

April 14, 2020

The Committee of Council as a Whole for the Municipality of the County of Pictou met by teleconference on Tuesday, April 14, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Wayne Murray, Deputy Warden

Robert Parker, Warden, Vice-Chair

Don Butler

Deborah Wadden

Darla MacKeil

Ronald Baillie

David Parker

Larry Turner

Peter Boyles

Randy Palmer

Andy Thompson

Chester Dewar

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Brian Cullen, CAO, Municipal Clerk-Treasurer

Karen Cornish, Deputy Municipal Treasurer

Carolyn MacIntosh, Deputy Municipal Clerk

Sueann Musick, Communications Officer

Jane Johnson, Recording Secretary

**COVID-19 UP-DATE**

The CAO reported that the weekend was very quiet locally. Communications continue using the various platforms. REMO posted a video message from Pictou County Solid Waste and it had 1,600 views to date. The Province has issued internal directives to the municipalities to report any operational changes to the Coordination Center. The last call at the local level was held last Wednesday and there will be another call tomorrow. An overlay for the sign on Mt. Thom, "Pictou County Forward Together" is being developed. The sign will reinforce the messaging to stay home and acknowledge the efforts of essential workers. The newsletter was mailed last week to all households.

Clr. Butler informed the Committee that the Board of Directors at Valley View Villa had a conference call last week and will be having another one this week. He assured Council that Management and staff at the Villa are working very hard to keep the virus out of the Villa. Measures have been implemented regarding the wearing of masks; staff temperature readings are taken upon entering and exiting the building. The temperatures of the residents are taken twice a day. Family members have been very understanding and are appreciative of social media opportunities implemented to increase contact with their family members. Staff are naturally nervous and there is some concern about reactions if someone in the facility was to test positive for Coronavirus.

Clr, Wadden reported residents in her area want to organize a phone tree for seniors and she pointed out it is important to touch base with seniors.

The CAO indicated that he will bring that issue forward to John Davison, REMO Coordinator for discussion.

The Communications Officer reported that she can speak with Mary and Barb of Seniors Outreach about this issue.

Clr. Boyles suggested the Municipality lower its flag to half-mast to honor those people who lost their lives to COVID-19 and to show support for First Responders.

The CAO pointed out we can lower our flag but the Federal Government has strict protocols in place and it has to go to the Protocol Office for a compliance review.

Clr. D. Parker suggested that we could lower our flag if there is a death in Pictou County.

The CAO reported we are currently getting a price on a flag for Emergency First Responders that we would fly on our secondary flagpole.

Clr. Boyles commented that we are all in this together in Nova Scotia and we have already lost 3 people to the virus which he felt warranted the lowering of our flag.

#### **MOTION - FLAG**

It was moved by Clr. Boyles that the Municipality lower the municipal flag at the Administration Building to half-mast for the duration of the COVID-19 Pandemic for those who lost their lives and in support for First Responders.

There was no seconder for the motion.

#### **MOTION - FLAG**

It was moved by Clr. D. Parker and seconded by Clr. Baillie that the Municipality lower the municipal flag at the Administration Building for 3 full days if there is a death in Pictou County as a result of the Coronavirus.

Motion carried. (Nay Vote: Clr. Boyles)

#### **COVID-19 – LONG TERM CARE/ADULT RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES**

Clr. D. Parker reported that the correspondence expressing concern over protocols at residential care facilities was presented to the Tripartite table. He noted that residential care facilities are funded and staffed differently and it was his understanding that the current protocol will continue whereby residents who are sick will be transferred to hospital for care and returned back to the ARC when they are well. From a pandemic perspective, Clr. Parker reported that protocol planning began in February with the imposition of limits on the number of people residents could interact with in a day. This continued with the use of masks, temperature checks and the preparation of 3 isolation areas.

#### **COVID-19 – WATER UTILITY PAYMENT DEFERRAL 60 DAYS BOARD APPROVAL**

The CAO explained that the Water Utility has a quarterly billing cycle so we wanted to extend our payment terms to 60 days with no interest charge on bills. The UARB approved this request until the end of June and at that time we can go back to the Board and change the schedule again if necessary.

Warden R. Parker commented this is a good idea for residents and we should be helping them out as much as we can. Businesses are concerned about property taxes and he asked the Councillors opinion on deferring interest charges on property taxes.

The CAO pointed out there will be a cost to a deferral program (i.e. loss of interest revenue & impact to the Valuation Allowance at the end of the fiscal period). He advised that Administration is working towards releasing interim tax bills the first week of May, understanding that many of our accounts are paid by mortgage companies which already have the money in the various accounts of their customers. He estimated that we have 2 weeks to make a decision on what we are going to do with respect to interest. He also noted that there is the ability to extend the due date with a policy amendment.

### **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. D. Parker and seconded by Clr. Turner that staff be directed to develop text to amend appropriate policy to extend the due date of the final 2020/21 tax bill and present it to Council for consideration.

Motion carried.

### **COVID-19 – 2020/21 BUDGET PROCESS**

The CAO informed the Committee that he talked with the Deputy Municipal Treasurer last week on the process and they are still targeting early June for the approval of budgets.

### **COVID-19 – NSFM DEFERRAL IMPLICATIONS**

The CAO reported that anything and everything is on the table with the Province with the exception of forgiveness of costs. There may be an opportunity to defer costs on mandatory contributions (education, justice, policing, etc.) until a cash flow improves, and the Province is looking at tax deferrals for those who qualify.

