

Rural Municipality of Belfast

Mayor: Garth Gillis; Chief Administrative Officer: Bob Brooks; *Incorporated 1972*

COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES

Wednesday, June 17, 2020 at 7:00 PM

New Meeting Location – Upstairs Hall, Wood Islands Village

In Attendance: Mayor Garth Gillis (Chair)
Deputy Mayor Virginia Cooke
Councillor Lynn Docherty
Councillor Billy Gamble
Councillor Andy Henry
Councillor Audrey Shillabeer
Councillor Joanne Vessey
CAO Bob Brooks

Item Order of Business

1. **Call to Order** – Council was called to order by Mayor Garth Gillis at 7:07 PM.
2. **Covid-19 Considerations** –
 - As per Health PEI suggestions for public meetings; the maximum number of attendees allowed for this Council Meeting was limited to 15 people total (**7 Council, 1 CAO, 7 General Public**).
 - Additional measures taken for this meeting included:
 - Tables and Chairs treated with a disinfectant;
 - Physical Distancing of approximately 6 feet between all participants;
 - Hand Sanitizer, Face Masks, Gloves and Bottled Water available; and
 - Conference Call Attendance was available for those Council Members requiring it – (Not Required).
3. **Declarations of Conflict of Interest** – No Council Conflict Declarations for today’s Agenda.
4. **Approval of Agenda** – Two items were added under Item 13.

Moved by Councillor Cooke and **Seconded by Councillor Docherty to approve the Agenda as presented, with two additions under item 13.**

Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0

Result: Unanimous

5. **Adoption of March 18, 2020 Council Meeting Minutes** (*previously distributed*)
(comments/changes received to-date by Council, incorporated into attached Minutes)

Moved by Councillor Vessey and **Seconded by Councillor Henry to adopt the Minutes of the March 18, 2020 Council Meeting as presented.**

Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0

Result: Unanimous

6. **Adoption of March 11, 2020 Community Grants Committee Meeting Minutes** (previously distributed) (for approval at this meeting, as there will be no Grants Committee meeting expected until 2021 – approval by Committee Members only) – (comments/changes received to-date, incorporated into attached Minutes)

Moved by Councillor Shillabeer and **Seconded** by Councillor Cooke to adopt the Minutes of the March 11, 2020 Community Grants Committee as presented. Committee Votes for: 4 Committee Votes against: 0
Result: Unanimous

7. **Business arising from the March 18, 2020 Council Meeting Minutes (CAO)** –
- a. **Community Grants** – the vast majority of the awarded Community Grants for this year have already been awarded – recipients expressed a deep appreciation for receiving these grants in a timely manner in this time of Covid-19.
 - b. **Future Municipal Office Space** – In conversation with Wood Islands, Mr. John Rousseau noted that he was very interested in having the Rural Municipality of Belfast as a full-time tenant sooner than later; especially now, as he will not have a tenant as of April 1, 2021. He realized that we initially did not need the space until the next fiscal year, so as such he was willing to make an attractive offer that would enable us to guarantee the space sooner, so it is available when we actually need it.
 - i. **Lease starting April 1, 2021:**
 - Advantage – would guarantee the required space in a desirable location;
 - Advantage – would be provided a low lease rate for at least 2 years at \$725 + HST, which includes electricity, heat and air conditioning. Could also look to solidify a five-year long-term lease;
 - Advantage – although phone and internet are extra (as they are now), the Municipality would have access to a High-Speed Fibre Internet System, allowing for Skype and Zoom Meetings in the future, as required; and would look at a conferencing phone system as well;
 - Advantage – the Municipality could have a public office space with public access open sooner (under limited hours initially); and
 - Advantage – would allow for a graduated office space set-up, in line with new Community Plan implementation; however,
 - Disadvantage – would cost the Municipality an extra \$10,000 for the 21/22 Fiscal Year, and \$10,000 for the 22/23 Fiscal Year (as initially envisioned), but would save approximately \$3,800 over what it would have cost for 22/23 (= a net extra cost of \$6,400 for 22/23); and
 - Disadvantage – Space may not be available for lease if we wait until the 22/23 Fiscal Year.
- Council discussed the proposal and suggested that the following be negotiated before signing: a built-in sink in office space (water is there already); 24/7 access to washroom facilities; free access to the common spaces, e.g. upstairs hall and the kitchen; Free High-Speed Fibre Internet; snow clearing (parking lot and sidewalks) arranged and paid for by WIADC as part of their ongoing snow removal arrangements; and an approved exit clause from the lease should the Government of PEI announce plans to amend the *Municipal Government Act* to not require Municipalities that they must operate a Public Accessible Office. The CAO was tasked to follow-up, and bring the item back for discussion/decision during the August 19th Council Meeting.
- c. **Belfast Newsletter** – Regular Council Updates and regular Municipality promotional advertising underway since April 2020.

