

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF ARGYLE
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday May 12, 2020
Zoom 6:30 p.m.

Present: Warden Danny Muise, Deputy Warden Guy Surette; Councillors Glenn Diggon, Richard Donaldson, Calvin d'Entremont, Nicole Albright. and Kathy Bourque; Chief Administrative Officer Alain Muise, Director of Finance Marsha D'Eon and Clerk/Recorder Lori Murphy.

Regrets: Roderick Murphy Jr and Lucien Leblanc

The meeting was called to order at 6:35p.m. by Warden Danny Muise

Agenda:

On a motion by Guy Surette and seconded by Kathy Bourque the agenda was approved as circulated

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Conflict of Interest Declaration

Warden Danny Muise asked for any declarations of conflict of interest from the floor. Deputy Warden Surette declared a conflict of interest on agenda item COVID 19 Property Tax Financing Policy.

Presentations

None

Adoption of Minutes

140th Annual Council Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2020

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded by Nicole Albright that the April 28, 2020 minutes of the 140th Annual Council Meeting minutes be approved as circulated.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Business Arising from the Minutes

None

Resolution

East Pubnico Area Rate (Year 1 of 6)

It is moved by Kathy Bourque and seconded by Calvin d'Entremont that Council approve an area rate of .05 cents per \$100 of assessment be collected by means of tax billing in the areas and/or communities covered by the East Pubnico Volunteer Fire Department for the Fiscal year 2020/21, this being year 1 of 6.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

West Pubnico Area Rate (Year 1 of 1)

It is moved by Glenn Diggdon and seconded by Calvin d'Entremont that Council set an area rate of .09 cents per \$100 of assessment be collected by means of tax billing in the areas and /or communities covered by the West Pubnico Fire Protection Association for the fiscal year 2020/21, this being year 1 of 1.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Eel Brook & District Area Rate (Year 2 of 5)

It is moved by Nicole Albright and seconded by Guy Surette that Council approve an area rate equivalent to 0.0125 cents per \$100 of assessment be collected by means of tax billing in the areas and/or communities covered by the Eel Brook & District Volunteer Fire Department for the Fiscal year 2020/21, this being year 2 of 5.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Islands & District Area Rate (Year 4 of 5)

It is moved by Guy Surette and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve an area rate of .07 cents per \$100 of assessment be collected by means of tax billing in the areas and /or communities covered by the Islands and District Fire Department for the fiscal year 2020/21, this being year 4 of 5.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Kemptville & District Area Rate (Year 2 of 6)

It is moved by Nicole Albright and seconded by Richard Donaldson that Council approve an area rate equivalent to .03 cents per \$100 of assessment be collected by means of tax billing, in the areas covered by the Kemptville & District Volunteer Fire department for the fiscal year 2020/21, this being year 2 of 6.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Lake Vaughn Volunteer Fire Department (Year 5 of 10)

It is moved by Nicole Albright and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve an area rate equivalent to .05 cents per \$100 of assessment be collected by means of tax billing, in the areas covered by the Lake Vaughan Volunteer Fire department for the fiscal year 2020/21, this being year 5 of 10.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Quinan & District Area Rate (Year 2 of 12)

It is moved by Nicole Albright and seconded by Glenn Diggdon that Council approve an area rate equivalent to 0.10 cents per \$100 of assessment be collected by means of tax billing in the areas and/or communities covered by the Quinan & District Volunteer Fire Department for the Fiscal year 2020/21, this being year 2 of 12.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Wedgeport & District Area Rate (Year 11 of 15)

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve an area rate equivalent to .07 cents per \$100 of assessment be collected by means of tax billing, in the areas covered by the Wedgeport & District Volunteer Fire department for the fiscal year 2020/21, this being year 11 of 15.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

For Decision

By-Law 28 Tax Exemptions-Schedule A

Warden Muise highlighted the addition of The West Pubnico Golf Association and the Windjammer Park Community Fund to Schedule A.

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve the amendments made to the By-Law 28 Tax Exemption Schedule A.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Land Use By-Law and Municipal Planning Strategy-First reading

Discussion about removing the riparian buffer from the LUB and process going forward. It was added to protect our waterways.

CAO Muise explained there may be a cost associated with removing sections of the documents. Council's responsibility to the public is to make sure they have an opportunity to make comments and provide feedback. CAO reminds Council that it is their document to approve and be comfortable with.

Council discussion raised specific concerns on the potential duplication of regulations on our residents regarding watercourse protection. Furthermore, the regulations have large implications to many residents with lake and riverfront property, and there was a sense that many wouldn't see this change coming, despite the engagement already done. The overall discussion supports more caution, more feedback from the public, and more public education.

Furthermore, with COVID restrictions, Council's option for a public hearing is restricted to online. Which was an added factor of concern.

Council would like to see examples from other Municipalities and how they have dealt with it above and beyond the government regulations.

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and Glenn Diggdon to remove section 4.23-natural shoreline protection-Riparian buffer from the Land use By Law and section 12.4.3 from Municipal Planning Strategy with the intention to revisit the riparian buffer at a later date.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

It is moved by Guy Surette and seconded by Glenn Diggdon that the Planning Advisory Committee revisit the riparian buffer zone in the LUB and MPS, review pros and cons and include public participation.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

It is moved by Guy Surette and seconded by Richard Donaldson that Council approve the first reading of the amended LUB and MPS documents.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Accessibility Advisory Committee members

Warden Muise reviewed the memo and listed the proposed members of the committee

It is moved by Nicole Albright and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve the applicants provided by staff to sit on the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

East Pubnico Fire Department

Councillor Bourque explained that they are losing revenue due to COVID-19. They will not be able to do any fundraising. Wondering if Municipality can help them financially. Councillor d'Entremont stated that all fire departments could be in the same predicament. Councillor Diggdon would like to look at other organizations that might need help. CAO Muise stated that fire departments do not qualify for COVID related grant money from the government.

