova Scotia! We're finally weaning ourselves off of dirty fossil fuels and developing clean energy alternatives that will last as long as we manage them. Is it difficult? Expensive? Time-consuming? Of course! But I would ask you to consider the alternative. In a recent speech on Tar Sands development, PM Justin Trudeau stated that any country with a resource the size of the Tar Sands would be crazy to leave it in the ground. And that's one of the dirtiest sources of oil on the planet. Our project is astronomically more green than any fossil fuel development, especially the Tar Sands, so why the innuendo that it is somehow unworthy of development? There is no doubt that Tidal Energy will present problems that need to be solved - engineering, environmental, and economic - but these pale in comparison to the problems continued development and burning of fossil fuels.

In addition to enjoying a good pat on the back for our environmental stewardship, tidal power will undoubtedly create whole industries centered around the supply chain for such projects. This may well be the most lucrative development for Nova Scotia - becoming a world-leader in tidal energy technology and expertise. Forget the electricity - that's just the icing on the cake. If we can develop a solid, reliable technology industry here in the Minas Passage - arguably the

harshes tidal environment out there - we may discover markets all around the world for our knowledge and finally see a turn-around in our province's fortunes.

In closing, please don't underestimate the potential this project has for our shore. Your suggestion that this recent development in the project somehow warrants such derision of the project as a whole reveals a journalistic imbalance that is unbecoming. It's easy to criticize, and probably makes for energized conversation at Tim's. However, I for one would like to see some optimism for the future of our local economy and get past the tendency to self-sabotage when we are offered this real opportunity on our Shore. Green Energy is coming, and it's our best hope for the future. Let's test it carefully until we can make it work for everyone, support the research project in which we have invested so much, and stop making excuses why we shouldn't get it done.

Doug Wilson, Parrsboro

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Journal

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#### BIBLE HILL:

C.W. Fraser Pharmacy  
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#### DEBERT:

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