

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF ARGYLE
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday April 14, 2020
Zoom 6:30 p.m.

Present: Warden Danny Muise, Deputy Warden Guy Surette; Councillors Glenn Diggdon, Lucien Leblanc, Richard Donaldson, Calvin d'Entremont, Roderick Murphy Jr. and Kathy Bourque; Chief Administrative Officer Alain Muise, and Clerk/Recorder Lori Murphy.

Regrets: Councillor Nicole Albright

The meeting was called to order at 6:33p.m. by Warden Danny Muise

Agenda:

On a motion by Glenn Diggdon and seconded by Guy Surette the agenda was approved with addition of 7e -road in Pubnico
Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Conflict of Interest Declaration

Warden Danny Muise asked for any declarations of conflict of interest from the floor.
None declared

Presentations

None

Adoption of Minutes

Regular Council Meeting Minutes – March 10, 2020

It is moved by Kathy Bourque and seconded by Richard Donaldson that the March 10, 2020 minutes of the Regular Council Meeting minutes be approved as circulated.
Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes – March 31, 2020

It is moved by Glenn Diggdon and seconded by Kathy Bourque that the March 31, 2020 minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting minutes be approved as circulated.
Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Business Arising from the Minutes:

Regional Agreements & Structural Reform Conversation

No update

Library Funding

CAO Muise explained that we are waiting for the NSFPM to take a position on correspondence on the funding.

Defer

Canada Post-Community mailbox lighting

Warden Muise explained the email from Canada post stating they don't erect lighting for community mailboxes. Council made no decision on this matter.

COVID 19 Discussion

2020 Election

CAO Muise informed Council that NSFAM approved a letter asking the Province to consider if an October election is appropriate considering the current situation and the amount of work that needs to go into the preparations for the elections. The decision is up to the Province not the municipalities. There was no deadline for response on the letter. Council will wait and see what the response is from the Province.

COVID 19 Provincial update

Tax Deferral

CAO Muise provided an update. Province has been asked by NSFAM how they can aid municipalities in a time where we are expecting our tax payments to come in a lot slower than they would normally. The NSFAM presented a plan to defer property taxes for up to 6 months without interest to eligible residents and businesses. The taxpayer would then have up to 24 months to repay the delayed taxes at a low interest rate. Deadlines are different across the Province, but our deadline is currently July 31.

Government is being asked to secure or allow us to secure special borrowing for this purpose. The NSFAM and AMA are also asking the Provincial Government to defer the mandatory payments that we make to the Provincial government. This includes cost of Education, Corrections, and Roads. A small AMANS group is creating an application process while we await a response from the Provincial Government.

Argyle is pushing to have our budget passed by end of April or in early May. Councillor Surette would like to see help for businesses, especially those in accommodation business. Councillor Donaldson expressed concerns for local restaurants, tourism and accommodations and the hardships they are facing. Hardest hit in this area is tourism, accommodations and restaurants. We are not clear on what may still be available for these businesses hardest hit by COVID. The deferral will at least give us time to see what the situation is for those organizations. CAO Muise talked briefly about regional services, such as the Airport, in response to questions on where expenditures can be cut.

All AMA and Spring NSFAM conferences are cancelled and are considering cancelling the one in the fall. Some funds are still in the budget for fall NSFAM in case it isn't cancelled.

COVID-19 Decisions

2020/21 Billing

CAO Muise explained the request for decision and the different options presented. Biggest challenge in budgeting is absence of information. COVID has impacted businesses and individuals but we don't know how much they have been impacted. We

won't know what our collection rate will be until we bill. Some businesses and residents have received funding from the Federal or Provincial government. Some do not qualify for any assistance but that doesn't mean they are not in need. There are many people and businesses impacted in different ways.

Recommendation from staff is to reduce the interest rate for all taxpayers. The option to extend the deadline without interest or delaying the issue of tax bills might result in behaviours that would not be consistent in helping the right people nor would it be that helpful to the municipality from a cashflow perspective.

There were expressed concerns that the tax deferral is not a reality as of yet, and the recommendation appears to presume a tax deferral program. Also, while the interest reduction is positive, there may be more targeted efforts required, and we should reach out to businesses to further understand the impact and our options to assist. CAO Muise committed to more information on this, including a reach out to the local Chamber of Commerce who has already reached out.

Clarification on tax deferral. For those that are eligible, they would apply and show that they require a deferral and it would pay their taxes for them and they would not have to pay anything for 6 months at zero interest. The 10% would not apply in those situations. No one eligible for a deferral would have to pay 10% unless they miss a payment in the repayment plan.

It is moved by Glenn Diggdon and seconded Calvin d'Entremont by that Council approve the interest rate be set at 10% for the 2020-21 taxation year to reduce the cost to taxpayers and that the due date remain at July 31 for the 2020 taxation year.

Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Summer students & events

Warden Muise briefly highlighted the request for decision. Staff is recommending a cancellation of Summer Day Camps. The result of this decision is a cost savings of about \$70,000, but a significant reduction of service. The Recreation Department is committed to hiring students, maximizing the availability of Federal and Provincial grants for students. Their work will not be in Day Camps but will be community related work. The Courthouse will also not hire tour guides this year, rather will focus on archival work. A partnership with Musée de Pubnico-Ouest was mentioned by Councillor Diggdon

It is moved by Guy Surette and seconded by Glenn Diggdon that Council approve the cancellation of Day Camps and Courthouse related tours for the 2020 summer season, due to COVID related restrictions and that Council support staff hires that are supported with Federal and Provincial funding and can execute the work safely respecting COVID restrictions.

Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

YMCA Funding

CAO Muise explained the funding request. First request was to maintain same level funding as last year. Second piece of the request is more complicated. They are requesting some form of partnership. The YMCA will be asking for some form of commitment from all 3 municipalities. They will send an updated request. Councillor Donaldson wondered how important this is right now with everything going on with COVID. Deputy Warden Surette asked if scheduled meetings took place and CAO Muise confirmed that meeting did take place. Council expressed concerns about ownership of YMCA but would be interested in being a funding partner. CAO Muise is prepared to recommend the same level of funding as last year.

No motion required as it will be discussed at budget deliberations

YASTA Funding

Warden Muise explained the request. They are asking for same funding as last year. CAO Muise explained that they are doing a very good job at looking at their operations and how they are doing things. Councillor d'Entremont explained the challenges of YASTA and how they are trying to realign themselves.

It is moved by Calvin d'Entremont and seconded by Guy Surette that Council accept the funding breakdown of \$67,250 for Core funding and \$10,500 for project funding for a total of \$ 77,750 for YASTA.

Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Road in Pubnico

Councillor Diggdon expressed concerns with the condition of the Chemin du Rocher in Pubnico. Due to climate change and coastal erosion there have been times when the road is blocked by debris, gravel and boulder wash up. At times the road is impassable. Could be an issue for emergency vehicles. TIR has been coming down to clean up the issues when they are called but would like to see a permanent solution.

It is moved Glenn Diggdon and seconded by Calvin d'Entremont to send a letter to TIR and MLA Colton LeBlanc to see if some major renovations can be completed on Chemin du Rocher and the breakwater in question.

Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Correspondence and for Information

Novel Corona Virus

No action, for information.

Waste park update

Councillor Bourque asked for update on garbage pick up that was mentioned at pervious meeting. Spring clean-up is still going ahead and considering looking at possible

alternative form of collection for construction and debris. Municipality is working with solid waste & the haulers. Contractors can bring debris to waste park. Deputy Warden Surette stated that for the time being the waste park will remain closed.

Councillor Diggdon wanted to mention on behalf of the municipality of Argyle, council, and staff that we pass along our sincere condolences to Councillor Nicole Albright and her husband Harold and all involved in the death of Harold's father. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Financial Requests

None

Agenda Topics for Next Meeting/Notice of Motion

None

Question Period

CAO Muise thanked Councillor Diggdon for his kind words. Also thanked Scott and Lori for their work on setting up these meetings and work that goes on in the background.

Will there be cleaning of the ditched for different areas: No clean up for the Spring. Summer students may take on the litter clean up for safety purposes and COVID-19. Fall clean up may still be an option.

Will COVID-19 effect the Municipal elections. It may put the municipal election on the back burner: We are unsure of this at this time, but the Province has been asked by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities to consider a delay in the October election.

In Camera

None

There being no further business, it is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded Guy Surette to adjourn the Regular Council Meeting at 8:04p.m.

Recorder
Lori Murphy

Date Approved: _____

Chairman/Warden _____

Alain Muise, Chief Administrative Officer _____