

MINUTES OF THE VILLAGE OF PORT WILLIAMS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 20, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lewis Benedict, Debbie Graves, Andy Nette, Ernie Hovell & Kim Cogswell

IN ATTENDANCE: Brock McDougall, Carol Tanos, Geoff Muttart, Jason Stevens, Adam Griffin, Amber Rand, and Mark Grotjohn.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson, Lewis Benedict, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. REGRETS: Darlene Robertson, Joe Keddy, June Granger

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- a) It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Commission meeting of January 16, 2024, be approved. **MOTION CARRIED.** Commissioner Nette abstained from the vote.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

a) Municipality of the County of Kings:

- Building activity report for January 2024 was received from the Municipality Kings.

b) Other Correspondence:

- Environment and Climate Change - Response from Hon. Timothy Halman, Min. of Environment and Climate Change regarding Chain Lakes Wilderness Area. Letter dated January 29, 2024, expressing thanks for our interest in protecting the Chain Lakes area.
- Association of Nova Scotia Villages (ANSV) regarding Capacity Building. It was determined that the Village of Port Williams does not have enough information on the proposed addition of an administrative position to the ANSV. No salary, funding model or job description was in the correspondence.
- Apple Blossom Festival – “Passions That Bloom” competition. More information is required.

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

a) Community Centre By-law –

- The Community Centre Board of Trustees held their quarterly meeting on January 10, 2024.
- Additional feedback from the board has been added to the

- draft by-law.
 - Schedule F (Alcohol Services) – Discussion regarding the ability for an event holder to obtain a temporary license. This would allow, for example, service of table wine by a renter. The Commission directed CAO McDougall to add an amendment to that end.
 - Commissioner Hovell confirmed that the Lions do not offer catering in July and August to give their volunteers a break, but bar service continues throughout the year.
- b) Village and Water Utility Budgets – Second Reading –
- The capital project list was presented following input from the last meeting.
 - Staff recommended that the Commission take a holistic approach and consider the Village and Water Utility bank balances and the impact of planned capital projects, reserve contributions, and operational spending.
 - The Commissioners considered further reductions in capital expenditures for 2024-25 to ensure a reasonable amount of funds would be on hand to cover all projects and expenses with contingencies in place.
 - It was moved and seconded to approve the Village (\$532,021) and Water Utility (\$136,553) capital budgets and to fund all reserves: Fire Capital (\$25,000); Sewer Capital (\$25,000); Sidewalk Capital (\$25,000), Recreation (\$10,000), and general capital (\$10,000). **MOTION CARRIED.**
 - The operating budgets have been amended to reflect changes from the last meeting. The operating budget will be reviewed again as a result of amendments to the draft Capital budget and brought back to the Commission in March.
 - Proposed operational cost: In addition, the operating budgets include an expense for new accounting software. There are three major expenses associated with switching to a new accounting package:
 - Software module purchase and setup (\$16,545)
 - Annual license fees (\$2500 and \$795)
 - Auditor review following transfer of data (\$3000 to \$4000)
 - Total \$23,840 plus non-refundable HST (\$1023)
 - Benefits of new accounting software:
 - Interfaces directly with water reader software for billing
 - Experience serving Villages / small municipal units.
 - Create any report from the database.

- Store copies of invoices and attach to entry
- Batch posting
- Automatically calculate and post interest
- Will store historic SAGE data.
- Modules can be added (e.g. for recreation facility bookings or public works inventories)
- Can add users with read only access.

6. REPORTS

a) **Municipal Councilor** – sent regrets

b) **Fire Department** – Chief Jason Stevens reported:

- Training will continue through the winter months.
- The Fire Department will conduct a 'lessons learned' session to gain some insight regarding a recent structure fire.
- The Fire Department is currently engaged in future planning which will help them envision where the department needs to be to support the changes in our community.

c) **Public Works** – Superintendent Joe Keddy reported in writing:

- **Operations**
 - Water & sewer inspections
 - Meter readings started.
 - Water and wastewater building maintenance.
 - Helping with High Street service locates
 - Water leak repaired and isolated on Hwy 358
 - Water turned off at former Shur-gain.
 - Follow-up on unpaid accounts
- **Alarms:** None
- **Meetings and Training**
 - Collins road zoom meeting
 - High Street zoom meeting.
 - GIS zoom meeting. As a sidebar, it was suggested that the GIS be updated, and the PW Operator be trained on this system.
 - Met with NSP to ask if we can use existing power poles in the parking lot to run back-up power from existing generator to the public works building.
- **Public Works General:**
 - Regular duties and general maintenance on buildings.
 - Working on budgets and shop inventory.
 - Working on trail and field drainage (Ditching). Email to DPW requesting a meeting.
 - Trail map, with the county kings.

- Clearing snow and salting.
- Work truck in for repairs.
- Meeting with contractor Feb15 to go over repairs to fire dept floor, window ledge & planter box.
- Working on clearing trees and brush so NSP can run a new line to the ballfield light building. New service installed.
- Scoped water and sewer services for NSP, new pole install on Belcher.

d) **Recreation and Community Development** – Brock McDougall reported.

Events/Programming:

- No upcoming events or changes in ongoing programming since January

Facilities:

- The exterior Community Centre lights have been repaired. We are being reimbursed the cost of the lights for the period without service.
- Staff are reviewing how we apply field usage fees to ensure rules are applied fairly and meet the Recreation Facility By-law. In some cases, fees have been lower than prescribed and are greatly outpaced by the rising cost of labour, fuel, line paint, electricity, and other costs associated with the maintenance and operation of the facilities. Some intended changes in current practice are:
 - Collecting fees at the beginning of the season
 - Charging for all bookings for all user groups (unless a program of Village Recreation)
- Staff are reviewing how we schedule/book the community center along with the ongoing review of the Community Centre By-law. The intention is to ensure the use of the facility is equitable and sustainable, while keeping the needs of the Village rate payers as a top priority. Some of the matters being considered are: Exceptional bookings and fee structures, continuous bookings versus single event bookings, and weekend staffing.

Personnel:

- The position of Recreation Coordinator has been offered to Nichole Gilbert who has accepted the position. Nichole will start with the Village in April.

Other business:

- Request to open the old reservoir pond for skating – after discussion it was determined by consensus that due to the cost of maintaining the pond, the need for work at the existing skating pond, plus the additional liability, that this request would be declined.

e) **CAO/Clerk Report** – Brock McDougall reported:

I. **High Street Project Update**

- Funding: The change request was approved by Infrastructure Canada. We have proceeded with the engineering (pre-design) as approved in January.
- The status of the stormwater system is still undetermined. We continue to work with NS Public Works on a resolution and maintain that NSPW is responsible for any stormwater systems within their roads.

II. **SAG Development Update**

- The SAG development that was approved by Municipal Council, has been appealed to the UARB (Three submissions).
- A public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, May 8th, at 10:00am, in Council Chambers, followed by an evening session that same day, with time allowed May 9th and 10th if required.

f) **Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee** – Commissioner Andrew Nette reported:

- Grant funding – currently reviewing available funding for improvements that could provide additional accessibility or upgrading of existing features.
- Working in collaboration with the Lions Club to make the Lions Community Park on Church Street more accessible.

7. FINANCIAL REPORT:

- a) A written report of the previous month's financial activities was distributed.
- b) It was moved and seconded that the Commission approve the Village General Operating and Water Utility financial statements for January 2024, as submitted. **MOTION CARRIED**

- c) It was moved and seconded to approve the capital purchase of bulk water meters for the 2023-24 fiscal year. **MOTION CARRIED**
- d) It was moved and seconded to approve \$3.78 to the Port Williams Women’s Institute for expenses related to their Planters Monument. **MOTION CARRIED**
- e) It was moved and seconded to approve two hospitality expenses incurred; \$39.98 for refreshments related to the February 9th funding announcement and \$25.49 for a meal expense **MOTION CARRIED**
- f) CAO McDougall suggested that the Commission consider approving a policy amendment that would permit a limited number / fixed value of hospitality expenses to be incurred without prior approval for instances where such expense may be necessary on short notice. For example, refreshments for dignitaries attending the Village as was the case for the recent joint federal-provincial funding announcement. The Commission directed CAO McDougall to provide a draft amendment to the Hospitality Policy for their review.

8. NEW BUSINESS:

- a) **Tax rate inquiry** – CAO McDougall indicated that a request was received from the public asking that the Village consider applying separate inside and outside rates for taxation purposes. Currently there is one rate for all Village residents (36 cents per \$100 of assessment). The Commissioners received a summary of Villages in Kings County, including their rates and whether there were multiple rates used (some for example have a specific fire protection rate).
 - It was noted that there were different inside / outside rates in the past, but for many years there has been one rate for all rate payers in the Village. Further, reducing the rate for those outside the core would require an increase in rate for those inside.
 - The Commissioners discussed that many of the services offered by the Village are available for all members of the community, regardless of whether they reside within the Village core. For example, all Village residents have access to parks, trails, preferred rates at the Community Centre, recreation programming, sidewalks, and fire protection. Services only accessible in the core of the Village such as sewer and water are paid for by separate rates only applied to those who use the services.
 - The Commissioners agreed by consensus that tax rates would not be considered for review at this time.

A motion to move *in camera* for matters of personnel and contracts was made at 8:59 pm. **MOTION CARRIED**

Meeting returned to an open session at 10:09 pm

It was moved and seconded to accept the bid made on the Collins Road sidewalk project by Sheehy Construction Limited in the amount of \$273,978 **MOTION CARRIED**

It was moved and seconded to approve a cost-of-living increase starting April 1, 2024, to all permanent staff in the amount of 3.6% in addition to contract amendments as discussed in closed session. **MOTION CARRIED**

9. ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion being made the meeting adjourned at 10:10 pm



Lewis Benedict, Chairperson



Brock McDougall, CAO/Clerk