

COUNCIL COMMITTEE

The Regular Session of the Council Committee of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted virtually, via Zoom Webinars on Thursday, March 11, 2021, beginning at 6:00 pm.

Roll Call

The roll was called with the following Councillors in attendance:

Mayor Christine Blair	
Councillor Eric Boutilier	District 1
Councillor Laurie Sandeson	District 2
Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart, Chair	District 3
Councillor Mike Cooper	District 4
Councillor Tim Johnson	District 5
Councillor Karen MacKenzie	District 6
Councillor Michael Gregory	District 7
Councillor Lisa Patton	District 8
Councillor Marie Benoit	District 9
Councillor Tom Taggart	District 10
Councillor Wade Parker	District 11

Staff Present

Rob Simonds, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
 Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development
 Scott Fraser, Director of Corp. Services/Acting Director of Solid Waste
 Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works
 Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor
 Tracey Veno, Recording Secretary
 Devin Trefry, Research, Policy and Community Engagement Officer
 Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager
 Tim Smith, IT Manager
 Kelly Gratto-McCarthy, HR Specialist (*for item no 5*)

Moment of Silence

One year ago today, the World Health Organization declared that we were facing a pandemic for Covid. It has been a day of observance across the Country and Council observed a moment of silence to commemorate those who lost the fight due to Covid-19.

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Johnson
 Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That the agenda be approved with the following addition:
 - Item # 14b, Recognition.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Councillor Patton
 Seconded by Councillor Sandeson

“That the minutes of the meetings held on February 2, 11, and March 2, 2021, be approved as presented.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Business Arising from Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes of the meetings held on February 2, 11, and March 2, 2021.

ACTION ITEMS**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee – Terms of Reference**

Kelly Gratto-McCarthy, HR Specialist, presented the draft Terms of Reference for the recently approved Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee. Included in the Terms of Reference is the mandate of the Committee; membership structure and composition of the Committee; selection and appointment process of Committee members; expectations of the members; and information on agendas, minutes and frequency of meetings.

Discussion was held on whether consideration had been given to having terms for the Committee members as there may be great interest in serving on the Committee. Ms. Gratto-McCarthy indicated that it had not been considered but could be included. Further discussion was held on the mandate of the Committee having emphasis on increasing the diversity of our workforce to better reflect the communities we serve, whilst still aiming to hire best qualified individuals based on merits.

Moved by Mayor Blair
Seconded by Councillor Sandeson

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Terms of Reference for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee be approved.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Reserve Funding

Mr. Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services, reported that due to the unknowns with respect to the financial impacts of Covid-19, during 2020-21 budget deliberations, a decision was made that funds be transferred to the special operating reserve rather than allocating to the various reserves, with the understanding that this would be revisited later in the fiscal year.

Mr. Fraser noted that we were able to mitigate a lot of the risks that were faced during the pandemic. Additionally, the Municipality received \$1,024,664 through the Safe Restart Program, funds that were not anticipated. Current financial projections anticipate a modest surplus for fiscal year ending March 31, 2021. At this time, staff is recommending that the transfers be made to the various reserves as originally recommended during budget deliberations.

Concern was expressed that once the funds are transferred into the reserves, they cannot be used for other purposes if need be. Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor, indicated that there is nothing in the Municipal Government Act indicating that it is irreversible, and it is within Council’s discretion to reallocate the funds if necessary.

Moved by Councillor Boutilier
Seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That Council Committee recommends to Council the transfer of funds to the reserves as presented.”

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Taggart opposed)*

**NS Remembers Legacy Society
Community Event Grant Request**

Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager, advised that the NS Remembers Legacy Society have requested a Community Event Grant to assist with the 2021 Nova Scotia Remembers Memorial Run. The event is taking place April 18th and the group's request is to have the funding prior to the event. A presentation was received from representatives during the March 4th Grant Presentation Meeting. At that time, Council requested more information be provided, specifically a balance sheet, which has been received and was attached to the Action Item on table this evening. Mr. Burgess indicated that the request meets the criteria of the Community Event Grant Program.

