

June 15, 2020

The Committee of Council as a Whole for the Municipality of the County of Pictou met by teleconference/videoconference on Monday, June 15, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Wayne Murray, Deputy Warden
Don Butler
Darla MacKeil
David Parker
Peter Boyles
Andy Thompson

Robert Parker, Warden, Vice-Chair
Deborah Wadden
Ronald Baillie
Larry Turner
Randy Palmer
Chester Dewar

ABSENT

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

AGENDA

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

Motion carried.

MINUTES

It was moved by Clr. Butler and seconded by Clr. MacKeil that the minutes of June 8, 2020 be approved as circulated.

Motion carried.

COVID-19 - UPDATE

The CAO reported that the administrative office has now been open for two weeks and is receiving a steady flow of traffic, with no real operational issues to date. The REMO group continues to work with the not-for-profit sector on their re-opening plans. Unrelated to COVID-19, there was a hurricane briefing; approximately 5 – 6 significant storms are predicted to hit Atlantic Canada this year. The COVID-19 numbers in Nova Scotia continue to be trending in a positive direction and reporting procedures have been changed to reflect residency, rather than the location where the testing was completed.

RURAL INTERNET UPDATE

The CAO reported nothing significant has changed from last week and they are still working through the Bell process which is now 98% validated.

Warden R. Parker asked are we still on target to see construction begin by July 15th and the CAO replied that he does foresee anything that would delay that date. A final review of the Ring 8 design is underway and information on that design will be sent to the Warden, Deputy Warden and Clr. Turner to ensure that there are no glaring anomalies.

Clr. D. Parker reported he spent some time on the phone with Emmerich, Tim, Kevin, and the CAO regarding issues in his district and thanked the CAO for arranging for the opportunity to have input.

The CAO reported having attended a virtual conference last week on rural broadband issues. And it is apparent that our issues are not unique to Pictou County as many municipalities struggle to serve or improve service to their residents.

MOTION - BUILDING INSPECTION REPORT

It was moved by Clr. Palmer and seconded by Clr. Boyles that the report of the Building Inspector for the month of May be approved as circulated.

Motion carried.

MOTION – RECREATION REPORT

It was moved by Clr. D. Parker and seconded by Clr. Palmer that the report of the Recreation Department for the month of May be approved as circulated.

Warden R. Parker asked if we could have the recreation coordinator online with us at one of our future meetings so we could ask some questions and review where we are at with the Recreation Strategy.

Motion carried.

MOTION – COMMUNICATION REPORT

It was moved by Clr. Butler and seconded by Clr. Thompson that the report of the Communications Officer for the month of May be approved as circulated.

Motion carried.

MOTION – WARDEN’S REPORTS

It was moved by Clr. Turner and seconded by Clr. MacKeil that the reports of the Warden for the months of April & May be approved as circulated.

Clr. Turner asked for an update on the April report regarding the meeting with the MLA’s and Warden R. Parker replied that it was at a time when we were trying to move Develop Nova Scotia on the Rural Internet Project. During those discussions the MLA’s were in agreement that the County was not being treated fairly with the denial of funding by Develop Nova Scotia and they did meet with Minister MacLellan but were not successful in changing his mind on the “arm’s length” approach of Government from DNS.

Clr. Wadden referred to the fire study in the May report and she asked Warden R. Parker who he was speaking with regarding the study and the Warden R. Parker replied that they were internal discussions with the CAO and Deputy Warden Murray about ways to move the process along. Warden R. Parker pointed out there is a certain expectancy to have that report from the consultants but it is taking too long.

Clr. Wadden asked if there was any feedback from Fire Chiefs on the document that was just delivered to them and Warden R. Parker replied there were some concerns from the Caribou Fire Chief.

Clr. D. Parker asked about the discussions with the CEO of the REN in the April report and the Warden R. Parker replied that there were things that were supposed to happen related to the forestry sector that were put aside as a result of COVID-19.

Clr. D. Parker commented businesses are down because of the mill closure and Warden R. Parker replied that we have to get the Provincial Government to find alternative markets for the wood.

Clr. Turner reported he sent out the strategic plan for the REN so he would like to have the CEO of the REN on a future agenda to review that Plan with Council.

Warden R. Parker reported he was speaking with the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia in late April regarding the COVID-19. He was very interested in our internet project and the telephone call was very much appreciated.

Motion carried.

MOTION – ACCOUNTS PAID

It was moved by Clr. Palmer and seconded by Clr. MacKeil that the list of Accounts Paid for the month of May be approved as circulated.

Motion carried.

2020/21 WATER UTILITY BUDGET

The CAO reviewed with the Committee the proposed Water Utility Budget showing total expenditures of \$455,295.

MOTION

It was moved by Warden R. Parker and seconded by Clr. Thompson that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve the Water Utility Budget for 2020/21.

Clr. Wadden asked what is private fire protection and the Deputy Municipal Treasurer replied that is our own fire protection charge.

The CAO informed the Committee that our water rates will be expiring so we will be monitoring the accumulated deficit to ensure it is trending downwards in the event that another rate study is necessary in anticipation of a future rate increase with the UARB. Typically, you would want to eliminate any accumulated deficit over a 5 – 7 year period. Rate increases for the past 3 years have started a downward trend.

Clr. Wadden referred to the maintenance of hydrants and asked if we are flushing regularly.

The Deputy Municipal Treasurer reported that Public Works staff have advised that flushing in the Municipality will occur once all of the Towns who supply water to the Municipality have finished their own flushing programs.

Motion carried.

2020/21 HYDRANT FEE BUDGET

The CAO reviewed with the Committee proposed hydrant fees for 2020/21 which are unchanged from the prior year.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. D. Parker and seconded by Clr. Thompson that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve the Hydrant Fees for 2020/21 as follows:

	Per \$100 Assessment	Flat
Residential Fee	\$	\$ 260.00
Commercial Fee	0.0040	
Institutional Fee	0.0044	

Motion carried.

2020/21 SEWER USER BUDGET

The CAO reviewed with Committee members the proposed Sewer Maintenance Fee for 2020/21 which is unchanged from the prior year.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Thompson and seconded by Warden R. Parker that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve a Sewer Maintenance Fee of \$303.00 for 2020/21.

Motion carried.

COMMUNITY GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee reviewed a summary of the recommendations from the Community Grants Review Committee on applications for municipal funding. Total funds requested were \$625,186 and the Committee is recommending approval of \$422,499.00 for inclusion in the General Operating Budget.

Clr. Boyles referred to the grant for LORDA and pointed out that there are issues around a private family camp which is part of the LORDA property and thereby is exempted from taxation by the Municipality which is unfair to other camp owners. He also expressed concern with legal issues that have been brought to the Board by the property owners lawyer which jeopardize the viability of the park and made him anxious about investing large amounts of money in the park at this time.

Clr. D. Parker reported that while he no longer sits on the Board of Directors, he is in contact with some of the family and it is his understanding that the daughter of the owner has been using the camp. While there have been some threats and deadlines from the a lawyer, in recent weeks there has been cordial relations between the family and the Board and the park is open but only under the COVID-19 regulations; some maple syrup harvesting did occur, the campgrounds is ready to be opened and 3 students have been hired to assist with operations. He noted that Dave Leese Sr. has been quite ill and it has been a difficult situation but he no longer seems to be active in the running of the Park. Clr. Parker advised that the Review Committee is cognizant of issues relating to the park and is not recommending that the full request of \$10,000 for operating expenses be granted. Instead, the Committee is recommending \$8,000

with 50% to be paid out upon approval and the remainder to be paid out following receipt of a report at the end of July providing an operational and financial update.

Clr. Boyles acknowledged that without the funds from the Municipality the Park would not be viable, nevertheless he did have concerns over the lack of taxation on the private camp and the potential for the family to take back control of the park at any time. Over the years the County has essentially been the sole provider to LORDA and he felt that it was important that we be accountable to our taxpayers.

Clr. Boyles also expressed concern that Clr. D. Parker who has resigned from the Board seems to know more about what is going on with the park than the Board itself.

Clr. Butler asked about the 40% contribution to the Sutherland's River & District Community Association and the CAO replied the maximum we can give is 40% of the request according to our Policy.

Clr. Butler asked about the reduction in the grant for Seniors Outreach and the CAO replied that the major factor in that recommendation is the ability to have lunch & learn events while maintaining Public Health protocols; additionally there has been a history with this organization where they have not been able to spend all of their funding in the timeframe required by our Policy.

Clr. Wadden reported that Seniors Outreach has a different operational year than the Municipality with respect to the dispersal of funds. She emphasized that there are also challenges with increasing food costs, the potential for a meals-on-wheels program and noted that the COVID crisis has shown that there is a definite need to provide better funding for seniors.

MOTION – SENIORS OUTREACH

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. Butler that the allocation for Seniors Outreach be increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Motion carried.

Warden R. Parker referred to the New Glasgow Farmers Market funding and clarified that the amount being recommended is \$15,000 in each of the next 3 fiscal periods, for total funding of \$45,000 towards the construction of a new building to replace the dome structure.

