

**MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF ARGYLE**  
**140<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Tuesday April 28, 2020**  
**Zoom 6:30 p.m.**

**Present:** Warden Danny Muise, Deputy Warden Guy Surette; Councillors Glenn Diggon, Richard Donaldson, Nicole Albright Calvin d'Entremont, Roderick Murphy Jr. and Kathy Bourque; Director of Finance Marsha D'Eon, Solicitor Real Boudreau, Chief Administrative Officer Alain Muise, and Clerk/Recorder Lori Murphy.

**Regrets:** Councillor Lucien LeBlanc

The meeting was called to order at 6:34p.m. by Deputy Warden Guy Surette

**Agenda:**

On a motion by Kathy Bourque and seconded by Glenn Diggon the agenda was approved with additions under business arising 5b

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

**Conflict of Interest Declaration**

Deputy Warden Guy Surette asked for any declarations of conflict of interest from the floor.

None declared

**Presentations**

None

**Adoption of Minutes**

Regular Council Meeting Minutes – April 14, 2020

It is moved by Danny Muise and seconded by Glenn Diggon that the April 14, 2020 minutes of the Regular Council Meeting minutes be approved as circulated.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

**Business Arising from the Minutes:**

**YMCA**

CAO Muise gave a high-level summary of the YMCA proposal. Council has received a request from the YMCA regarding a proposal to partner with a purpose to fund and support the YMCA operations over a longer term. The partnership proposal suggests a scenario where the municipalities would share in the ownership of the YMCA in its current location. A conditions assessment was completed on the current facility and there are some issues that require immediate attention. It would cost about \$1,500,000 to remedy the short term needs and about \$5,300,000 to consider an investment that refreshes and restates the YMCA facility for 10 years. Another option is a 20+ year solution which would cost \$8,400,000. The YMCA board is focused on short to medium term at that location. Currently the YMCA is closed due to COVID, which adds

complexity to their current situation. MODY decided not to enter into a partnership with the YMCA. The financial implications of COVID 19 has had severe impact on YMCA. CAO Muisse does not recommend an ownership position at this time, but council could propose a modified funding solution one that gives more clarity about how many years Council is willing to contribute and under what conditions.

Council discusses concern for overextending financially. They are briefed on the current cost to fund the YMCA and that it had increased 2 years ago (\$45,000, up from \$15,000). To put the investment in perspective, regular contributions to Mariners Center amount to \$85,000, and our entire Recreation Department budget is about \$340,000.

There is no pre-set funding formula for YMCA contributions amongst the three municipal units; traditionally, the Town was the major funder due to its downtown location and usership. Council wishes to determine what the cost would be to re-open the YMCA as is, and the CAO is going to get that information.

No decision was made by Council at this time, and the deadline to make a decision was set by the YMCA for May 5, 2020.

#### Tax deferral

CAO Muisse gave a highlight of Province NS press release for tax deferral that has just been released. The province has arranged to borrow funds on behalf of all municipalities. They have secured a total amount of \$380 million at an interest rate of 1.1%.

The amount the Province is offering represents about 35% of the tax levy across the Province. The Municipality of Argyle's portion could be up to 2 million dollars under a worst-case scenario. Council will be asked to generate a temporary borrowing resolution. This turnaround for cash is expected to be very quick.

A model policy is being crafted by AMANS to aid all municipalities that would support a payment plan for those businesses and residents affected by COVID. The policy will be brought to all municipalities very soon and each unit can alter the policy to accommodate whatever local variations they have or choose not to implement one. CAO Muisse will bring a recommended policy to Council as soon as possible.

Councillors enquire about payback period, and CAO Muisse states that municipalities would have up to three years to repay the loan. Only people affected by COVID 19 will qualify. Anyone in arrears now, with no pre-approved payment arrangement also will not qualify. Eligible taxpayers would have 6 months at nominal payments (from Aug 1 to Jan 31) and would then have a 24 month repayment period at an interest rate of 1.35-1.4%. This program will be rolled out in weeks.

#### **Appointment of Auditors**

It is moved by Nicole Albright and seconded by Richard Donaldson that Council approve the firm Grant Thornton LLP as auditors of the Municipality for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

#### **Appointment of Solicitors**

It is moved by Calvin d'Entremont and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve the firm of d'Entremont Boudreau as Solicitors of the Municipality for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

#### **Appointment of Officers**

It is moved by Kathy Bourque and seconded by Roderick Murphy Jr. that Council approve the enclosed list of appointments as Officers of the Municipality of Argyle for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

There is a discussion on the Bylaw Officers' power to issue tickets or warnings. CAO Muise explains they can, and are in the process of simplifying the process through final registration of bylaws with the Department of Justice.

#### **Membership to NSFM & FCM**

It is moved by Roderick Murphy Jr. and seconded by Richard Donaldson that Council approve its membership to NSFM and FCM for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

#### **COVID 19 update**

Most staff are working from home and some staff at the office, practicing social distancing. Office is closed to public, but we are still operating, and people can still access our services. Still running municipal operations. We have COVID hotline established. It is a REMO led initiative. Navigators for this initiative are Kim Rowley and Ginette d'Entremont. Summer day camps will not be provided the way it has been done in the past. Still committed to hiring some summer staff. Where we can hire them and where they can work safely. Cannot hire as much as we have in the past.