Council discussed a number of points including whether all families of the victims had been notified of the event and if all were in support; having a decision on a memorial prior to approving funding for this event; the tremendous amount of work by the Society; other funding contributions by the Municipality; and, the importance of respecting the wishes of the families and ensuring that all families are contacted and informed.

Moved by Councillor Taggart
Seconded by Mayor Blair

"That Council Committee recommends to Council that a Community Event Grant in the amount of \$5,000 be approved to the NS Remembers Legacy Society for the NS Remembers Memorial Run being held on April 18th; and,

That funding be approved from the 2020/21 Community Event Grant Budget."

Motion Carried. *(Councillor Parker opposed)*

**Paving of Granmar Estates
Subdivision in Crowes Mills**

Councillor Benoit advised that she has received a request for the Granmar Estates subdivision to be paved. A copy of a petition was circulated in the package for this evening's meeting.

Moved by Councillor Benoit
Seconded by Councillor Gregory

"That the request for the paving of Granmar Estates be referred to staff to start the petition process."

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Vacant Unused and Untaxed
Farmland and Taxes**

Councillor Taggart raised the issue of unused farmland and taxes which was discussed at a recent meeting of the NSF, and has concerns about this in West Colchester. The problem is that family members that live away inherit farmland and it sits vacant and unused and the lands are getting overgrown. The family members are not concerned with this as farmland is not taxed. During the NSF meeting, a Mayor from the Valley advised that they have a policy specific to this and Councillor Taggart indicated that he would be interested in seeing what/how other municipalities deal with unused farmlands.

Moved by Councillor Taggart

Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

“That staff investigate what other municipalities are doing relative to unused farmland and taxes.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Beautification and Streetscaping Program

The CAO advised that an Information Item presented by Paul Smith, Planning Manager, was provided at the February Council meeting. At that time, it was referred to this meeting for further discussion.

Councillor Taggart advised that he was not aware the Beautification and Streetscaping funding was being utilized and saw this Program as an opportunity to clean-up the mess at interchanges that enter into our communities. From the Information Item presented by Paul Smith, it sounded like the funding from the Program is already spoken for for compacting waste bins at the Fundy Discovery Site. He would prefer to see the funding from this Program or another source if necessary, to see beautification and streetscaping at the exits, which might help to address the littering issue.

The CAO indicated that he and Councillor Benoit will be meeting to discuss litter issues in District 9, with a goal to identifying a strategy to address the concerns. Discussion was held on litter being an issue in all districts.

Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development, advised that landscaping and green spacing is a great idea, however, wanted to clarify that general maintenance at the sites would not be covered under the Beautification and Streetscaping Program and there is concern that this would lead to more expenses.

Suggestions were made on ways to help address the litter issue such as involving communities in clean-up, and installation of cameras and signage at locations to help deter littering.

The CAO advised that the meeting with Councillor Benoit will also include staff, with the intent of better understanding the issue and to come up with an action plan. Council agreed to hold in abeyance further discussion on this matter until such time the meeting takes place and more information comes back to Council.

Salmon River Green Space

The CAO indicated that Council received a presentation on March 2nd and it was referred to this Council Committee meeting to determine Council wishes relative to this matter.

The group's request is for the land to be used as a park/green space. The CAO reminded Council of a previous motion on the books relating to the old Salmon River school property, for a portion of the land to be allocated for the Salmon River Fire Brigade, with amount of land being determined through a needs analysis. The second component was that the remaining land would be maintained by the Municipality for future municipal needs.

Discussion was held on the importance of determining what the community wants and that the group requesting the land do the leg work to determine

the level of community interest and what portion of the land is being requested.

Moved by Councillor Johnson
Seconded by Mayor Blair

“That this be sent back to the group that requested the parcel of land for consulting with the community and come back to Council with this information.”

