



Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Committee of The Whole (COTW) Meeting
Wednesday, January 20th, 2021

1. Meeting, Date & Time:

The COTW Meeting of the St. Mary's Municipal Council was called to order on Wednesday, January 20th, 2021 at 7:08pm in the Council Chambers Sherbrooke, N.S.

2. Attending:

Warden Wier	Councillor Mailman
Deputy Warden Fuller	Councillor Malloy
Councillor Baker	Councillor Zinck

Also Attending:

Marvin MacDonald, CAO
Marian Fraser, Director of Finance
Marissa Jordan, Municipal Clerk & Special Projects Coordinator
Mallory Fraser, Community Development and Recreation Coordinator

3. Additions to the Agenda:

- 8d. Staff Report- ECRL Funding Update
- 8e. 2021 Volunteer Awards

4. Approval of the Agenda:

On motion of Councillor Malloy and seconded by Deputy Warden Fuller, Council approved the agenda with the additions.

Motion approved.

5. Approval of Minutes:

On motion of Councillor Zinck and seconded by Councillor Baker, Council approved the minutes of the COTW Meeting held Wednesday, January 6th, 2021.

Motion approved.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes:

- No business arising.

7. Correspondence:

a. NS Quality of Life Survey- Joint Council Session

- Staff received a letter from the Regional Local Leadership Team for the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative proposing that Council be involved in a special joint-council session. The session's primary purpose is to create an informative and thought-provoking space for all four Councils (St. Mary's, Antigonish Town, Antigonish County and Guysborough) to explore connections to the strategic directions of their work.
- The session is part of a larger Municipal strategy of the Quality-of-Life Initiative which includes an upcoming presentation in partnership with the Department of Municipal Affairs on January 21st.
- Council agreed to participate in the session and staff will notify the representative from Engage NS.

8. Other Matters of Business:

a. Provincial Surplus Land:

- Staff received a letter on December 23rd, 2020 from Richard Burns with Prime Waterfront Developments requesting that the Municipality revoke their interest in the provincial surplus

land with PID 35231786 located at Old Ferry Road/Gegogan Ferry Road, St. Mary's River, Guysborough County. The developer would like to use it to provide access to other lots that are being developed as residential lots. Council had previously passed a motion expressing interest in the property at the December 14th Regular Council Meeting.

- Provincial departments have the first opportunity to express interest in surplus land. Staff was notified that there is a government department that has an interest in the property as well and their assessment is still under review.
- Council discussed and agreed to wait until the interested government department has made a decision.

b. Tourism Guysborough County Association- Board Member:

- Staff asked that Council discuss and appoint an elected official to the Tourism Guysborough County Association at the request of the Association. Currently CAO MacDonald sits on the board as a representative for the Municipality.
- Council discussed and agreed to appoint Councillor Baker to the Tourism Guysborough County Association.

On recommendation of Councillor Malloy seconded by Deputy Warden Fuller, Council agreed to appoint Councillor Baker to the Tourism Guysborough County Association as a board member.

Recommendation adopted.

c. Municipal Low Income Property Tax Rebate:

- Staff presented the 2021/2022 Municipal Low Income Property Tax Rebate form. The form included a \$500 increase in the "Total Annual Household Income" amount to incorporate the cost of living. The amount of the tax exemption received by the applicant would be \$110. Staff asked that Council review this form now to have it ready to put in the March 2021 newsletter.
- Council asked how many people in a household this was based on, the DOF stated that it was for the total household income for all residents. Council also asked how many people took part in the program last year, the DOF said approximately 46 people received the exemption and those applicants were also recipients of another 2021 Grant program called the Good Food Grant which allowed for applicants to receive gift cards to offset the cost of groceries.
- Council discussed and agreed to accept the form as presented.

On recommendation of Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Zinck, Council approved the 2021/2022 Municipal Low Income Property Tax Rebate Form as presented.

Recommendation adopted.

d. Staff Report- ECRL Funding Update:

- In January/February 2020 the ERCL staff informed the board of a new funding formula for the region from the province. The new funding formula resulted in an increase of funding to the ERCL of 31% or \$225,100 from the Province of NS. Before this increase, no increases in funding were provided by either the province or municipal units for several years, other than special grants for targeted projects. The funding formula is based on population.
- In 2020/2021 the increase in Provincial funding supports regional operations that are shared by and benefits all Municipal funders. Provincial and equity funding currently does not fund local library staffing.
- As part of the new funding formula proposed by the Province of NS a mandated increase to Municipal contributions was developed. This mandatory increase for Municipalities did not take effect in 2020/2021 but appears as though it will in 2021/2022.

- In addition to the new funding formula, ERCL staff are proposing that the board review the staffing expenses at each local library branch compared to the Municipal funding contributions.
 - Based on this comparison ERCL staff are proposing the following to the board:
 1. An equitable financial return on mandated contribution for all Municipal Funders.
 2. The Equity grant will be used to support regional operations that are shared by and benefit all Municipal funders.
 - The next board meeting for the ERCL is Thursday, January 21st, 2021 where service levels and equitable funding proposal will be discussed and possibly voted on by the board. If the proposal is passed there will be several items to consider:
 1. The local branch would not receive any provincial or equity funds towards local staffing.
 2. Municipality would have to pay 100% of local staffing, therefore at current funding level the following would occur:
 - a. St Mary's municipal contribution would have to increase by an estimated \$6,000 to maintain current hours at Sherbrooke Library.
- or-
- Only fund ERCL the mandated amount for 2021/2022, a budget increase of \$1,873, and have a reduction of library hours at the Sherbrooke Library.
 - Council discussed and gave direction to Councillor Baker who is the council representative on the board to vote against the proposal and in favour of only supplying the mandated amount as Council felt a portion of the equity should be considered at the local level.

e. 2021 Volunteer Awards:

- Mallory Fraser updated Council on planning for the 2021 Volunteer Awards and how COVID has had an effect on the celebration of the volunteers.
- Nomination forms will be going out to local organizations in the February Newsletter. The deadline for applicants is Friday February 12th at 4:00pm.
- The deadline to submit to the Province is Monday March 1st, 2021. The provincial celebration will virtual again this year due to COVID restrictions.

f. In Camera- Land Issues:

Mallory Fraser left the meeting at 7:54pm.

On motion of Councillor Malloy and seconded by Councillor Baker, Council moved into an in-camera session for land issues at 7:54pm.

On motion of Councillor Malloy and seconded by Councillor Baker, Council reconvened to regular session at 8:12pm.

9. Adjournment

On motion of Councillor Malloy seconded by Councillor Baker there being no further matters of business, Council adjourned at 8:12pm.

Motion approved.

Recorded By
Municipal Clerk/Special Projects Coordinator

Approved By
Warden Wier