



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Comeau's Hill Wharf –
reparations request

Date: October 20, 2020

VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

Background:

The Comeau's Hill and Little River Harbour Recreation Association was a longstanding owner of the Comeau's Hill Wharf. In 2017, they made the decision to dissolve the Association. With no association willing to take ownership of the wharf, the Municipality was left in an unfavorable position to respond to a stranded community asset. An executive decision was made, and Council informed of this decision in an in-camera session of council. The discussion raised the possibility of transferring the asset back into the hands of another Association in the future, but this has not yet occurred.

The ownership, effective, 2017, is in the hands of the Municipality. Since ownership is ours, so is the responsibility to ensure it is in safe and useable condition. We were made aware of damage to the wharf and investigated using our PW staff. The conclusion was that the wharf needs a replacement of the underlay and asphalt. The initial underlay left gaps in the rocks, and the water has eroded material over time. Other than that issue, the wharf is considered in excellent shape.

Historically, the Wharf in Comeau's Hill was transferred to the Municipality in 1991, and subsequently, the ownership was transferred to the community association. The wharf was federally owned previously. The wharf has seen an increase in community use since the pandemic, and is certainly a popular spot for fishing, water access and beach access. It is essentially the only beach area we have in the Municipality.

Staff obtained estimates to repair the wharf and received one from Aberdeen Paving that would both remove and replace the underlay and asphalt as explained above. The total price is \$39,300 plus HST to replace both. Another option would be to repair without asphalt paving at \$19,800. Without the asphalt we would run into the danger of losing a lot of the gravel surface over time and need to refill holes after each winter season.

MGA considerations:

As we own the property, any improvements we make to it would be considered an eligible municipal expense. There are no MGA restrictions to your investment.

Options to consider:

Do nothing: - this option maintains status quo, and MODA would ensure signs and other warnings are in place to inform residents of the hazards. This option is contrary to your motion to approve the repair in your 5-year Capital Investment Plan. Not an advisable option.

Wait until fiscal 2021-22 – Council has approved this work in fiscal 2021-22. So waiting is certainly an option worth considering. Staff brings this for your attention this year because of the opportunity exists to address it this year, and the price is likely to increase next year.

Repair now without asphalt replacement – Total cost of \$19,800, resulting in a gravel surface instead of asphalt. The useful life of this would be shorter than asphalt, and the maintenance needs higher. Furthermore, we are replacing the existing structure with a lesser quality. For these reasons, we would not recommend this option, for concern of the annual maintenance needs.

Repair now–with asphalt replacement – Total cost \$39,300 plus HST. This is an unbudgeted item and requires your approval.

CAO's Recommendation:

We would recommend the full replacement of asphalt included, and to address the repair now for the following reasons:

Price – We can recommend with some accuracy that we will not get a better price next year. Since the work does not involve wood repair or reconstruction (as wood prices are skyrocketed), there would be no reason to wait, other than it has not been budgeted in this fiscal year (though tentatively approved for next year in the 5 year plan). PW department finds the price competitive and reasonable, and with the cost being less than 50K, we do not require a full tender issue for competitive bids. We did request alternative pricing.

Ownership – if it is the intention of Council to transfer ownership back to the community, the responsible course of action is to ensure it is in working order prior to doing so. Too many times we have been forced to take ownership of assets from the provincial or federal government, along with the liability to fix it, clean it or operate it. No reasonable community group would want to accept ownership in the current condition.

Safety – We want safe and livable communities. There is a safety issue with this wharf – a wharf we know is used by the community on a regular basis. We have the opportunity to repair it top to bottom this year, significantly reducing risk of injury and increasing enjoyable use.

Suggested motion:

Move that the Comeau's Hill Wharf repair be executed in fiscal 2020-21, and the Aberdeen Paving execute the work to repair, including repaving, at a cost of \$39,300 plus HST, and that the funds be sourced from our Capital Reserve.