It is moved by Guy Surette and seconded by Kathy Bourque that staff review the financial needs of the fire departments due to Covid state of emergency.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Operating Budget

Director of Finance Marsha D'Eon briefly detailed the mandatory vs discretionary expenses. CAO Muise advised Council that the amount set aside in the budget for COVID related issues is 25K.

As Council has seen the draft prior, they were satisfied that the operating budget was ready for approval, and also acknowledged that the 2020-21 fiscal year will have lots of unpredictability.

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded by Glenn Diggdon that Council approve the operating budget for 2019/20 as submitted.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Ocean Pride Fisheries-Letter of Support

Councillor d'Entremont explained the request from Ocean Pride Fisheries and the struggles they are facing to increase their ability to fish sea cucumbers in a larger area. The request is attached as part of the agenda.

It is moved by Guy Surette and seconded by Calvin d'Entremont that Council approve a letter of support on behalf of Ocean Pride Fisheries to support their initiative.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

East Pubnico water system application

Warden Muise explained the request for decision, a motion of Council is required to approve the submission of a funding request to upgrade the Middle East Pubnico Water system.

It is moved by Kathy Bourque and seconded by Glenn Diggdon that Council supports the submission of an application under the Provincial Capital Assistance Program for the total amount of \$63,000 for the Middle East Pubnico Water System Upgrade project.

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

YMCA Partnership

CAO Muise explained the partnership recommendation and counter proposal. The Town of Yarmouth is going to approach the YMCA with a counter proposal. Municipality of Argyle's counter proposal will be less complex. Town recognizes that its a challenge to support services that are for our people but service not in our community. The preference of the Town of Yarmouth is that Municipality of Argyle support the YMCA directly. MODY did not want a partnership but did not include funding in their motion.

Councillor Diggdon wanted clarification that we are just offering a contribution and not a partnership with the YMCA. The donation will be given over a period of time and not all at once. It will be a monthly contribution.

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve a contribution of \$50,000 per year for two years, supporting operations of the YMCA, and that the CAO request conditions on the funding, including the recipient of the funds, and bring the recommended payment plan to Council for final approval. 50K

Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Road names

Warden Muise reviewed the road name submissions. Submission were made through schools with historical context that was provided. Council would like to ensure the history of the name that is selected is accurate and confirm the history details. Road name will be a bilingual sign.

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded by Guy Surette that Council approve J.E. Hatfield as the road name at the location of the new administration building
Motion Carried (7 in favour, 0 against)

Notice period-Municipal Policy

COVID 19 Property Tax Financing Policy

Deputy Warden declared a conflict of interest and did not participate in the discussion. CAO Muise explained the model policy presented. It was developed by the AMA. They obtained legal advice and is strongly advising that each municipality get their own legal opinion. No decision is required today.

Municipality of Argyle will ask government for about \$2 million. This amount was calculated looking at the worst-case scenario based on who would have been impacted financially by COVID and not be able to pay their taxes at the deadline of July 31. Municipality does not have the authority to defer taxes, but we do have authority to provide a financing program.

This is an application process for residential and commercial. This will allow those to apply to the Municipality for COVID relief. It is not a tax write off. It is a delay. Currently working on central application system but will be able to apply through paper application.

An eligible person or business would pay, on the 20th of each month for 6 months starting in July, an amount of \$25 regardless of the tax bill. At end of 6 months there would be a program put in place where they pay the remaining amount owing over 24 months at a rate of interest of 1.35% per year. This policy does not write off taxes.

Eligibility criteria is in policy, and highlights eligibility for commercial and residential taxpayers. Only those taxpayers in good standing shall be eligible for this program. It is the decision of the Treasurer (in our case, the CAO is the Treasurer) whether the eligibility criteria have been met. Exclusions are also listed, and includes those who did not experience a hardship. Those who have received compensation from their insurance do not qualify. Those businesses who have received federal or provincial funding are not eligible. This policy excludes Airbnb's.

Application process deadline is June 30, 2020. Might be able to push this into July but not too far back. CAO Muise would like to see this passed as early as next week at a special council meeting. This policy will generate quite a bit of administrative work for staff.

Councillor Donaldson wondering if it is wise to have a 3rd party to decide who qualifies. Councillor d'Entremont asked about an appeal process written into policy. Policy has room to be amended.

Not all Municipalities will be doing the same thing. Municipality has 36 months to pay back the loan and applicants have 24 months to pay back. Staff will provide council with concerns and questions from other municipalities so council can be more informed.

Correspondence and for Information

Peases Island

No action, for information.

Waste Check

No action, for information.

Councillor Diggdon wanted to thank waste check and recycling station for opening back up to the public.

Internet for NS

No action, for information.

Financial Requests

None

Agenda Topics for Next Meeting/Notice of Motion

Councillor Bourque would like to add rails to trails for future discussion. The rails to trails are being used more often and they could use some updates.

Deputy Warden Surette has received concerns regarding fire water holes. Wondering if caution signs could be put up at these fire water holes. Safety review of fire holes was conducted, and CAO Muise will be looking to PW to present this information to Council at a future date. Councillor LeBlanc thinks signage is good start, but we need to look at larger picture.

Question Period

None

In Camera

None

There being no further business, it is moved by Calvin d'Entremont and seconded by Richard Donaldson to adjourn the Regular Council Meeting at 9:05p.m.

Recorder

Lori Murphy

Date Approved: _____

Chairman/Warden _____

Alain Muise, Chief Administrative Officer _____

DRAFT