Deputy Warden Surette has heard from a couple of businesses that are asking where they can get support in regard to how to figure out what they may qualify for. People can reach out to set up an appointment with Municipality through out Community Development Officer Charlene Leblanc who has already assisted many businesses.

#### **Draft Budget**

CAO Muise reviewed the power point presentation attached to these minutes which provided a review of the draft budget.

The operating revenues and expenditures budgeted this year are down \$18,000 from prior years. The budgeted amount is \$8,428,900. In this budget we are assuming to maintain the residential and commercial tax rates. Draft budget is significantly impacted by the corona virus. Loan from province is not for revenue losses it is to deal with expected payment delays, thus causing cash flow problems. Every Municipality is impacted by the

corona virus and will experience a form of revenue loss. Deed Transfer taxes, investment income, and interest from taxes in arrears are expected to be reduced. When considering additional costs and revenue loss relating to COVID, we expect a \$178,000 gap. This gap has been reduced through reductions of service, including but not limited to cancellation of recreation and tourism events, and elimination of conferences for staff and elected officials.

Despite financial setbacks, this budget contemplates investments in the West Pubnico Golf Course, Musee Acadien, and investments in firefighting equipment. We are still planning a municipal election in the fall of 2020.

Taxation revenues will increase from the prior year, a net amount of \$131,000. This increase is offset by increases in mandatory contributions and services, leaving a net increase of just \$44,000.

As we have had operating surpluses in the past, saving for times like this, we propose using \$135,000 from our reserves this year.

Council is satisfied that staff has done what it can to reduce investments without significantly reducing services. They support a stable tax rate for residential and commercial, and were reminded in the discussion that Argyle residential taxes are the fifth most affordable in Nova Scotia when taking into consideration assessment, tax rate, and average family income.

Councillors understand the operating budget is presented as draft, and ask what else is needed to complete the budget. There are decisions on this agenda that will impact budget accuracy, along with other information on fire rates that we await before presenting a final. CAO Muise also informs Council that there may be more contingency built in the budget for support needed from fire departments or other organizations.

Council, based on the draft is ready to decide on an operating and commercial tax rate.

It is moved by Glenn Diggdon and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve that the commercial and residential tax rates stay the same. Residential rate of \$1.09 per every \$100 of assessment and commercial rate of \$2.27 per every \$100 of assessment.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

### **COVID 19 Decision**

#### YASTA - tax deferral request

Deputy Warden Surette reviewed the request. CAO Muise states that Municipality cannot legally approve this request, but we can give them the information for the provincial loan that was announced today.

No Motion required

#### Blue bag recycling letter

Deputy Warden Surette reviewed the request. The Land fill variance describes the relaxation of rules. CAO Muise described the concerns of Waste Check.

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded by Roderick Murphy Jr. that Council endorse the letter from Waste Check.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

#### **For Decision**

#### Kilometer & transportation allowance

Deputy Warden Surette briefly highlighted the request.

It is moved by Danny Muise and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve the KM & transportation rates to coincide with the provincial rate.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

Kathy wanted to state that councillors are not paid for mileage for travel inside our municipality.

#### West Pubnico golf club association-request for tax exemption

Deputy Warden Surette explained the request. Calvin asked if we could exempt the whole or partial amounts. CAO Muise explained that this is a new request and not related to COVID. Most of the non-profit organizations we exempt them in full. The only partial rate we have is Nakile. Taxes in arrears are not eligible for exemption. Staff will verify that they are in fact a non for profit. This amount is already in the budget.

It is moved by Calvin d'Entremont and seconded by Kathy Bourque that Council approve the West Pubnico Golf Club Association be added to the list of tax exemption properties in the MODA for full exemption.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

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#### Community Litter clean up policy

CAO Muise explained that this is a new policy

It is moved by Kathy Bourque and seconded by Glenn Diggon that Council approve the Community Litter Clean up policy as presented

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

#### EV charging station funding request

Deputy Warden Surette highlighted the request. Discussion about what EV stations we have in the Municipality and types of stations. We do not currently fund any but Tusket Ford has one. Concerns of where to put stations and cost of stations. Council agrees that this is not the time to entertain this request.

No motion required

#### Rural Internet

Deputy Warden Surette explained the request. The cost associated with the request is only relates to East Kemptville, but staff will verify what civic addresses are included in East Kemptville.

It is moved by Richard Donaldson and seconded by Danny Muise that Council approve that the Municipality support Bell's request for a letter of support and funding support for their CRTC application for federal funding for rural internet upgrades to Lower Argyle, Central Argyle, Argyle, Argyle Head and East Kemptville.

*Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)*

#### **Correspondence and for Information**

##### Airport Annual report

No action, for information

##### Blue bag recycling

No action, for information

#### **Financial Requests**

None

#### **Agenda Topics for Next Meeting/Notice of Motion**

None

#### **Question Period**

None

#### **In Camera**

None

There being no further business, it is moved by Roderick Murphy Jr. to adjourn the 140<sup>th</sup> Annual Council Meeting at 8:52p.m.

Recorder

Lori Murphy

Date Approved:

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Chairman/Warden

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Alain Muise, Chief Administrative Officer

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