Motion **DEFEATED**. (*Councillors Boutilier, Cooper, MacKenzie, Patton, Benoit, Taggart and Parker opposed*)

Further discussion was held on continued interest of the Salmon River Fire Brigade; need for clarification on the intentions of both parties expressing interest in the land; suggestion to send a second letter to the Salmon River Fire Brigade advising of another party being interested in the land; and the need for consultation with the community.

Moved by Councillor Johnson
Seconded by Councillor MacKenzie

“That a community meeting be held, at a time as deemed appropriate due to Covid-19, for input on what to do with the old Salmon River school property.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Shubenacadie Canal Waterway Transitions Project

Councillor Cooper advised that the group working on the Shubenacadie Canal Waterway Transitions Project will be looking for people to join their Transition Committee in the coming weeks. He would like to see this posted on the County’s social media page for any citizens interested in being involved with the project. The CAO advised he would have the Research, Policy, and Community Engagement Officer look into this.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Community Trail Funding Program – Winter 2021 Applications

One application was received under the Community Trail Funding Program for the Winter 2021 application deadline. The request was from the Tatamagouche Area Trails Association, for \$21,315 for repair and maintenance to the Butter Trail. Staff has approved a grant in the amount of \$21,315, pending confirmation of other funding sources and pending the 2021-22 budget approval.

Community Park Funding Program – Winter 2021 Applications

Three applications were received under the Community Park Funding Program for the Winter 2021 application deadline, with total amounts requested as follows:

- \$23,894 from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colchester for natural playground and greenspace development on the grounds of their facility in North River;
- \$30,000 from the Debert Elementary School Parent Teacher Association for playground upgrades;
- \$40,000 from Redcliff Middle School for playground upgrades.

The total amount being approved from these applications is \$93,894, pending approval of the 2021-22 budget.

It was noted that in January 2021, Council approved funding for the Portapique Community Build-up project with a portion of the funding, \$40,000 from the Community Park Funding Program.

Discussion was held on the application from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colchester. Clarification was sought on whether requests are assessed and approved based on need versus merit and if applications would be approved if an organization was doing well financially. Mr. Burgess indicated that typically applications would not be approved if doing well, however, the majority of organizations do need funding support. An inquiry was made on requirements of providing a balance sheet and financials through the application process. Mr. Burgess confirmed that information specific to the project is required but is unsure about balance sheets and financials. It was requested that this information be brought back to Council.

Brief discussion was also held on the applications from the Debert Elementary School and Redcliff Middle School with concern that these are school boards. Mr. Burgess advised that the school playgrounds become the playgrounds utilized by the communities as well as the schools.

Recognition

Mayor Blair advised Council about a plaque that the Municipality received from the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, in recognition of those who aided their fellow citizens during the 2020 pandemic. The plaque will be hung in the Courthouse.

Director's Report

A report from the Director of Public Works was circulated in the package for tonight's meeting.

Brief discussion was held on the watermain replacement at Highway 246 in Tatamagouche; damage to curbs and grass due to snow plowing; an inquiry on the costs of the sidewalks on Hill and William Streets; and the Biosolids Larvae Pilot Project. Referring to the sidewalks on Hill and William Streets, Ms. Newell advised that an email would be sent to confirm the costs associated with this project, and an update on the Biosolids Larvae Project would be provided in the next month or so.

CLOSED SESSION

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Boutilier

"That the meeting go into closed session at 8:25 pm."

Motion Carried Unanimously

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Patton

"That the meeting reconvene in open session at 8:47 pm."

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Wastewater Collection Worker –
New Position**

Moved by Councillor Benoit
Seconded by Councillor Sandeson

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that one additional full time Wastewater Collection Maintenance Worker position be added to the Public Works Department, replacing the winter and summer term positions.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Councillor Gregory
Seconded by Councillor Patton

“That the meeting adjourn at 8:49 pm.”

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary