

August 19, 2024

The Financial Services Committee for the Municipality of the County of Pictou met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Administration Building by videoconference and teleconference on Monday, August 19, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

- 1 Clr. Don Butler
- 2 Clr. Deborah Wadden
- 3 Clr. Darla MacKeil
- 4 Clr. Mary Elliott
- 5 Deputy Warden Wayne Murray
- 6 Warden Robert Parker
- 8 Clr. Larry Turner
- 9 Clr. Peter Boyles
- 10 Clr. Randy Palmer
- 11 Clr. Andy Thompson
- 12 Clr. Chester Dewar

ABSENT

- 7 Clr. David Parker
Adam MacInnis, Communications Officer

IN ATTENDANCE

- Brian Cullen, CAO, Municipal Clerk-Treasurer
- Sueann Musick, Director of Corporate Services/Deputy Clerk
- Karen Cornish, Deputy Municipal Treasurer
- Evan Hale, Director of Emergency Services
- Logan McDowell, Director of Public Works & Development
(videoconference)
- Shellie Pettipas, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Clr. MacKeil, Chair of the Financial Services Committee, called the meeting to order and acknowledged that we are on the ancestral territorial lands of the Mikmaq people.

AGENDA

It was moved by Clr. Elliott and seconded by Clr. Wadden that the agenda be approved as presented. **Motion Carried**

Clr. Dewar requested an addition to the Municipal Service Grants for District 12 by adding Friends of Iona Park for \$2,000.00 for maintenance costs.

Clr. Wadden requested that the Fire Department Levies discussion be tabled.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTIONS

There were no emergency resolutions.

MINUTES

Clr. MacKeil asked if there were any errors, omissions, or corrections in the minutes for July 15, 2024. The members of the Committee entered no errors, omissions, or corrections. The Chair proclaimed the minutes of the meeting on July 15, 2024, as the official record of the meeting. **Motion Carried**

REPORTS

COMMUNICATION REPORT

The Communication Report for the month of July 2024 was received as presented.

RECREATION REPORT

The Recreation Report for the month of July 2024 was received as presented.

Warden Parker said the Recreation Department and the summer students have done a great job and wished to thank them, especially for their work at the SARA Fun Day. The Warden said the four students and Ms. Steele were there from 10:00 to 2:00 and did a great job entertaining the children.

Clr. MacKeil said that so many great compliments have been received about the students this year. They are said to respect and keep the facility clean and are great with the kids.

Clr. Dewar said that the East River Valley Recreation has a terrific number of kids this year, and the students they hired are wonderful.

WARDEN'S REPORT

The Warden's Report for the month of July 2024 was received as presented.

Clr. Turner said it is a wonderful thing happening in Westville to honor Meghan Bragg. This will be a community-accessible and inclusive playground, benefiting the surrounding areas.

Clr. Turner asked the Warden about the discussions regarding the wind towers. The proposal was for wind energy to go directly into the grid. Warden Parker said it was made clear that it had nothing to do with the proposed turbines for hydrogen. Submissions were made to the province for development in Pictou County. The group was interested in the feeling of having wind towers here in Pictou County. The province is asking about four projects in total and if the county is aware of these projects. The Warden said it is essential to remember that the county's two sets of wind towers are very different.

Clr. Butler asked what the highlight of the Pictou Hub Project was from the final meetings. Warden Parker said it is well on its way, and another meeting will occur. The project is progressing well, and a beautiful new library and upgrades will be being made to the deCoste Centre. There will now be a space for Creative Pictou County, which will make a difference for them. Local art will be brought into the building. Clr. Wadden said that the date for the deCoste Centre's opening is September 15, 2024, and that the art for the building will be phenomenal.

Warden Parker was pleased to attend the unveiling of the sign for Meghan's Place in Westville on the year anniversary that Meghan passed away. The sign is simple and impressive, which is how Ms. Bragg would have wanted it. This park will be accessible to children of all ages throughout the county.

Warden Parker had the opportunity to meet people from all over while attending the Warden's Tea in River John. The Warden had a good time at the East Pictou Rural Fair and congratulated all the volunteers who helped put everything together.

INTERNET AND SALES MARKETING REPORT

Clr. Boyles said that Purple Cow is coming to install internet at Hillside Hall since the MOPC Internet service is unavailable at the hall's location.

Clr. Butler said that the provincial government announced 18 million dollars to upgrade cell phone service in Nova Scotia and asked if existing towers would be used or new ones would be erected to enhance the county's service. CAO Cullen said that ongoing negotiations with a carrier will use some of the towers to improve the cell phone service, mainly in the eastern part of the county.

Clr. Butler asked if there is hope for other parts of the county for more enhanced service through this program. Mr. Cullen believes there is a second component, which will use new towers to fill in the gaps. Clr. Thompson said that Build Nova Scotia presented at the spring conference and discussed using existing towers. Clr. Thompson said that the second round will be more creative than the first.

Clr. Turner inquired about the marketing and uptake of the internet project and asked when it would be heading east for installation. CAO Cullen said that it would be in quarter one of 2025. Clr. Turner asked for a build-out plan to be distributed to Councillors, and Mr. Cullen said this would be arranged and sent out.

TAXES RECEIVABLE REPORT

The Taxes Receivable Report for the month of July 2024 was received for information purposes.

DEED TRANSFER TAX

The Deed Transfer Tax for the month of July 2024 was received as presented.

ACCOUNTS PAID – JULY 2024

It was moved by Warden Parker and seconded by Clr. Elliott that the Accounts Paid Report for the month of July 2024 be received as presented. **Motion Carried**

BUSINESS ITEMS REQUIRING ACTION:

MUNICIPAL SERVICE GRANTS

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. Turner to approve the following Municipal Service Grants for District 2:

Motion Carried
Clr. Deborah Wadden
Clr. Larry Turner

a. Little Harbour Comm Centre	\$3,000.00	Water Purification System
b. Little Harbour Presbyterian Church	\$7,000.00	Offset Cost of Renovations
Total	\$10,000.00	

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Elliott and seconded by Deputy Warden Murray to approve the following Municipal Service Grants for District 4:

Motion Carried
Clr. Mary Elliott
Deputy Warden Murray

a. Melville Seafoam Hall	\$3,500.00	Upgrade to Kitchen
Total	\$3,500.00	

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Dewar and seconded by Warden Parker to approve the following Municipal Service Grants for District 12:

Motion Carried
Clr. Chester Dewar
Warden Robert Parker

a. Hopewell 4-H	\$2,000.00	Operating Expenses
b. St. Columbia United Church	\$525.00	Battery for Life Pak
c. Friends of Iona Park	\$2,000.00	Maintenance & Upkeep
Total	\$4,525.00	

CLEAN NOVA SCOTIA FUNDING REQUEST

MOTION

It was moved by Warden Parker and seconded by Clr. Turner to approve \$5,000.00 for the Climate Change Advisory Committee to join the Quest Net-Zero Communities Accelerator (NCA) Program.

Motion Carried
Warden Robert Parker
Clr. Larry Turner

Clr. Turner said that Sydney Griffiths, Climate Lead with the Clean Foundation, is helping to introduce the committee to available programs and navigate the funding opportunities process.

Warden Parker said that Ms. Griffiths had a good presentation and that climate change is a big subject; there are a lot of programs and avenues around this. The Warden said that working with Quest would give Ms. Griffiths access to other communities and can then bring forward things that are prepared. This will enable more to be done and provide more access to programs.

Deputy Warden Murray asked where the funds for this would come from. Warden Parker said that it would come out of the Climate Change Advisory Committee's budget, but the committee wanted to bring it to Council for information and that it was being done.

COMMUNITY RECREATION OPERATING GRANT: LITTLE HARBOUR

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. Turner to approve a Recreation Operating Grant in the amount \$2,900.00 to host a Youth Leads Art program in Little Harbour. This program will develop skills in visual arts, filmmaking, drama, and cooking workshops.

Motion Carried
Clr. Deborah Wadden
Clr. Larry Turner

Clr. Wadden said a survey was done during the hosted Family Day, and residents were overwhelmingly interested in this workshop. The hope for the future is to have someone locally trained in the area to run the program.

Clr. Boyles said that anything done for children is good and said to ensure it is open to other areas. Hillside Hall will be making a youth centre in the hall's basement and will be looking for available things.

Clr. Elliott asked when the program would take place and Clr. Wadden said it would be in the fall.

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON LITTER

Warden Parker said this issue has been discussed many times and requests that Council consider establishing an Ad Hoc Committee to examine the litter problem in Pictou County.

Warden Parker said that a letter was received from a resident in Plymouth who has lived here for 2.5 years, and the letter stated the resident's surprise at the amount of litter on the county roads. The resident asked why there was little response from the county on this issue. The Warden asked the resident who wrote the letter if they would sit on a committee about this concern. The resident would be excited and happy to sit on this committee. The Warden said there is much interest in trying to keep litter down, and there are resources for the committee to work with.

MOTION

It was moved by Warden Parker and seconded by Clr. Butler to set up an Ad Hoc Committee following the fall election to examine the county's litter problem. The committee would consist of three public members and three Councillors for one year.

Motion Carried
Warden Robert Parker
Clr. Don Butler

APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BOARDS

Clr. MacKeil asked that Council review the outside committees to determine if a Councillors presence is still needed or if new committees would benefit from having Councillors present. Clr. Turner said that Council should revisit and reevaluate all the boards to determine the required expertise.

Clr. Butler said the Council should have the executive review the list and make recommendations. CAO Cullen said the initial analysis could be completed quickly and prepared for the September meeting.

Clr. Boyles said that committees go along with being a Councillor. If it is decided that Councillors won't be on committees, then salaries should be considered and dropped. Warden Parker said that the discussion was around something other than dropping committees. Clr. Elliott said that being there to know what is going on is the job of a Councillor: staying involved and understanding what is happening in the community. Clr.

Elliott spoke of attending appointed committee meetings and other meetings that are not required to attend.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Elliott and seconded by Clr. Turner to direct staff to bring forward what is currently in place for outside boards and bring this item to a future agenda to reexamine all the outside boards.

Motion Carried
Clr. Mary Elliott
Clr. Larry Turner

TRAINING FOR NEW COUNCIL

CAO Cullen said the province has a planning session for newly elected officials in early November. Mr. Cullen said a two-day session will also be scheduled at the Municipal Administration Building.

Clr. Boyles said that every new Councillor should have this training available. Clr. Elliott said training was provided through slides, presentations, and walking through the steps with the municipality when joining as a new Council member. Clr. Elliott said that hands-on learning was necessary, and the municipality staff answered any questions presented.

TAX SALE UPDATE

Clr. Boyles asked when the tax sale would occur and if a list of the properties could be distributed. Mr. Boyles said it has been a long time since a tax sale happened, and it seems to take the law firm a long time to prepare the information.

CAO Cullen said this information was presented to the Audit Committee. Currently, title searches are being done on approximately 80 properties; the searches should come back within the next couple of weeks. Mr. Cullen said the process takes time, and many of the properties are older and were not migrated, which takes longer. Once the list is back, the final notices will be sent to the property owner, who will have 60 days to respond. Within those 60 days, there are advertising requirements.

Clr. Boyles said each municipality has tax sales, but the county has not had any in years. People have been asking when this will happen.

Clr. Wadden said that the Audit Committee recognized this as a serious issue and that this process does take time, and things are being done to work away to get this done.

Clr. Palmer questioned if it would be an in-person tax sale, and Mr. Cullen responded that that has not yet been determined. Once the list is finalized, it will be brought forward, and recommendations will be made to the Council on setting a minimum bid.

FIRE SERVICE

FIRE DEPARTMENT LEVIES

Clr. Wadden requested that this discussion be tabled.

PICTOU ISLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING REQUEST

Clr. MacKeil passed the Chair to Clr. Dewar. Clr. MacKeil said the Pictou Island meeting was well attended, and many things were discussed. There was a request concerning an increase to the Pictou Island Fire Department grant. The grant is currently \$6,000.00 and Clr. MacKeil said that the fire department is in a unique situation, having no mutual aid nearby, and some properties are inaccessible. The request was for an increase to help the department. They have a lot of fundraising efforts that go on, and the residents should be commended for raising the funds to help fill the gaps.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. MacKeil and seconded by Clr. Turner said an additional \$10,000.00 should be granted to the fire department, increasing the total to \$16,000.00.

Motion Carried
Clr. Darla MacKeil
Clr. Larry Turner

Warden Parker expressed support of the motion and said the department has no backup support.

Clr. Elliott supported the motion and said the Pictou Island Fire Department desperately needs to increase their training. Clr. Elliott asked if they would be included in some of the training being offered by Mr. Hale. The safety of residents is essential, and members should be trained and updated.

Mr. Hale said this is a unique department, and they have had some serious calls. Some of these things are being addressed, including the training. Mr. Hale will visit Pictou Island to tour the facilities and agreed the department deserves this increase.

Clr. Turner asked where the money comes from to fund this department because they do not have a levy. CAO Cullen said the funding comes from the general budget.

Clr. Thompson asked if the fire department should be included in the equalization. Mr. Cullen said that will be part of Mr. Hale's assessment and recommendations will be made following that assessment.

Clr. Palmer asked how many homes are on the island and if charging a levy to the homes could be an option to pay their share. Clr. MacKeil said there are 53 homes on the

island and 8 people in the department. As far as equalization is concerned, it is not the same as in other areas.

Clr. Wadden supported the motion and said a hard look should be given to see what is happening in Pictou Island. Clr. Wadden asked where the money would be coming from to support this. CAO Cullen said this would be looked at, and a report would be given on where the money comes from.

Clr. MacKeil said that the properties there are very different: some are grand, and some are simple bunk houses. Residents and the department will have to explore this because it is hard to compare.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clr. MacKeil wished Deputy Warden Murray a happy birthday.

Clr. Boyles said the Hillside School reunion was a great time. Approximately 55 people, including a former teacher, Mr. Carter, attended the reunion. The oldest student who attended was now 93.

Clr. Boyles said Hillside Hall will start the Jam Session again on September 6, 2024, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. The cost is \$5.00, and lunch will be provided.

Clr. Elliott said the Toney River Community Hall will host a Seafood Chowder dinner on Saturday, August 24, 2024, beginning at 4:00 p.m.

Clr. Dewar said the Hopewell Ceilidh said the people were delighted to be there. The weather cooperated, and everything was perfect. Clr. Dewar said the music, food and people were wonderful and cannot say enough about the volunteers. Clr. Thompson and the Premier spent the afternoon at the event as well.

Clr. Butler said a community picnic will be on Saturday, August 24, 2024, beginning at 12:00 p.m. Clr. Butler said there will also be a six-mile road race.

Clr. Palmer thanked Warden Parker for attending the East Pictou Rural Fair and said there was an unbelievable turnout. The event started on Tuesday and went through until Sunday night. There was a 22-minute fireworks show. Clr. Palmer said it takes a lot of work, and the committee of 20 people started preparing in February. Clr. Palmer acknowledged the hard work of volunteers and said the weather helped make things come together.

Warden Parker was invited to the official opening of the Pictou North Colchester Exhibition, which will run from Wednesday, September 4, to September 8, 2024. The Warden wished the exhibition great success and said the loss of some key people involved has caused some difficult times. Warden Parker encouraged all to attend the exhibition.

Warden Parker told Councillors that canvassing for the Terry Fox Run will begin soon and the run takes place on September 15, 2024.

Clr. MacKeil said it was great to hear of everything happening in the communities.

MOTIONS OF RECONSIDERATION

There were no motions of reconsideration.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business before the meeting, so the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON

MUNICIPAL CLERK