Clr. Wadden asked if the East River Valley Fire Department needs funding from the Municipality to secure other levels of government funding for their solar project.

The Deputy Municipal Clerk reported that sources of funding for this project include a \$10,000 request from the County and an unconfirmed amount of \$10,000 from WATTS Wind, with no other sources of government funding.

Clr. D. Parker pointed out that financial statements for the department indicate that it is in good financial standing.

Clr. Wadden pointed out that she wants all fire departments to be treated the same and not pick and choose who gets funding.

Clr. Baillie commented that what is being supported here is the solar technology that would make them more efficient and without that component in the application the Grants Committee would not be recommending funding for the department.

The Chair noted that the former Ad Hoc Energy Committee was supportive of solar energy projects and Council has allocated funding in its Capital Budget for that purpose.

Clr. MacKeil informed the Committee that the Cruise Committee still needs to be involved with projects moving forward so she would like to see the amount increased to \$3,000 to support future planning as it takes years to book ships and build itineraries.

MOTION – PICTOU COUNTY CRUISE COMMITTEE

It was moved by Clr. MacKeil and seconded by Clr. Wadden that the grant allocation for the Pictou County Cruise Committee be increased from \$1,500 to \$3,000.

Clr. Palmer asked the amount of the request from the Town of Pictou and Clr. MacKeil replied she was not sure. Clr. Palmer reported he would have no problem supporting the motion if the Town of Pictou contributed the same.

The Deputy Municipal Clerk reported that the application indicates confirmed funding of \$2,000 from the Town of Pictou, \$500 from the Museum of Industry, \$1500 from the Pictou Business & Marketing Society and \$600 from the Town of Stellarton.

Motion carried. (Nay Vote: Clr. D. Parker)

Clr. Wadden referred to the Friends of the Green Hill and asked are we funding the entire project and the Deputy Municipal Clerk replied this project is a \$20,500 project. The Deputy Municipal Clerk reported sources of revenue is \$15,000 from the Municipality and \$6,500 in fund raising.

Warden R. Parker reported they have received Municipal Services Grant funding over the last 3 years and work has already gone into this project.

Clr. Wadden reported that she was disappointed they are wanting the entire \$15,000 from the County.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. MacKeil and seconded by Clr. Palmer that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve the Community Grants with the changes approved this evening.

Motion carried.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES GRANTS – DIST. #11

The Committee considered several applications for Municipal Services Grants as follows:

Dist 11 East River St. Mary's Fire Dept.	\$1,500	Equipment Purchases
East River Valley Rec. Assoc.	1,000	Operating Expenses
MacDonald Rebekah Lodge #108	1,000	Operating Expenses

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Thompson and seconded by Clr. Palmer that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve Municipal Services Grants for District 11 as submitted.

Motion carried.

SUMMER RECREATION FUNDING – LISMORE & RIVER JOHN

The Deputy Municipal Clerk reported that in a normal year there would be 6 – 7 recreation programs offered in various districts within the Municipality hosted by community organizations who have secured funding from the Provincial or Federal Governments to hire students. The Municipality would typically provide of grant of \$750 to each of these organizations to assist with equipment, events, and wage subsidies. This year not all organizations received funding for students; some organizations that received funding are declining the funds and not offering programming due to COVID and social distancing requirements. Two districts (Lismore & River John) have decided to offer some virtual programming and some outdoor events where social distancing can be maintained. She asked for direction on whether or not Council wished to provide some level of financial assistance to those organizations and what would be an appropriate level of funding.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Baillie and seconded by Clr. Palmer that a recommendation be forwarded to Council to approve Summer Recreation Funding in the amount of \$750 for Lismore and River John.

Clr. Palmer pointed out this is the first year in over 45 years that the District 13 Recreation & Planning Commission has not received funding to hire students for the Thorburn area and residents are disappointed that the funding normally invested in this program by the Federal Government has been redirected to support private businesses.

Motion carried.

REFERRALS TO COMMITTEES & COUNCIL

Clr. Wadden asked that Municipal Services Grant application from the Little Harbour Community Centre be placed on the agenda for next week.

Clr. Wadden asked that a discussion on garbage collection on the Black Point Centre Road be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

Clr. Turner reported that he would like to have the CEO from the REN meet with Council at a future meeting to discuss the REN's Strategic Plan.

CLOSED SESSION

The Committee met in closed session at 8:49 p.m. to discuss matters relating to the security of municipal property and contract negotiations.

OPEN SESSION

The Committee resumed in open session at 9:17 p.m.

ADJOURN

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. MacKeil that the meeting adjourn.

Motion carried. (9:17 p.m.)

CHAIR
Brian Miller
MUNICIPAL CLERK