

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

A Special Emergency Session of the Municipal Council of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted virtually via Zoom Webinar, on Monday, April 20, 2020, at 6:00 pm

Roll Call

The roll was called with the following Councillors in attendance:

Mayor Christine Blair, Chair	
Councillor Eric Boutilier	District 1
Councillor Bill Masters	District 2
Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart	District 3
Councillor Mike Cooper	District 4
Councillor Lloyd Gibbs	District 5
Councillor Karen MacKenzie	District 6
Councillor Michael Gregory	District 7
Councillor Ron Cavanaugh	District 8
Councillor Bob Pash	District 9
Councillor Tom Taggart	District 10
Councillor Wade Parker	District 11

Staff Present

Rob Simonds, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
 Scott Fraser, Director of Corp. Services/Acting Director of Solid Waste
 Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development
 Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works
 Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor
 Tracey Veno, Recording Secretary
 Devin Trefry, Research, Policy and Community Engagement Officer
 Tim Smith, Manager of Information Services
 Dave Westlake, Emergency Management/Protective Services Coordinator

Purpose

Mayor Blair opened the meeting indicating that the purpose of this Special Emergency meeting is to update Council on the tragic events of April 18th and 19th and discuss how, as a municipal government, we may be able to assist.

The events that took place over the weekend were indescribable and horrendous and no community should ever have to deal with such a senseless tragedy. As Councillor for the area where the tragic events began, Councillor Taggart has been dealing with a number of people in the community and doing media interviews. The RCMP investigation is ongoing with continued information, as it becomes available, being brought forward. The Municipality has prepared a statement which is being posted on our website. It is a very difficult situation to have to deal with at this time, and we offer our support to the communities and families who have lost loved ones.

Speaking very emotionally on the matter, Councillor Taggart stated that this is beyond anything anyone can imagine. It has devastated a lot of people and we don't know where the end is or what we can do to help. We have to focus on support for the communities, and in particular, the community of Portapique. Many people have been affected by this, including children, and we have to do anything we can to support them. There are professional services being offered through various sources such as the Sociologists of Nova Scotia and Morneau Shepell. It was requested that a resource from the Municipality be put in place as a designated navigator with a local number to call, for people reaching out for assistance. Councillor Taggart also wanted

to mention the tremendous number of messages being received from people and municipalities alike, across Nova Scotia and Canada, offering heartfelt condolences and support. Canada truly cares.

Mayor Blair spoke briefly about media calls she has received, the messages being received from around the world, and the different resources available to help and support those in need, which can be found on the Municipal website.

A number of Council members spoke on the matter regarding being contacted by the media, recognizing the amazing job Mayor Blair and Councillor Taggart have been doing in representing the Municipality, how this tragedy is affecting everyone and expressing a desire to support, however possible, those most affected.

Moved by Councillor Cavanaugh
Seconded by Councillor Pash

“That the County of Colchester pay funeral expenses of all those who passed away this week needlessly in Colchester County.”

Lengthy discussion was held on a number of points including funeral costs; a suggestion to cap funding support at \$5,000; use of funds not being restricted to funeral expenses; the possibility of those affected having insurance coverage to cover these types of expenses; other available funding such as Canada Pension; the possibility of having a permanent memorial in the community; other ways to support such as education funds and bursaries; supporting all victims families as opposed to only those in Colchester County; whether other municipalities plan to provide monetary support; and, holding any decisions in abeyance until Thursday evening when more information might be available.

Referring to the permanent memorial, Councillor Taggart indicated that he personally was not in favour of this, however, this is something that could be discussed in future amongst the community members.

Additional discussion was held on whether such funding contributions would be permissible. Mr. Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor, advised that amendments to the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), specifically Section 65, allows for broader discretion for expending funds, as long as it is within Council’s purpose as a municipality. Based on this, the Solicitor indicated that it is in Council’s authority to support Colchester residents and, with the broader discretion, he also feels that it is within Council authority to provide support to all victims. Mr. James also advised that this does not mean that Council can spend money outside their jurisdiction, but in this particular circumstance, it is a tragically unique situation, and could be considered a reasonable extension of Council’s spending authority.

amended motion

Moved by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Masters

“That Council supports covering the funeral expenses of all the victims, due to the recent senseless tragedy, up to an amount of \$5,000.”

Motion Carried. (*Councillor Gregory opposed*)

The amending motion having carried, the original motion as amended was voted on and carried with Councillor Gregory being opposed.

Concern was expressed with this motion being made prior to knowing whether the victims have insurance coverage and/or if other municipalities plan to make contributions. It was suggested that staff reach out to Cumberland County and East Hants regarding potential support for the victims and their families. The Solicitor advised that it is possible for Council to move for reconsideration of the resolution on Thursday evening, should the above noted information become available.

On the issue of having a designated navigator to assist those in need, as referred to by Councillor Taggart earlier in the evening, Rob Simonds, CAO, advised that there will be a designated line, and a staff person will be identified, to field inquiries from people requiring assistance during this time. This information and a draft Public Service Announcement will be prepared for the next Executive meeting.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the meeting adjourn at 7:40 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary