

May 15, 2023

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, May 15, 2023, 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
- 7 Clr. David Parker
- 8 Clr. Larry Turner
- 9 Clr. Peter Boyles
- 10 Clr. Randy Palmer
- 11 Clr. Andy Thompson
- 12 Clr. Chester Dewar

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Brian Cullen, CAO, Municipal Clerk-Treasurer  
Karen Cornish, Deputy Municipal Treasurer  
Evan Hale, Director of Emergency Services  
Logan McDowell, Director of Public Works & Development  
Adam MacInnis, Communications Officer  
Shellie Pettipas, Administrative Assistant

**CALL TO ORDER & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Clr. MacKeil 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. Boyles and seconded by Clr. Elliott by that the agenda be approved as presented.

Warden Parker requested to add the Warden's Report to the agenda.

**Motion Carried**

## **MINUTES**

Clr. MacKeil asked if there were any errors, corrections, or omissions in the minutes for April 17, 2023. The members of the Committee entered no errors or omissions. The Chair proclaimed the meeting minutes on April 17, 2023, as the official record of the meeting.

**Motion Carried**

## **CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES**

A thank you letter was received from Athalie Smith's family. Warden Parker read the letter and it was posted to the Municipality's social media page. Clr. MacKeil said that Athalie is doing better; she is literally a miracle, and it is nice to see somebody as young and as vibrant and full of promises getting well.

A letter was received requesting a ban on Non-Government and Special Interest Group Flags.

It was moved by Clr. Wadden moved and Clr. Butler seconded that the letter be accepted for information purposes.

**Motion Carried**

Clr. Parker pointed out the contrast between the two pieces of correspondence, one based on thankfulness, gratefulness, and hope and the other based on the exact opposite. Clr. Parker said we have to guard our agenda carefully and not allow that type of misinformation to spread through our Council.

## **PROCLAMATION VON WEEK**

Warden Parker presented the following proclamation to the committee:

**WHEREAS** the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada is a charitable community-based healthcare organization addressing community health and social needs.

**WHEREAS** VON Pictou County nurses, home support workers, community service coordinators and many other staff and volunteers have been caring for the lives and well-being of residents of the Municipality of the County of Pictou since 1898, and VON's nursing, health promotion and support services make a contribution to the health care system in Nova Scotia, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that I, Robert Parker, Warden for the Municipality of the County of Pictou, hereby proclaim May 21-27, 2023, as VON Week here in the county.

**DATED** at Pictou, Nova Scotia, on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of May 2023.

**Sgd. Warden Robert Parker**

Warden Parker commented that he was so impressed by the professionalism of the nurses with the VON who helped him recently. Not only did they display professionalism, but friendliness as well. They were exemplary as to what a nurse should be. Thank you to all VON nurses in this county and beyond. Warden Parker wished to express his personal thanks.

## **RECREATION REPORT**

Clare Steele, Active Communities Coordinator, gave a presentation to Council about the Go Play Fund program that the Recreation Department has been working on. The Go Play Fund program is based on expanding the success of the equipment loan program and increasing access to recreation in the community. This is a fund that community members can access by applying for funds to participate in recreation. She said the funds that are out there now are great, but they are limited, and once someone reaches a certain age, they are out of luck. In the wider sense of recreation, if someone wanted to do something such as art or dance, then there are no funds available. People can apply to this fund, participate in an intake process, and make sure they are not eligible for other funds; then, the applicant would receive the money to participate in the desired recreational activity.

The idea is that it would be largely community funded. An application has been sent to Province for funding and to both community health boards. It has been approved for this year's budget. Another interesting factor is that community members can donate to the fund and receive tax receipts. She said the Recreation Department is asking that Council participate in the rollout of the fund beginning June 1<sup>st</sup>, and when people in the community donate, would Council match donations for the month of June?

Clr. Palmer asked Ms. Steele what checks and balances does the program have to ensure that the people who really need it are the ones to receive the funding? Ms. Steele informed Council that she sits on Pictou County Partners Organizing Committee, which works closely with other members of this committee. From this, there is an access point for those who really need it. They can identify and hand out the applications to the people who really need it. She said there might be people trying to take advantage, but the program will do its best to ensure the funds get into the hands of those who need them.

Clr. Butler stated his support for the concept of the program and believes it is significant for the Municipality to show support. Clr. Butler felt there should be a cap on what it would be matching in funds up to a certain limit. He said this is a worthy program, and it needs the support of Council. Deputy Warden Murray asked if the applications came back to the Recreation Department. Ms. Steele responded that they can be filled out online or come in and she directly does the work to do the backchecking. Warden Parker also agreed that the Municipality should help to kick off the funding and agreed there should be an amount set for a cap. Warden Parker applauded the Recreation Department for the great idea.

Deputy Warden Murray asked Ms. Steele how much the Recreation Department put in the budget for this program. She said \$1,000 was the amount budgeted to get the program up and running and for the branding of the project.

It was moved by Deputy Warden Murray and seconded by Clr. Palmer to match community donations up to \$1,000 for the month of June.

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Warden Parker to increase the matching of donations to \$2,000 for the month of June.

**Amendment Carried**  
**Motion Carried.**



# GO PLAY FUND

PICTOU COUNTY'S ACCESS TO ACTIVITY

## HOW IT WORKS

The Go Play Fund provides financial assistance to residents of Pictou County to help cover the cost of participating in recreational activities.



## HOW TO DONATE

The success of the Go Play Fund depends on you! Donations to the Go Play Fund can be made at the Municipal Building or online at [munpict.ca](http://munpict.ca). Tax Receipts for donations are available.

## WHO CAN APPLY

The Go Play Fund is for any community member who requires financial assistance and are ineligible for other funding - There is no age limit! Applicants can apply for up to \$200 to go towards and activity of their choice.

**APPLY NOW** 



## WHAT WE FUND

We want to make it easier for you to GO PLAY! We will help cover expenses for a variety of Recreation programs or activities .

- dance
- art
- hiking gear
- music class

Learn more at  
[munpict.ca](http://munpict.ca)



## **RECREATION REPORT**

It was moved by Clr. Butler and seconded by Clr. Palmer that the Recreation report be received for information purposes. **Motion Carried**

Clr. Wadden said it was a great evening at the volunteer recognition ceremony and asked in the future to have the volunteer certificates put in a frame. Clr. Wadden also stated that there should be a separate group for young people to be recognized. Deputy Warden Murray also said that at the ratepayer meeting for District 5, the question was also asked to create a youth group to recognize youth volunteers. Ms. Steele responded that it has already been noted for next year and, in the past, has expressed to the province that there should be a category for youth. Ms. Steele said the Recreation Department has this on the plans for next year.

## **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. Parker that the Communications report be received for information purposes. **Motion Carried**

## **EMERGENCY SERVICES REPORT**

It was moved by Deputy Warden Murray and seconded by Clr. Elliott that the Emergency Services report be received for information purposes. **Motion Carried**

## **FIRE INSPECTORS REPORT**

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. Parker that the Fire Inspectors report be received for information purposes. **Motion Carried**

## **ACCOUNTS PAID (March 31, 2023 and April 2023)**

It was moved by Deputy Warden Murray and seconded by Clr. Palmer that the Accounts Paid report be received for information purposes. **Motion Carried**

## **DEED TRANSFER TAX (For Information Purposes Only)**

CAO Cullen said that April is typically a slower month. As of March 31, 2023, the fund is on par with the last two fiscal years. The fund came in within \$10,000 of the year before.

## **TAXES RECEIVABLE REPORT**

Interim tax bills are now out and are due June 15, 2023.

## **PARL REPORT**

Clr. Wadden provided the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Report:

The 2023/24 Budget was approved. The province did increase its base share by \$42,000, which was gladly received however, the province also accelerated the multi-year plan to reach a minimum wage of \$15 per hour for all front-line staff which added \$42,000 to this budget line. This was a 10.29% increase. The remaining staff received a 3% increase, so our total salary budget is over \$1.4M, an increase of \$54,515. With the increase in salaries, the library will see an increase in federal deductions and health benefits, which will increase the employee benefits line by \$44,111. This is a total increase in salary and benefits of \$98,626. Of course, cuts had to be made to various line items such as library materials, travel and board meeting expenses and capital purchases such as computer purchases. By far, the most felt cut is to our library materials which are not where it wants to see cuts. This will impact wait times and the ability to refresh the collection. Unfortunately, this was by far the most challenging budget Eric Stackhouse has prepared in his tenure. The board did note here how important it is for government to recognize the extra work and services carried out by public libraries and the extra skills needed by staff.

Both renovation projects are being moved forward with construction well underway with the Pictou Culture Hub Project. We have a very good working relationship with Iron Maple and good communication between all parties. New Glasgow has selected Fathom Studio as its designer.

It received a Period Poverty Grant for \$25,000 for purchasing and distributing Feminine Products and a small amount of this fund is directed towards awareness promotion and women's health.

The current provincial funding model for public libraries, which provided a flat funding rate for five years, comes to an end in Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Members of the Council of Regional Libraries (CORL) met in February and March 2023, to set a vision for public libraries, determine core services that align with that vision and identify funding priorities and an approach to funding discussions for 2025/2026 onwards.

There is a consensus that public libraries are increasingly playing a transformational and essential role in our communities. Libraries have significantly expanded the scope of services offered and embraced their roles as vibrant community hubs. The pace of change for libraries is quickening as evidenced by new collaborations, new services and new capital projects.

Provincial funding, however, has not kept pace and Nova Scotia Libraries are facing challenges providing the open hours and level of services our communities are asking of us. Many libraries in Nova Scotia are experiencing wage parity issues, which is making it difficult to attract and retain staff with the broad ranging competencies

required to deliver modern library services.

Eric Stackhouse is working with Tiffany Bartlett from Colchester County, together developed a needs analysis for Provincial Library Funding Formula Development which has been endorsed by CORL and our board with the expectation to be approved by all nine boards across the province. CORL and our boards will be communicating and engaging with our key partners and stakeholders to tell them of our vision, current situation and priorities. CORL will hire a contracted researcher to collect the necessary background data and information to inform the Funding Review Committee's work. The hope is that the province, with input from CORL, will establish a Terms of Reference for the Funding Review Committee with establishing Funding Review Committee by late 2023. Hopefully, this committee will consist of all levels of stakeholders to work together with the province on the new funding formula. If anyone is interested in receiving a copy of the Needs Analysis, Clr. Wadden can forward a copy to them.

## **WARDEN'S REPORT**

Warden Parker said he was not well for a period in April and was sick all of March. The Warden did meet along with the Deputy Warden, the CAO, the Town of Pictou representatives, the RCMP staff and MLA MacFarlane regarding the concerns of residents in Pictou West, River John and the Town of Pictou. There are a lot of dissatisfied residents with the service they are getting from the RCMP and with all the things taking place in River John and the neighbouring communities. Another meeting will be set up in River John with the RCMP. The meeting will be open to the public to bring forward their concerns, and there is a suggestion that neighbourhood watch might be helpful.

The Crisis Mental Health Working Group had a meeting two weeks ago and Warden Parker said a lot of credit should be given to two mothers who stepped forward to address the issue of suicide. That took a lot of courage, and they had pictures of their late sons with them. Warden Parker said their presence really added something to the meeting. They wanted to do something to help somebody else. There were a lot of representatives from the Northern Health zone, the Aberdeen Hospital, and representatives from four of the six municipalities. There is a lot of hope that the County is getting somewhere on our ask. He said the asks are being able to divert somebody with mental health challenges when they come into the Emergency Department at the Aberdeen Hospital not to have to sit there for eight to ten hours, to have professional help available on call for them when they come and to have beds if they need to be kept for their safety or the safety of others. Future meetings are being set up to try to make these a reality.

