

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF ARGYLE
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday, May 6, 2021
Zoom, 2:30 p.m.

Present: Warden Danny Muise, Deputy Warden Nicole Albright; Councillors Glenn Diggdon, Guy Surette, Gordon Boudreau, Richard Donaldson, Ted Saulnier, Kathy Bourque, Director of Public Works Hans Pfeil, Director of Finance Marsha D'Eon, Chief Administrative Officer Alain Muise, and Municipal Clerk/Recorder Eilidh Canning.

Regrets: Councillor Calvin d'Entremont

The meeting was called to order at 2:31 p.m. by Warden Danny Muise

Agenda:

On a motion by Guy Surette and seconded by Nicole Albright the agenda was approved as circulated.

Motion Carried

Conflict of Interest Declaration

Warden Danny Muise asked for any declarations of conflict of interest from the floor.

None declared.

Presentations and/or Petitions

None.

Adoption of Minutes

None.

Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

Priorities Discussion

Eilidh Canning reviewed the attached documents (matrix explanation, and priority matrix) and explained to Council what the Tier 1 and Tier 2 priorities are for the next 12-14 months. The Tier 1 priorities include Rural Internet, Mariners Center Expansion, Mariners on Main St (captured under Mariners Center Expansion on the matrix), and The New Administration Building. The Tier 2 Priorities, which are the top three items picked by Council from a survey sent out the week of April 26, 2021 includes East Pubnico well retrofit, Trail Retrofit (Annual) and the Wedgeport Sewer. All remaining priorities from that same survey that had the least number of votes, which includes the Hipson's Bridge, JE Hatfield Paving Extension, Glenwood Volleyball / Other, Tusket Treatment Plant Assessment, Fire Ponds Retrofit and Tusket Brewery (treatment) will not be completed within the next 12-14 months unless additional resources become available.

Councillor Surette asked where the Mariners Center on Main was within the Priority matrix, and CAO Muise advised that it should be visible as a separate item on this matrix but is included within the Mariners Center Expansion Tier 1 Priority.

It is moved by Glenn Diggdon and seconded by Kathy Bourque to move forward with the 2021 priorities as identified by Staff on the Priority Matrix presented by staff and attached to this agenda.

Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Attachment 050601

Residential Rate Analysis and History

CAO Muise reviewed attachment 050602 and advised Council that the tax revenues have not matched the Municipality's cost increases. He then advised Council that if garbage, RCMP, and corrections and other similar costs that are mandatory expenses increase as they have been (by 2,3, and sometimes 4%), the current tax revenue will not cover these rising expenses.

CAO Muise then reviewed attachment 050602 and advised Council that the purpose of this information is to indicate, across the board, what the Municipality is looking at in terms of costs and are we comparable to other Municipalities? He then advised that our Municipality is comparable to others with the exception of the Municipality of Yarmouth, as they are more expensive, however the remaining Municipalities are in line.

CAO Muise then advised that this discussion is for information only, and no motion is needed.

Attachments 050602 and 050603

Operating Budget Deliberations

Director of Finance, Marsha d'Eon and CAO Muise reviewed the operating budget and advised of the below highlights:

- Total operating revenues and expenditures budgeted at \$9,125,900, an increase of \$648,000 from the prior year.

Policing Costs

- All municipalities in the RCMP provincial contract will see a 4.92% increase. This will cost Argyle \$45,300 in additional policing costs.
- Provincial education and housing costs
 - o Increase of \$47,000, as billed by the Province of NS.
- Fire and Building Inspection,
 - o Increase of \$145,000.

- Required new position for Fire Inspection training of new building inspector, funding increases to our fire departments, new costs of Workers Compensation and insurance.
- Total investment increase = \$ 237,300.

Deputy Warden Albright then asked Council how we are going to fund Yarmouth County Ground Search and Rescue. Deputy Warden Albright advised she would like to see an annual commitment, via a separate line item for Yarmouth County Ground Search and Rescue. Councillor Saulnier said he would like to see a business plan completed by Yarmouth County Ground Search and Rescue, advising Council how much they need, and for what. Councillor Diggdon agreed with Councillor Saulnier and also said he would like to do a one year contribution, in order to see what the Municipality of Argyle's partners (Municipality of Yarmouth and the Town of Yarmouth) contribute.

After some deliberation, Council agreed to make a three-year contribution via a separate line item in the budget of \$6500 to support the Yarmouth County Ground Search and Rescue.

It is moved by Nicole Albright and seconded by Richard Donaldson to create a budget line item of \$6500 for Ground Search and Rescue for the next three years under line-item Fire Protection Services.

Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Recommended Property Tax Rates

CAO reviewed The Municipality of Argyle's increasing expenses and highlighted the increasing mandatory costs within our area. These mandatory expenses include such services as policing, provincial education and housing costs.

- Council is being asked to increase commercial and residential tax rates in this draft budget by 2 cents to meet the sharp increases of operation.

Current rates are as follows:

- \$1.09 per every \$100 of assessment – approximate cost for a home valued at \$150,000 equals \$1,635 before area rates. An increase of 2 cents would result in total taxes of \$1,665 for that same property.
- Commercial rate \$2.27 per every \$100 of assessment – approximate cost for a property valued at \$150,000 equals \$3,405 before area rates. An increase of 2 cents would result in total taxes of \$3,435 for that same property.

It is moved by Guy Surette and seconded by Glenn Diggdon to raise Residential taxes by 2 cents and Commercial taxes by 2 cents as part of the 2021/2022 budget.

Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Council also wants staff to ensure there is an information slip provided with the tax bills this year that advises residents of what the increase is, along with why there is a tax increase.

Capital Budget and Gas Tax Expenditures

Council discussed the Capital Budget and Gas Tax expenditures listed by CAO Muise and the purpose of each expense via *attachment 050604*. CAO Muise advised that there will be \$4 million dollars spent on Capital projects over the next few months. Some of this money will be recuperated from Government Grants, including the New Municipal Administration building.

Attachment 050604

Approval of Capital Budget

Council and CAO Muise advised that agenda item ‘Approval of Capital Budget’ will be deferred to Thursday, May 13th’s Regular Council Meeting.

In Camera - Personnel

It is moved by Kathy Bourque and seconded by Guy Surette recess the Special Council Meeting and go In-Camera at 5:22PM.

Motion Carried (8 in favour, 0 against)

Adjournment

There being no further business, it is moved by Kathy Bourque and seconded by Danny Muise to adjourn the Special Council Meeting at 6:48 p.m.

Recorder
Eilidh Canning

Date Approved: _____

Chairman/Warden _____

Alain Muise, Chief Administrative Officer _____