Warden R. Parker reported that we do not have the authority to deferral unless we have permission from the Province so he was not in favor of those qualifications which essentially mirror the Federal Government.

The CAO acknowledged that Federal Program does not fit everything.

### **RURAL INTERNET UPDATE**

The CAO informed the Committee that he had another follow-up call with the Canada Infrastructure Bank and they are going to provide modelling this week with different thoughts on how they may participate. Plexus had laid off their outside workers in Atlantic Canada for 6 weeks. They are now in the final edits to Phase I and he just receive the Statement of Work on what is included and excluded. The Municipality is waiting on the Insurance Certificates from the Insurer and before continuing to work on the Attachment Agreements with NS Power and Bell Aliant. Regarding project management we have reached an agreement with Terry Dalton of i-Valley and Emmerich Winkler, the ISP provider and they are going to project manage the project for us, so they are the key contacts of the project. The make-ready for Zone 8 is all ready to go.

Clr. Dewar asked if we should have more emphasis on the internet test and the CAO responded that we have to push this message. The CAO indicated that Terry Dalton will provide information on a weekly basis. This test will indicate there is a performance issue with the network and that the network

capability in our Municipality does not exist. The CAO reported that even the towns are not meeting the CRTC standards.

Clr. MacKeil asked if the timeline will still be in the fall and the CAO replied the target is the end of October for Phase I to be completed. He indicated the lead times have not changed for the equipment but the original date was June.

Clr. MacKeil asked if there was an update on the Hardwood Hill Tower and the CAO replied that frequency testing is incomplete so the identification of a final site has not been possible.

Clr. Boyles reported that he received a concern from a resident about using 5G technology because of radiation exposure.

The CAO advised that all technology emits a degree of radiation. He pointed out that installing anything less than 5G technology would use outdated equipment that would not be supported at some future point and would be prone to failures. He noted that 5G simply uses a different frequency band.

Clr. Boyles asked the CAO if he would answer these questions for the resident and the CAO responded those questions are from a larger Nova Scotia group that fundamentally opposes 5G technology. Some of the information could not be released for security reasons (i.e. location of infrastructure which could be subjected to potential damage). He noted that we are operating under the guidelines of Industry Canada which is selling spectrum license for 5G, adding that the solution to 5G would be an additional \$35 million to increase the fiber content in our program, keeping in mind that there is a segment of the population that can only be served with wireless technology.

#### **POLICY AMENDMENT – COVID-19 – MUNICIPAL SERVICES GRANT PROCEDURES**

The CAO reviewed the text of a potential amendment to the COVID-19 Policy that suspends sections of the Municipal Services Grant Policy to eliminate the need for ratepayer meetings. Community groups can contact the Councillor and the Councillor will submit a recommendation on how to divide the application requests. Council will then approve the grant requests. Applicants will still be required to submit financial statements.

Clr. Wadden asked will the application forms be available online and the CAO responded that the community groups can send an email to the Councillor. The Councillor can fill out and submit the applications on behalf of the groups.

The CAO pointed out the community groups have a requirement to report so they will be flagged. If they do not report they will not be eligible for the next year's grant process.

#### **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. Palmer and seconded by Clr. MacKeil that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve the policy amendments for the COVID-19 Policy Municipal Services Grant Procedures.

Motion carried.

### **POLICY AMENDMENT – LANDFILL VOUCHER PROGRAM**

The CAO reported the policy amendment to the Landfill Voucher Program is to change the weight allowance from pounds to kilograms so it is consistent with operations at the Landfill.

### **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. D. Parker and seconded by Clr. MacKeil that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve the policy amendment for the Landfill Voucher Program Policy.

Motion carried.

### **J CLASS ROAD ADDITIONAL PAVING PROJECTS- DEADLINE EXTENSION**

The CAO reported that he reached out to the Program Administrator and the deadline was extended for 1 week. If there any Councillors who want roads looked at to contact him.

Clr. Thompson he would like a copy of the full list that includes roads prior to 1999 and the CAO responded he will send that list out.

### **MOTION – MUNICIPAL SERVICES GRANTS - DISTRICT 4-ST. LIGHT MISSED 2019/20 \$40**

It was moved by Clr. Baillie and seconded by Warden R. Parker that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve a Municipal Services Grant in the amount of \$40 for the cost of street lighting in District 4 for 2019/20.

Motion carried.

### **SUMMER RECREATION**

Clr. Baillie asked for more information regarding the Summer Students Program for this year and the CAO replied that the Municipality has not received any details on federal funding for students to deliver our summer recreation programs, however, there will be a need to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the summer program, noting that if any programs are delivered they would need to be done in compliance with the orders of the Chief Medical Officer.

Clr. MacKeil asked for an update on insurance for recreation programs in the County and the CAO advised that he did have a discussion on this issue with recreation staff within the confines of our Recreation Strategy goals for 2020/21.

Clr. Palmer reported that he received a call from a concerned resident about someone flying a kite in the ballfield. The CAO reported that he will ask Provincial EMO to find out and get back to the Councillor. The CAO pointed out if people have concerns, they can refer complaints to law enforcement.

### **OUTSTANDING ST. LIGHT INSTALLATIONS**

The CAO agreed to provide an update on the status of all outstanding streetlights, noting that a backlog in repairs has been addressed however NS Power has not prioritized streetlights during its pandemic service.

### **ADJOURN**

It was moved by Clr. D. Parker and seconded by Warden R. Parker that the meeting adjourn.

Motion carried. (8:50 p.m.)

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CHAIR

  
MUNICIPAL CLERK