Warden Parker said that of all the ones he has gone to, this year's DEANS Gala was the best one yet. The Gala was held at the New Glasgow Square. Clrs. Butler, Clr. Boyles and Clr. Parker attended along with the Warden. The Warden said that everything was very well done, the food was great, and the guest speaker Jim Kyte told a good story and Gordie MacKeeman put on an entertaining performance. The whole evening was well worth being there for.



Warden Parker, along with Clr. Boyles attended the Day of Mourning memorial service for those who lost their lives at work this year, a total of 28 people in Nova Scotia in 2022.

The Warden attended the 150<sup>th</sup>-anniversary kick-off for the Town of Pictou.

The volunteer banquet at the Wellness Center was very well done and Warden Parker thanked the staff who put so much work into the banquet. The Volunteer of the Year, David Hillier, was unable to attend. Warden Parker said that it would have been nice to have Mr. Hillier attend and that he is very deserving of this recognition and will be going to Halifax in September.

Clr. Wadden commented on the policing issue and the meetings concerning Pictou West and wanted to express that there is also a real concern in Pictou East. Recently there was a break-in at an artist's studio and there is fear in the area and a major concern about the presence of the police in the district. Warden Parker said a meeting could also be set up in Pictou East.

It was moved by Clr. Dewar and seconded by Clr. Parker to accept the Warden's Report as presented.

**Motion Carried**

### **MUNICIPAL SERVICE GRANTS**

It was moved by Clr. Butler and seconded by Warden Parker that the following Municipal Service Grants be approved for District 1.

a. Sutherland's River Pioneer Cemetery	\$500.00
b. Merigomish and Area Recreation	\$2,200.00
c. Pictou County Celtic Association	\$2,500.00
d. Hatties Cemetery	\$2,500.00
e. Freedom Bible Church	\$1,000.00
f. St. Andrew's Cemetery	\$1,000.00
g. Kenzieville Cemetery	\$2,000.00
h. Telford Cemetery Association	\$900.00
i. Sutherland's River Community Centre	\$625.00
j. Kenzieville District Community Centre	\$2,500.00
k. French River Cemetery Society	\$3,200.00
l. St. Mary's & Bailey's Brook Cemetery	\$500.00
m. Lismore Community Centre	\$2,500.00
n. Merigomish Cemetery Company	\$2,100.00
o. Thorburn War Memorial	\$500.00
p. District One Newsletter	\$1,700.00
q. Merigomish School House Streetlight	\$40.00

**Motion Carried**

It was moved by Deputy Warden Murray and seconded by Clr. Palmer that the following Municipal Service Grants be approved for District 3.

a. Caribou River Community Hall	\$3,000.00
b. Caribou River Upper Cemetery	\$2,000.00
c. Central Caribou Cemetery	\$5,000.00
d. Caribou Island Cemetery	\$700.00
e. Waterside Cemetery Co.	\$2,000.00
f. Seaboard Cemetery	\$2,000.00
g. St. James Mill Dam Cemetery	\$1,600.00
h. Bayview Community Hall	\$2,500.00
i. Caribou District Fire Department	\$5,164.00
j. Haliburton, Pictou Cemetery	\$4,000.00
k. Bayview Hall Street Light	\$40.00

**Motion Carried**

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. Parker that the following Municipal Service Grants be approved for District 9.

a. Hillside Community Centre	\$10,000.00
b. Hillside Cemetery	\$2,000.00
c. Priestville Walkerville Cemetery	\$2,000.00
d. Linacy Fire Department	\$10,000.00

**Motion Carried**

It was moved by Clr. Palmer and seconded by Deputy Warden Murray that the following Municipal Service Grants be approved for District 10.

a. IOOF Moore Lodge#17 Odd Fellows	\$3,000.00
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**Motion Carried**

### **2023-2024 GRANT REVIEW**

The Grant Committee met twice, once on May 2, 2023, and then again on May 10, 2023. Information at the finance meeting was distributed for information purposes only, and a motion will be made for approval as part of budgetary deliberations when that takes place. Warden Parker said that in the overall process, Council faced \$1.4 million in requests and the budget line was around \$475,000. There will be groups disappointed this year, not because they are not worthy but because of a fair number of requests. There were several restrictions put on some of the funding that funding is dependent on receiving other funding through the provincial government, federal government funding or contributions from the other municipalities.

