

June 1, 2020

The Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou met by video/teleconference on Monday, June 1, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Dist.	1	Clr. Don Butler
	2	Clr. Deborah Wadden
	3	Clr. Darla MacKeil
	4	Clr. Ronald Baillie
	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

Donn Fraser, Solicitor, Mac Mac & Mac
Brian Cullen, CAO/Municipal Clerk Treasurer
Karen Cornish, Deputy Municipal Treasurer
Carolyn MacIntosh, Deputy Municipal Clerk
Sueann Musick, Communications Officer
Jane Johnson, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Warden R. Parker called the meeting to order and invited Councillors to pray or reflect, as may be their preference, to help Council focus and properly do the work of the Municipality.

AGENDA

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. D. Parker that the agenda be approved as circulated.

Motion carried.

MINUTES

It was moved by Clr. Dewar and seconded by Clr. MacKeil that the minutes of May 4, 2020 be approved as circulated.

Motion carried.

PROCLAMATION – PIZZA DAY

Warden R. Parker read a proposed proclamation as follows:



*MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF PICTOU
PROCLAMATION*

PIZZA DAY

WHEREAS, Pictou County is well known for its style of pizza, most particularly its “brown sauce” and locally sourced ingredients; and

WHEREAS, Pictou County has welcomed a number of immigrant families to our community who have contributed greatly to our pizza fame; and

WHEREAS, a competition between pizza makers in Pictou County is held annually in search of the “perfect slice”; and

WHEREAS, the popularity of the pizza produced by local pizzerias has created a market for customers across the province and across the country so that the frozen product is shipped throughout Canada; and

WHEREAS, the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou takes great pride in promoting the pizza made by all of our local artisans and the notoriety it has brought to our community;

NOW THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED that the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou declare May 16th as “Pizza Day” in the Municipality.

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that for 2020 Council acknowledge the contributions of the Late Alice Xiros, founder and operator of “Alice’s Pizza” who served her customers with a smile and a story for over 50 years.

DATED at Central West River, N. S. this 1st day of June, 2020.

Robert Parker, Warden
Municipality of the County of Pictou

AGREED

It was agreed that the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou declare May 16th as Pizza Day in the Municipality.

COVID-19 UP-DATE

The CAO reported that today the Municipality provided open counter service to the public. The greatest demand during the day was for landfill vouchers. The Province has announced some reopening guidelines for various sectors and they will be issuing clarifications around that. The COVID-19 numbers in Nova Scotia are trending in the right direction so as we move forward over the next few weeks, we will see what additional restrictions will lessen. The State of Emergency has been extended for another two weeks.

Warden R. Parker asked how many employees are working in the building and at home.

The CAO replied that 75% of the staff are working from the office with the remainder continuing to work from home with intermittent trips to the office to complete certain tasks. Counter service at present includes payment of taxes and landfill vouchers. As much as possible we are encouraging payments on-line or by mail and the majority of landfill vouchers are being sent by mail to lessen the amount of public in the building at one time. With social distancing in mind, space at the finance counter is limited to 2 customers; a maximum of 5 customers are permitted in the lobby area and beyond that customers are asked to wait in their vehicles. Appropriate signage has been placed in public spaces and the area is being monitored internally.

Clr. D. Parker reported having visited the office this morning and complimented staff on their efforts to maintain social distancing and still maintain a level of service to the public.

Clr. Wadden asked if the landfill site was open for anyone who wants to take garbage.

The CAO reported that the site was never closed, although the public was discouraged from travelling there for a time and Saturday hours were cancelled. The Manager anticipates resuming Saturday service this week.

Deputy Warden Murray asked about the fire ban and the Communications Officer advised that the Department of Lands & Forestry website is updated every day at 2 pm; presently you can burn after 7 pm until 8 am.

HIGH SPEED INTERNET PROJECT – UP-DATE

The CAO reported that one of the major accomplishments this past week was the application to the CRTC Fund which was submitted yesterday. Kevin Burley our GIS Technician has done a lot of coordination on our side. The ask to the CRTC is \$4 million and we did have the financials third party verified by someone linked to the consortium. He informed Council that on the make-ready side we are getting close and he will have a call later this week to go through the process completed. There are a couple of technical issues that the project team needs to look at for him.

Clr. Palmer asked for more information on the \$4 million ask to the CRTC.

The CAO advised that it was based on the full project but respecting the amount of money earmarked for Nova Scotia. It is based on an estimate we were given so they had to make the ask somewhat realistic.

Clr. Palmer asked if that was on the \$69 million project and the CAO replied the final net cost was \$60 million for fiber rich.

Warden R. Parker asked if we are applying for funding from the Federal Government and the CAO replied that the Universal Broadband Fund has not opened yet for applications. The CRTC only has \$750 million but the Universal Broadband has \$6 Billion so there would be more money coming as well as specific requirements with it.

Clr. Butler asked if we are on schedule for Phase 1 and the sourcing of materials that are needed to begin construction and the CAO replied that there is no indication there will be any issues with supply of materials.

RESOLUTION – MUNICIPAL GRANTS

Clr. Wadden presented a resolution to Council as follows:

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED by the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou that Council approve the payment of the following Municipal Grants:

Municipal Services:

D02	Little Hbr. Walking & Bicycling Soc.	\$	4,635.00	Viewer Machine
D02	Woodburn Cemetery		3,000.00	Headstone & Grounds Mtnc. & Repairs
D05	Lyon's Brook Hall Society		<u>11,000.00</u>	Upgrades to Washrooms & Roof Replacement
		\$	18,635.00	

DATED at Little Harbour, N.S. this 1st day of June, 2020.

(Sgd.) Deborah Wadden
Wayne Murray

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Deputy Warden Murray that the preceding resolution be adopted as presented.

Motion carried.

CHAIR

At the request of Warden R. Parker, Deputy Warden Murray assumed the Chair.

RESOLUTION – TAX FINANCING PLAN POLICY

Clr. Thompson presented a resolution to Council as follows:

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED by the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou that Council adopt the following policy implementing a COVID-19 Property Tax Financing Plan:

POLICY #2002-06-55



**MUNICIPALITY of the COUNTY of PICTOU
COVID-19 PROPERTY TAX FINANCING PLAN POLICY**

1. This Policy is entitled the “COVID-19 Property Tax Financing Program Policy.”
2. **Objective:**
Municipality of Pictou County is concerned about the health and safety of residents and recognizes that facilitating the payment of property taxes in installments will better allow Nova Scotians to follow the public health directives endorsed by the Government of Nova Scotia. This Policy responds to that need by establishing a one-time property tax installment payment program (the “Program”) for owners of residential and commercial properties negatively affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic.
3. **Authority:**
Sections 111 and 112 of the *Municipal Government Act* give Council the authority to provide for the payment of taxes by installments.
Section 113 of the *Municipal Government Act* allows Council to charge interest for non-payment of taxes when due, at a rate determined by policy.
4. **Scope:**
4.1 **Residential**

The following owners of residential property are eligible to participate in the Program:

4.1.1 An owner of a residential property that is the owner's primary residence including secondary cottage/summer home where the owner has experienced financial hardship through a significant reduction in income due to the State of Emergency declared by the Government of Nova Scotia in response to COVID-19, demonstrated through receipt of Provincial or Federal program assistance, or a Record of Employment (ROE) demonstrating layoff from employment after **March 15, 2020**;

4.1.2 An owner of a residential property where the owner was a registered Tourism Operator with Tourism Nova Scotia for the 2019 tourist season (excluding AirBNBs);

4.1.3 An owner of a residential property that is rented to one or more tenants, where the owner has experienced a significant reduction in rental income from the property due to the State of Emergency, demonstrated through the following:

a.) Provision of a signed document that includes the total rental income received for the month of February 2020 for that specific property and the total rental income received for each of April, May and June (if June rent is due prior to making the application) of 2020 for the same property and that the rental income proves to have decreased by at least 30% for any two consecutive months as compared to February 2020.

4.2 Commercial

The following owners of commercial property are eligible to participate in the Program:

4.2.1 An owner of a taxable commercial property where the owner's business or building located on the property has experienced financial hardship through loss of revenue related to the State of Emergency, demonstrated through the following:

a.) Where a property has a total taxable commercial 2020 assessment value equal to or less than \$500000 as determined by PVSC on the 2020 Assessment roll.

b.) Provision of a signed document that includes the total revenue for the specific business operated from the property for April and May of 2019 and the total revenue for April and May of 2020 for the same business and that the total revenue proves to have decreased by at least 30% from 2019 to 2020.

4.2.2 An owner of a taxable commercial property who has experienced financial hardship through loss of revenue related to the State of Emergency, regardless of the assessed value, where:

4.2.2.1 The owner of the property is a tourism operator registered under the *Tourist Accommodations Registration Act* and the property is used for tourist accommodations (e.g., hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts);

4.2.2.2 The owner of the property carries on the business of an automotive or leisure/recreational vehicle dealership on the property;

4.2.2.3 The owner of the property uses the property as a private or non-profit recreation facility (e.g., golf courses, indoor playgrounds, campgrounds, racing venues);

4.2.2.4 The owner of the property carries on a business on the property in the hospitality industry, including bars, cafes, and coffee shops;

4.2.2.5 The owner of the property carries on a business on the property in the service industry, including hairdressers, nail salons, gyms, tattoo parlours;

4.2.2.6 The owner of the property carries on a business on the property as a health care provider (including, but not limited to, dentists, naturopaths, chiropractors, physiotherapists, physicians and other doctors), where that business has been required to reduce hours as a result of the State of Emergency.

4.3 Exclusions

Regardless of sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this policy, the following are not eligible to participate in the Program:

4.3.1 Property owners who have not experienced financial hardship through loss of revenue related to the State of Emergency;

4.3.2 Property owners who have received compensation from Business Interruption Insurance

towards the payment of property taxes;

4.3.3 Properties occupied by daycare centers in receipt of federal or provincial funding, or those

in receipt of other emergency funding;

4.3.4 Properties used for landfill, pipeline, parking, and vacant land;

4.3.5 Properties for which there is an active tax agreement with the Municipality through legislation or bylaw;

4.3.6 Properties owned by non-profit organizations that are funded by the Municipality or that are partially exempted from property tax;

4.3.7 All properties managed under payment-in lieu-programs.

4.4 General Requirements

4.4.1 Installments shall be payable by the person, company or other entity assessed for the property for the current fiscal year.

4.4.2 In order for taxes for a property to qualify for the Program, the taxes for the property must not be in arrears at the time of application.

4.5 Application:

4.5.1 Property owners wishing to apply to participate in the Program for a property must

complete and submit to the Municipality an application in the form attached as Schedule “A” to this policy.

4.4.3 The application deadline to participate in the Program is **July 15th, 2020**

5. **Administration**

5.1 Tax Installments

5.1.1 For applications meeting the Program criteria set out above, property tax payments normally due between April 1st, 2020 and October 15th, 2020 for approved properties may be paid in installments as follows.

5.1.2 For each property, Program participants will pay tax installments as follows:

5.1.2.1 Payments of \$25 per month for six months, payable on or before the last day of each month, commencing October 2020. The initial payments will be credited towards interest and administration fees.

5.1.2.2 Following these six months at \$25 per month, monthly payments equal to 1/24th of the balance of the amount eligible for the Program plus interest as set out by the Municipality for up to the next 24 months.

5.1.3 The rate of interest for the Program will be 1.35% per annum.

5.1.4 Interest will be calculated from the tax bill due date to the end of the tax installment payment period.

5.1.5 Tax installments are on the first business day of the month by automatic withdrawal. Applicants must provide banking information for automatic withdrawal to qualify for the program.

5.2 **Terms of the Program**

5.2.1 The Treasurer, or his or her delegate, shall approve qualifying applicants.

5.2.2 Payments under the Program must remain in good standing with the municipality throughout the duration of the Program.

5.2.3 Default in payment of an installment when due will result in the following:

5.2.3.1 The balance of outstanding taxes on the applicable property and interest will become immediately due and payable; and

5.2.3.2 The outstanding taxes and interest then owing will become subject to the municipality's regular rate of interest for overdue taxes of 12% per annum.

5.2.4 All amounts owing and payable on the property tax account that are not included in the Program are due on their normal dates and any amounts not paid when due will be subject to the municipality's regular rate of interest for overdue taxes of 12% per annum.

5.2.5 Payments received by the municipality from a property owner will first be applied to any installments due under the Program, in priority to any other taxes or other amounts owing by the owner to the municipality.

5.2.6 Payments are deemed to be paid on the date received by the Municipality.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Council will provide a Covid-19 Property Tax Financing Plan Policy and make any amendments required for the effective and efficient operation of the Program.

6.2 The Chief Administrative Officer will:

6.2.1 Administer and implement the policy and the Program; and

6.2.2 Identify necessary amendments to this policy in consultation with Council and staff and make recommendations accordingly to Council.

DATED at Plymouth, NS this 1st day of June, 2020.

(Sgd.) Andy Thompson
Randy Palmer

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Thompson and seconded by Clr. Palmer that the preceding resolution be adopted as presented.

Warden R. Parker reported that he was concerned under the taxable commercial property where the policy refers to 2 different groups. The first group includes a property that has a total taxable commercial 2020 assessment value equal to or less than \$500,000. The second group includes an owner of a taxable commercial property who has experienced financial hardship through loss of revenue related to the State of Emergency, regardless of the assessed value. He pointed out if that resource industry is assessed over \$500,000 then they don't qualify. There is nothing that says you have suffered revenue loss. If you prove you were negatively affected by COVID-19 you should have a chance to provide that information.

The CAO explained that when the analysis was done on the property accounts the \$500,000 captured 90% of all properties on the commercial side. He does not believe there were any resource properties over the \$500,000 limit in the commercial listings. He informed Council that we could just eliminate the assess value limit if that is Council's wishes.

Warden R. Parker reported that would allow the administrator to adjudicate those businesses so eliminating the \$500,000 threshold would allow them to fit in somewhere.

AMENDMENT

It was moved by Warden R. Parker and seconded by Clr. Boyles that the Tax Financing Plan Policy be amended to eliminate the \$500,000 threshold under the taxable commercial property.

Clr. Wadden asked why the threshold was used in the draft document

The CAO replied that the model policy developed by the AMA and NSFM had a threshold of \$5 million but we did not have many properties at that threshold so that is why we brought it down to a number that captured the majority of properties. These commercial properties had to be negatively impacted by COVID-19.

Warden R. Parker reported that a number of our sawmills were not able to open up because they could not get staffing so these were COVID 19 disruptions to their revenue.

The motion to amend carried.

The motion, as amended, carried. (Nay Vote: Clr. D. Parker)

CHAIR

Warden R. Parker assumed the Chair

RESOLUTION – COVID-19 POLICY RENEWAL

Deputy Warden Murray presented a resolution to Council as follows:

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED by the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou that Council adopt the following policy with respect to COVID-19:

POLICY #2020-06-54



MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF PICTOU COVID-19 POLICY

1) Purpose

- a) To provide direction and alter administrative provisions of certain municipal policies enacted by the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou.

2) Policy statements

- a) The following changes to policy are hereby enacted in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:
 - i) POLICY #2001-07-08 MUNICIPAL VEHICLES: All sections pertaining to staff use of vehicles are hereby suspended, until otherwise directed by the Chief Administrative Officer.
 - ii) POLICY # 2017-01-44 LANDFILL VOUCHER PROGRAM POLICY: Section 2 is hereby amended to state that Vouchers shall be made available during the period of June 1st through November 30 of the fiscal year.
 - iii) POLICY #2019-05-52 MUNICIPAL SERVICES GRANT POLICY: Section 6 (a)-(d) Ratepayer Meeting Requirements are hereby suspended for the duration of Order of the Chief Medical Officer for Nova Scotia as amended limiting gatherings to no more five (5) persons; Section 7 (a) Financial Statements shall be amended in accordance with the following policy statements;
 - (1) The following terms shall now be applied to the Municipal Services Grant Policy:
 - (a) A Councillor may receive applications via email at any point from qualified applicants.

- (b) The Councillor shall make a recommendation to a Committee of the Whole for the Municipal Council the amount of grant that an organization shall receive.
 - (c) The Municipality shall advertise on its website the new process for approval of Municipal Services Grants.
 - (d) A Municipal Councillor may contact any group to determine if they have any requirements for a Municipal Services Grant.
 - (e) Prior to payment of a municipal services grant a copy of the most recent financial statements of the organization shall be provided to the Administration of the Municipality.
- d) The aforementioned policy amendments shall remain in effect until September 30, 2020 unless repealed by Municipal Council at an earlier date.
 - e) This policy may be extended and or amended by the Municipal Council at a duly called meeting of the Municipal Council.

3) **Repeal**

All former policies with respect to COVID-19 are hereby repealed.

DATED at Hardwood Hill, NS this 1st day of June, 2020.

(Sgd.) Wayne Murray
Darla MacKeil

MOTION

It was moved by Deputy Warden Murray and seconded by Clr. MacKeil that the preceding resolution be adopted as presented.

Clr. Turner asked when we could send this message out to residents and the Communications Officer replied she was waiting for this resolution tonight so she will speak with the CAO tomorrow about the best way of sharing the information with the public.

The CAO reported there will be an online portal customized to the County and we will offer residents the ability to submit by other means than electronic.

Motion carried.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS/ELECTRONIC VOTING – UP-DATE

The CAO reported that NSFM continues to raise concerns with the impending municipal elections; however, the Province, at present, is maintaining that elections will move forward. The Minister has indicated that if we get into September and the second wave of COVID-19 occurs then the Chief Medical Officer may suspend the elections. Municipal units are concerned that by September units will have invested a significant amount of dollars in the election process. Last week municipalities participated in a conference call with the provider of E-voting services chosen by Halifax. Moving forward most people in this area are familiar with it since it was used 4 years ago with our 2016 election. We looked at a number of issues around the election and uncertainty of where we may be in the fall. The social distancing may still be in place so we will require additional staff to ensure that is taking place. The electronic side with E-voting is that it is convenient and voter fraud is extremely rare in Canada and there have been no threats about tampering.

Warden R. Parker asked do we have a cost and the CAO replied our cost for the electronic side would be \$34,000 and that is based on the Intelivote platform.

The CAO advised that the Returning Officer is recommending a full electronic election as the only way to mitigate all of the social distancing issues and ensure the safety of the electors. There would be issues with long-term care facilities which would need to be addressed through the use of mobile polls.

Warden R. Parker asked if there would be cost savings if we do not have polling stations and the CAO replied there would be considerable savings with polling costs. The CAO reported that we would still require some staff. At the moment 4 of the 5 towns are seeking election services from the Municipality and there is a possibility that the remaining town may also be seeking services. The cost to this Municipality for the Intelivote platform is \$34,000. Each of the towns would have their own costs for the platform based on their number of electors. All other costs would be shared among the participating unites.

CHAIR

At the request of the Warden, the Deputy Warden assumed the Chair.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. D. Parker that Council authorize the full use of electronic and telephone voting for the 2020 municipal election.

Clr. Boyles reported he has residents in his area that like paper ballots but he does not want to send the message that COVID-19 is still going to be around by that time.

Clr. MacKeil reported there is something special on Election Day of going to the poll and voting but things are different this year so we have to keep everyone safe.

Clr. Butler reported the people who are most vulnerable are seniors and they would feel more comfortable that we have selected this option.

Clr. Dewar reported this year he will be voting for the safety of residents in his area by going with electronic voting.

Motion Carried. (Nay Vote: Clr. Boyles)

CHAIR

Warden R. Parker assumed the Chair

SPEEDING ON THREE BROOKS ROAD

Clr, MacKeil reported she brought this issue to Council last year and was disappointed they could not put up a digital speed sign on the Three Brooks Road. She has received many calls and there have been 4 pets killed in the last 2 weeks. She called the RCMP and made a complaint on behalf of residents but has not heard back. She informed Council that the CAO also sent an email to the RCMP so she hopes to receive a callback soon. She told the residents she would bring this issue up this evening and looks forward to having a discussion with the RCMP.

Warden R. Parker asked if there is speeding on Hwy 6 as well and Clr. MacKeil replied that people need to slow down but she has not received complaints from other areas.

Warden R. Parker commented we could bring the issue forward to the Police Advisory Board but a lot has to do with education.

Clr. Boyles reported that he had the same problem so he called the RCMP and they went out on patrol and they were a great help.

Clr. Thompson pointed out speeding has always been a problem and he sent an email to the RCMP and they are looking into the issue in his area.

Clr. Wadden asked where the speed signs are going this summer and the CAO replied he does not know if they were in every area last year. The CAO asked Councillors to submit requests if they are looking for a sign this year.

Deputy Warden Murray asked if they could do a trial with speed signs on the Three Brooks Road and the CAO replied it is a provincial policy but he will ask.

Clr. Palmer reported that we should not go to the province because they have strict guidelines in place.

Clr. Thompson informed Council that he requested a speed survey of his area about 10 years ago and then used that data with the Provincial Traffic Authority to successfully lobby for a reduction in the speed limit.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTIONS

Clr. Boyles referred to the intersection at Abercrombie where there are no markings on the road and there was almost an accident there the other night.

The CAO reported he will send an email tonight to the Area Manager for TIR about that issue.

Warden R. Parker reported that there may be Federal infrastructure money available for projects ready to go so this would be a good infrastructure project to get started.

Warden R. Parker informed Council the COO of the Wellness Center made the Governing Board aware that the Wellness Center will be staying closed until July or August. They are afraid of getting mixed messaging because the YMCA is going to be opening up their Day Care so this may confused people thinking the Wellness Center is opening. The costs are being trimmed as much as they can so there is no heat in the pool or ice in the rinks.

Warden R. Parker reported that he received an email today regarding the Graduates of 2020 and they are looking for ways Council can help. The Mayor of New Glasgow suggested a write up on Facebook from the County and a banner congratulating the students. He asked Councillors if they have any ideas you can send them to the Communications Officer.

Clr. Palmer asked if Council have a get a copy of the financials from the Wellness Center and Warden R. Parker replied that should not be a problem.

The CAO informed Council that he will send them that information.

ADJOURN

It was moved by Deputy Warden Murray and seconded by Clr. Boyles that the meeting adjourn. Motion carried. (8:57 p.m.)

WARDEN

MUNICIPAL CLERK