8. **CAO Report**
- a. **Financial/Variance Report:**
- i. Provincial Credit Union Account Balances at June 07, 2020:
 - a. Share 00001 \$5.29
 - b. Chequing 00010 \$35,539.49
 - c. Gas Tax Acct 00011 \$96,108.59
 - ii. Year-End was completed throughout the month of May and provided to our Auditor (MRSB) for both the General Account and the Gas Tax Account. We basically came in on budget. The Audited Financial Statements are provided in today's Agenda under item 10.
9. **Gas Tax Funding Update (CAO):** – (1) the Prime Minister recently announced that 2020/2021 Gas Tax Monies would be available in 2020 in one lump sum payment instead of two extended payments, to help communities work on their infrastructure projects sooner. This change initiative however, does not affect the Rural Municipality of Belfast, as our projects are already approved, and our cash-flow, as such, had the monies available to handle the 2020 projects already. (2) on Wednesday, June 3rd, I heard back from the PEI/Canada Infrastructure Secretariat, that the Wood Islands application (resubmission) has now been approved. I'm still waiting to see the official letter for the exact amount and any restrictions, but once received I can do up the contract. This effectively means that ALL Rural Municipality of Belfast Gas Tax Applications have been approved for the 2019-2024 Gas Tax Funding Cycle.
10. **Audited Financial Statements for 2019/2020** (attached) (*Audited Financial Statements made available to Council and the Public, seven days prior to this meeting*) (CAO):
- Revenues: **\$236,467** (slightly more from Province than expected)
 - Expenditures: **-\$220,557** (slightly less expenditures than budgeted)
 - Balance: **\$15,910** (about \$5,500 more surplus than expected)
 - Starting Surplus* Balance: **\$47,094**
 - Ending Surplus* Balance: **\$63,004**
 - *Surplus required for transition to permanent public office space, as per the *Municipal Government Act* (estimated \$100,000 surplus required for transition).
- Council asked the CAO to check into the FREE Computer Refurbishment Program available through the Government of PEI, which would save on costs for the Municipality for PCs.
- Moved** by Councillor Docherty and **Seconded** by Councillor Gamble to adopt the Audited Financial Statements for 2019/2020 as presented.
- Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0
- Result: Unanimous
11. **Derelict Building Issue** – Following a number of inquiries from the Municipality, the Mayor, and members of the public, the CAO heard back from both Municipal Affairs and the owner himself, Mr. Daniel Martens:
- The Province completed a site inspection on May 27th. They then spoke to Daniel Martens by phone, who is aware of the issue and his requirements. Mr. Martens will make arrangements to remove the structure and will update the Municipality. A Follow-up letter was dropped off to his residence and left with his wife explaining the concern and requirements for clean up. Mr. Martens then contacted the Municipality asking us to forward a burn request to the Firehall; this burn request was subsequently passed on to our Firehall contact. Councillor Vessey said it was unlikely that the Firehall would grant such a permit, considering the proximity to numerous trees around the house. This message was passed on the Mr. Martens for consideration of other options.

12. **Correspondence Follow-up (Councillor Henry):** – At the March 18th Council Meeting, Council was made aware of a long-standing issue with one of the residents (on Garfield Road) regarding culverts. Councillor Henry agreed to follow-up and reported: that on May 26th “A bunch of watershed people, including a rep from the province, toured the property owned by the elderly New Jersey couple. We investigated the old culverts that are blocking the creek and devised a plan that would see the Province removing the old culverts, and the Belfast Area Watershed Group (BAWG) apply for the permits, restore the site and plant trees. The landowners are now very happy. Councillor Henry and BAWG were thanked for all their help and work on this issue.
13. **New Business for the Agenda (as per Item 4 above) –**
- a. **Update on Flat River Cemetery Access** – Council noted that public access has now been restored at the Flat River Cemetery with the recent sale of the adjacent property owned by the Beatons. Seems there is no longer a public access issue at the Cemetery.
 - b. **Update on Unsightly Property at 166 Bessie Willow Lane, Point Prim** – This property belongs to Perry Aftab. The Province is already involved with that case. The building that was constructed did not match the permit that was issued, and now there is also a lot of debris and building materials laying about. It was suggested that the CAO follow-up with the Province, and also look at an Unsightly Properties Complaint.
14. **Community Grants Policy – Suggested change to remove Mosquito Abatement Programs from eligibility within the Community Grants Program Allocations:**
 On March 11, 2020 the Community Grants Committee met to deliberate the allocations for the 2020/21 Community Grants and make a recommendation to Council regarding grant recipients. After some discussion, within that recommendation was the following: *“That Council review the Community Grants Program Policy, prior to the 2021/2022 Community Grants Season; specifically, to consider whether it is appropriate to continue to include: Mosquito Abatement Programs, within the Community Grant Program Mandate.”* That recommendation to review the Policy was subsequently approved by Council on March 18, 2020. Council discussed the possibility of amending the Community Grants Policy, discussing:
 - Limitations of specific area coverage across the municipality and effectiveness,
 - Whether there was a positive or negative environmental impact,
 - Other funding mechanisms, such as Lot Improvement Levies and resident buy-in, Plebiscites, Donations, Sponsorships, and costs.
 - Noting the lack of public attendance at this meeting, Council decided to **DEFER** the discussion/decision to the August 19, 2020 Council Meeting. Residents would be notified by: Website, Belfast Newsletter, and Office Bulletin Board.
15. **Next Scheduled Meetings:**
- a. **Regular Council Meeting** – the next regular meeting of Council is scheduled for Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 7:00 PM at the Upstairs Hall at Wood Islands.
16. **Adjournment** – As there was no further business...

Moved by Councillor Henry to adjourn the meeting at: 8:50 PM

Minutes Approved: _____, 2020

 Mayor – Garth Gillis

 CAO – Bob Brooks