Clr. Wadden asked about the Pictou County Seniors Outreach Program and the contingency that it had to be used only for rural residents. Clr. Wadden said that some of the residents in that district like that program, and they have moved to town and continue

to go back to those lunches. Clr. MacKeil responded that the contingency was more about the events being held in the rural areas and the rental of the halls being used to be in the County.

Clr. Thompson asked why there was no contingency placed on the Pictou Agricultural Society barn project as on others dependent on receiving other funding sources. Warden Parker said that it is believed they are applying for other funding and that they have several other things going on to raise money. Clr. Thompson said that all these organizations must be treated the same way. Clr. Parker stated that this organization has a long history of finding a way to get it done. Clr. Elliott said that with the revenue they already have, the volunteers and the fundraising, this project will go ahead. They deserve and need funding; this project will draw more people to the community. Clr. Thompson stated he is not against giving the money for this project, but if contingencies are placed on others, then they should all be treated the same.

### **POINT OF ORDER**

Clr. Parker made a point of order that it was the fourth time Clr. Thompson addressed this issue and this is for information purposes only. Clr. Thompson replied that he wanted to clarify that he is not against this barn project or Municipal funding for the project. However, if contingencies are being placed on other projects, then funding should be treated the same as it is with the other groups. Clr. MacKeil said this would be discussed again when Council meets for budget deliberations.

### **COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY FUND POLICY**

CAO Cullen said the amount set for this fiscal year is \$150,000 for the projects recommended for the Community Connectivity Funding. In subsequent years, if any money is left over, that money can be reserved for future years. Fire halls, church halls and arenas are not eligible for these funds. This grant can be used to assist with creating new recreational opportunities or destinations, refurbish existing community halls or centres, or help with the cost of building new community halls or centres, and these must be located within the Municipality of Pictou County. The grant would fund 40% up to a maximum of \$50,000, and an organization that receives this funding is not eligible again for five years. The money would be distributed across districts. Funding would be considered first for organizations if they have not already received it.

Clr. Thompson asked where the five-year time frame came from and stated that many of these buildings couldn't wait five years to get these upgrades. If they must wait for five years for the next chance to get funding, they will have a harder time finishing these projects. The time should line up with other government funding criteria.

Deputy Warden Murray said that if a project were funded this year and they came back again next year for the same amount and other funding is not requested and there is money left over, then Council would look at them for further funding opportunities.

It was moved by Deputy Warden Murray, seconded by Clr. Thompson seconded recommend to Council the Community Connectivity Fund Policy.

Clr. Palmer had suggested three years at the Grants Committee Meeting and had felt that five years was too long. He said community halls couldn't wait five years for the second round. Clr. Palmer said he would like to see the criteria changed to three years with the understanding that they may be eligible for more funding if other money is available.

Warden Parker agreed with Clr. Palmer and said that this was brought forward as a starting point and Council is trying to be fair across the districts. If three years is more acceptable, then this can be looked at. CAO Cullen said the five-year clause could be dropped. Then under evaluation criteria, it could state that preference will be given to projects that have not received funding in the previously specified number of years.

It was moved by Clr. Palmer, seconded by Clr. Wadden seconded that the five-year clause be removed and changed to three years with the understanding that organizations could be eligible before that if the funds were available.

**Amendment Carried.**

**Motion Carried**

### **COMMUNITY SUPPORT SOCIETY OF RIVER JOHN TAX EXEMPTION REQUEST**

It was moved by Clr. Parker and seconded by Clr. Elliott that the Community Support Society of River John be considered for an exemption of taxes or taxes to be calculated on a residential rate.

**Motion Carried**

### **EMERGENCY RESOLUTIONS**

There were no emergency resolutions brought forward.

### **ADJOURN**

There was no further business before the meeting, so the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

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CHAIRPERSON

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MUNICIPAL CLERK