

Municipality of Argyle Staff Report – March 2022

Chief Administrative Officer – Alain Muise

Return to Work:

CAO Muise shall continue to work at the office Monday, Wednesday and Thursdays until the doctor makes adjustments to the schedule, COVID being any exception to this rule. We have experienced a rather unique snow day on Monday, which highlights some of our learnings from COVID and how best to maintain support for our residents in times of inclement weather. Our leadership team is actively pursuing many avenues of positive change in a weekly meeting

Boundary Review:

This item was recently given the green light from Council, and WSP shall be engaged to handle initial public consultations, and preliminary discussions with Council on our options for number of Councillors for the community.

Budget 22-23:

CAO Muise and Director of Finance d'Eon have met with department heads, and fire departments regarding the upcoming financial needs for the 2022-23 budget. This matter is ongoing. On April 6th, we will meet with the new Director of Operations to discuss wastewater budgets, and the need for further investment. There are still a few questions on provincial funding, and our commitment to pay provincial bills, like RCMP, Corrections and Housing. The Department of Municipal Affairs is collaborating with the AMA and NSFM to develop a new Memorandum of Understanding, that shall be similar in magnitude to the service exchange agreement of 1998-99. It is why Premier Houston committed to the doubling of our fiscal capacity grant (equalization) in the previous fiscal year, and whether he would do so again this year is still an outstanding question. One way or another, expect some major changes to occur to how we pay for services and receive grants for those services.

As part of the recent budget announcements, the Provincial Government has announced a non-resident deed transfer tax, as well as a resident deed transfer tax (less in percentage) to bolster provincial funds. Getting into the deed transfer tax game is skating in our lane a bit, as this is a municipal power we have. That being said, the Province has the ability and power to do so, and it is of course our repeated request to be a part of the discussions when these items occur.

In short, we are expecting tax increases of 5.5-6% when you include the municipal portion of deed transfer tax, but there will also be large increases in service costs, with Policing services being the largest by far at over 12%. Fire Services are also expected to rise sharply, and that is in further support for our non-profit, volunteer fire departments. We expect 2-3 meetings with council to go over it in full.

Insurance

We have recently re-signed 7 of 9 fire departments to our insurance program for fire department coverage. We hold the one contract on behalf of these organizations. Over the past 2 years,

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insurance companies have described the conditions as a hard market, which essentially means that they had more claims than expected and could not recover that cost through their investments in the market. Meaning that the user will be the payor. The past 2 years have seen our premiums increase by 55-60% in property and contents, and much less in liability insurance for our firemen and women.

One of the reasons was the accident claim for a fire truck 2 years ago. Therefore the Municipality remains committed to covering any cost increases that are as a direct result of this. Our commitment shall not include the 2 fire departments who made a choice to go elsewhere, as the claim loss was incurred by the current insurer, not a new one. CAO Muise did spend considerable time on this issue in the last weeks of March to ensure a good outcome for the Municipality and will be recommending improvements to aid our departments to be appropriately covered in the future.

Mariners' Center partnership

Partnership negotiations have advanced, with a new meeting required in early April. Currently, there are no concerning issues, as all three units have a similar outlook on the regional asset. Once we have established our collective will, we will engage TMC Law to craft an agreement.

Splash Park:

Attended a meeting with CAO's and the community group about the status of the project, the status of an agreement to takeover after completion, and the roles and responsibilities of municipalities and the community group on the funding and purchases of the project assets.

Wind turbine applications:

We are currently entertaining 2 support letters for two separate wind projects in our community. Namely, Wedgeport/Comeau's Hill and Quinan/Argyle villages. We are not supporting the wind projects at this time, rather the application. Both developers shall meet with the public on this issue as part of their application. Also, it should be noted that the land owners must sign off on supporting the location as part of the application.

Affordable and Alternative Housing *Council Priority (multiyear)

No further request for information has been released yet. CAO Muise has gathered all provincially led reports on housing, including affordable housing, and will likely engage WSP to assist us in future investment.

Rural Internet – WREN *Council Priority (multiyear)

Work is ongoing, we get many questions on investments and locations. Our best advice is to go to the Develop NS web site, but that will not tell us if Bell is investing in its own fibre op in communities (not funded by government). If a more complex question is raised, we typically engage the WREN as the lead on the project (Evan Nemeth).

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Wedgeport Wastewater project

This project is on schedule, see also Operations report for more information. Draft budgeting was prepared for this community, with meetings in the current week of Council. The budget includes a projection of an additional 48-50 users in a year from now.

Tax Sale

We hosted the tax sale at the West Pubnico Legion, and sold every property listed, with a healthy tax sale surplus from the sale. It is a clear sign of a hot real estate market in our area. Also, please be reminded that each owner of these properties has 6 months to pay the outstanding taxes and costs, otherwise the bidder shall own the property.

Municipal Innovation Program

The RFP process is being taken over by the Municipality of Barrington due to timing issues around my personal health. The process was well analysed, and we did receive interested parties that will address our regional planning needs. We will contribute to this initiative rather than lead it. We have been involved in the planning and will be in the execution. Expect some costs and action in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

HOPE Dial a ride

Met with Hope (Warden Muise, CAO Muise, Dep CAO Surette) regarding their application for funding, which was supported via letter from the Warden. We will make ourselves available to assist in the application which shall be due April 7, 2022.

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer – Scott Surette

ACOA funding applications

We have received confirmation that ACOA has approved our Trails Funding applications. Further details shall be provided once the actual press release has been released by ACOA. We are currently working with Dept of Environment to complete the permit process for the Hipson Bridge applications.

Veterans Banner Project

We are working with Pubnico and Wedgeport Legions in regard to setting up a veteran's banner program for the municipality. We have established the areas that banner will be placed. Legions is working on the application process for families. The next step is to work with Nova Scotia Power to have access to the power poles.

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Community Development Officer Position

The leadership team is reviewing to the job description and should have the position posted by the end of the month.

4 Day Work Week

We know that our neighboring town and municipalities have switch to a 4-day work week. Therefore, we are currently gathering information on what it would mean for the municipality to amend staff to a 4-day work week. Office would be continuing to be open from Monday to Friday. More information will be shared in the following month.

Part Time Administrative Assistant Position

The posting closed on March 31, 2022. We had many applicants, and we will be short list applicants and setting up interviews in the next few weeks. Hoping to have someone in place for early May.

REMO Coordinator Position

The posting closed on March 18, 2022. Interviews are schedule for April 11, 2022. Hoping to have someone in the position as soon as possible as Janine retired on April 1/22 however has agreed to help if needed until we find a replacement.

Approval of Funding

The municipality was able to get funding approval from BHP which now owns the Old Tin Mine Company in East Kempt. BHP reached out to the municipality advise they have funding available through their legacy fund. We (Recreation and CAO office) put a proposal together and we were awarded funding to make improvements to the East Kempt Multi Purpose complex. The funding amount is up to \$4500 and the plan is to repaint the lines in the Multi purpose court and purchase new equipment.

By-Law Enforcement and Fire Inspection – Mitch Colburn

Dangerous or Unsightly

The arrival and approval of Special Constable is now official. This has now given me the ability to interact with the public in a more personal, positive, and productive way. We had 5 new complaints come in and we able to close out 5 pending files. We have 11 pending files with all of them presently being acted upon.

Fire Inspections

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The Fire Inspector Certification is progressing smoothly with the Home Study Program at about 75 percent complete. I will be attending the Fire Inspectors of Nova Scotia Conference the first week of May for two required courses. I will be meeting with the Deputy Fire Marshal of Nova Scotia this week to discuss the plan moving forward with Fire Inspections. I hope to start doing some Inspections as soon as possible.

Finance Department- Marsha d'Eon

Our tax sale was held on Tuesday, March 22, 2022, at the West Pubnico Legion Hall. All 21 properties brought to the sale were sold.

The 2022 Property Tax Exemption forms were mailed out and advertised last month. Forms have been consistently coming in. Deadline to apply is April 22, 2022

The Finance Department is busy working on the 2022-2023 draft budgets. The CAO and Director of Finance have been meeting with some department heads to go over their budgets and sewer & water utility subcommittee meetings have been scheduled.

HST Offset was completed and submitted to the Province by the March 21st deadline.

Preparations, adjustments, and changes are being worked on for this year's tax billing.

All services, including monthly reconciliations, accounts payable, and monthly financial reporting to staff and Council continues and is on schedule.

Archives/Courthouse - Judy Frotten

Projects for Congrès Mondial Acadien 2024 – Patchwork Pals is creating a quilt for the CMA 2024, with squares representing various Acadian organizations in the municipality. The Society has engaged local quilter, Debby Gray, to design a square for the Court House.

Trevor Murphy is also working on a project for the CMA, for which he has received funding. We have made our resources accessible to him as he conducts his research. He has been in several times earlier in March and will return in April to continue his research. Trevor is a Society member and grew up in this area. He now lives in Halifax and is a well-known musician in the Acadian music scene.

La Société Touristique Bon Temps d'Argyle – Judy attended Board meeting March 24 and will attend an in-person re-branding session @April 20th.

CSAP – Judy participated in a meeting Mar. 22nd with other partners in the region regarding development of French programming for the summer.

Tourism Nova Scotia and Events Nova Scotia – Judy attended webinar "2022 Tourism Outlook, Provincial Marketing Plans, and Industry Opportunities Confirmation: Tourism NS Webinar Series" on March 2.

Oral History Project – Judy conducted interview with Pauline Hubbard Bourque on Feb. 23, the first of what will hopefully be a series of interviews. Phil continues with his oral history interviews with Charlie and Annie Muise.

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Tusket River Reminiscing Project – This collaborative project with Francine Dulong (Blooming Ludus) resumes, after being set aside due to Covid. Judy is reaching out to potential partners, and Francine is seeking funding opportunities. Judy and Francine met virtually in March and will meet again in person later in April.

CNSA & Professional Development – Phil attended CNSA's Conference and Education committee meetings in March. He is also taking CNSA's virtual "Introduction to Archives" workshop, March 28-31, as part of their core curriculum.

ANSM – Judy attended Association of Nova Scotia Museum's Webinar on March 27/22, where they launched their new "TRACK" program, which will replace the previous provincial museum evaluation program. Judy has also accepted to join ANSM's Nominating Committee again this year.

Communities, Culture, Tourism & Heritage (CCTH) – We have received CMAP (Community Museum Assistance Program) paperwork from Dept. of CCTH. The provincial report (which combines both MODA and AMHGS financials) needs to be completed by May. Judy will also attend information sessions regarding the program.

AMHGS & Argus – Society Board meeting was Mar. 22, next meeting Apr. 19. We are working on spring issue of *The Argus*. New formatting and working around two staff vacations means anticipated delivery to members of late April.

MODA Senior Programming – We provided Ginette (Active Living) with 125 copies of *The Argus* to include with the Senior Activity Kits.

Preparing for Summer Season – Judy met with the Gift Shop Committee March 15, so preparations can be made for gift shop opening. We anticipate opening for the season in June.

Student Funding – Wrapping up summer/fall 2021: We are still awaiting final instalment from Young Canada Works – Canadian Museums Association for the remainder of last summer's funding (plus extension for fall/winter).

For summer 2022, Province of NS "SKILLS" program has advised that we have received one 14-week position for a "Heritage Interpreter." We are still waiting to hear from YCW regarding two other positions. We will start advertising the positions soon.

MODA Budget / Capital Projects – We have submitted our draft budget to MODA for 2022/23 fiscal year. The Court House needs new windows, roof and paint job. We are trying to determine which of those projects can feasibly be done in the coming year. Also, the work to connect the Court House to the Archives well is finally being done (as of Mar.27).

Research Requests – We have been receiving many more research requests than usual, these past few weeks, keeping us quite busy at the archives.

Director of Recreation Services – Natalie d'Entremont

Accessibility Plan

The final approved Plan has been sent to the Accessibility Directorate before the April 1st deadline. The Plan outlines our yearly path as to how the Municipality will become barrier-free by 2030.

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Thank you to MODA Accessibility Advisory Committee for their hard work. This has been in the making for the past two years.

Make Your Move at Work Pilot Project Update

The bingo challenge for staff was a success! 71% of the staff participated. Many have increased their movement by adding little changes to their day. The Wellness room is being used almost daily. The equipment in the wellness room was funded by the province (CCTH) as well as the prizes for these initiatives are funded by the province (CCTH). The Workplace Wellness Team has also received funding from the Municipal Wellness Grant fund from the province (AMANS) to enhance the wellness room.

Municipality of Argyle Staff has been featured on the Healthy Tomorrow Foundation Twitter and Facebook account as an exemplary workplace. This coming month, the workplace wellness lead will be interviewed and featured on their blog. We have also been asked to present to the Municipal Workplace Wellness Lunch and Learn on our Make Your Move at Work initiative.

“Gotcha Card” project: Creating an incentive for staff to increase movement throughout the day. The project ended on March 31 with many staff receiving “Gotcha Cards” to increase their day’s movement.

Active Transportation Plan refresh

I continue to work with WSP and MODA AT committee. Our next step is to have community engagement on the Active Transportation updated plan. Four Open House sessions will take place on April 25 and 26 at the Plymouth School and Drumlin Heights Consolidated School. Both schools will host 2 sessions each. One from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm and the second one from 6:00 pm to 7:30pm. Promotion of these engagement sessions begins on April 2 and will continue up to the Open Houses.

Glenwood Park Project update

We have received the agreement between the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables and the Municipality of Argyle. The Leadership Team will be taking a close look at the agreement before signing.

Adult Pickleball

Taking place at Plymouth School on Mondays from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm and on Wednesdays from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm.

Budget Planning

Ginette and I have met on several occasions to finalize the Recreation budget.

Meetings

March 2 - Workplace Wellness and Mariner Centre Expansion

March 3 –Leadership team

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March 7 – Wellness Funds celebration

March 9 – Recreation / Health Partnership

March 10 - Leadership team

March 11 - Capital Budget

March 17 – Leadership team and East Kemptville site visit

March 18 – Make Your Move Regional Pilot

March 21 – Building an inclusive sport environment

March 22 – Programmation Estivale- Region d'Argyle

March 24 – Staff Meeting

March 30 – Equity in Sport – Yarmouth Sport Hub

Director of Programming and Active Living – Ginette d'Entremont

Seniors

We created take home activity kits for seniors and gave away 70 kits in total; 47 were puzzle kits and 23 were painting kits.

We organized a free take-out ham supper at the Club Acadien in SAR on Thursday April 7th and served over 150 people. The meal was very much appreciated by the community.

PD Sessions

March 8 – MPAL's met online to discuss this year's workplan and sharing of information and ideas.

March 9 – I attended a workshop on the Principles of Healthy Aging in Bridgewater

March 23 – The MPAL's met online to discuss signage projects in our communities

Volunteers

I have been working on our Volunteer Celebrations which will take place the last week of April. We will be highlighting our volunteers on Facebook as we have done the past 2 years. Each volunteer will receive a framed certificate of appreciation as well as a gift card as a thank you for what they do.

Active Communities Fund

I have been working on putting together a grant application to the Active Communities Fund. Along with the application, it is required that I put together a one-year plan for my work. The initiatives for this year are focused on an equipment loan program, adaptive equipment and play boxes for some of our municipally owned properties.

Soccer

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I have started working on the registration for the upcoming summer soccer season as well as looking for coaches and referees. Registration should open mid-April with the season starting late May or early June.

Meetings/Webinars

February 28 – SAC Drumlin Heights

March 1 – Building relations with Primary Health Care

March 2 – Workplace wellness committee meeting

March 3 – Newsletter meeting

March 7 – Outdoor play session with Uplift

March 8 – Soccer NS meeting

March 10 – Active Transportation Stakeholders session

March 17 – Meeting with Elisabeth Bailey, the RPACT for the South Shore

March 22 – Meeting with the CSAP staff to discuss a French day camp

March 24 – CEC École Belleville

March 28 – Met with Pierre-Luc Gauthier to discuss a surf school at Port Maitland beach and Mavillette Beach

March 30 – SAC Drumlin Heights

April 5 – Workplace wellness committee meeting

April 5 – Online content committee meeting (replaces the newsletter)

April 6 – Met with Engage NS for a Deep Dive in the Quality of Life

Operational Services – Kyle Boudreau

West Pubnico Sewer Treatment Plant

Currently, all systems are functioning well, all our test results are well within the parameters set by NSDOE. There has been a 10 Hp pump breakdown at the lift station and we are rectifying this problem now. The 10 HP pump has been installed

We have corroding copper in the Auger building. We have ordered the material to rectify this and will be installed by our internal staff. This replacement has been completed

Tusket Sewer Treatment System

This plant is operating well within regulatory guidelines.

East Pubnico Water Utility

We had a power surge take out a pump on Willet Road. Luckily there are 2 wells, so we have been able to continue to serve our customers. We are looking at inline surge protection to reduce this risk in the future. We have ordered our inline surge protection for this problem and will be installed by internal staff.

Wedgeport Sewer System

Regular maintenance and pumping are being done on the existing sewers.

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Expansion of this system is currently in the design phase with tender expected to go out in coming weeks.

Facility and Field Maintenance

Snow removal season is ending. Now it is time for the field maintenance equipment to be started up and get ready for the field maintenance season.

Protection Services (Previously Property Inspection) – René Jeddry and John Sullivan

March picked up again, still receiving a high number of phone calls and emails inquiring about possible permits or building code questions. Staff issued 16 Building Permit with 5 permits pending as well, staff also issued 19 development permits (including electrical power hookups) for a total of 39 permits issued. Note: A Demolition Permit is tallied under the Building Permit numbers and the adoption of the new LUB require all development within the municipality to start with a Development Permit. Currently 4 subdivisions in progress.

Rene has been approved by the Nova Scotia Building Code Training and Certification Board to start administering and enforcing Nova Scotia Building code Act (NSBCA) and regulations within the scope of practice of his qualifications. i.e.: 1 & 2 Unit Group C Buildings, their accessory buildings and decks covered under the NSBCA Part 9.

GIS Services – Alix d'Entremont

- Regular data and civic address maintenance
- Partaking in Development/Public Works software demonstrations on Mar 1, 9 and 24
- AT Plan Review Mapping Meeting with WSP on Mar 11
- Marine Spatial Planning research meeting on Mar 16
- Aquaculture Development Area (ADA) meeting on Mar 23
- Created an update and current status document for the ADA
- Polling District Review statistics calculations and mapping
- Responded to an inquiry from Small Craft Harbour regarding civic addressing of their properties

Senior Safety Coordinator– Peggy Boudreau

New Clients: 4

Home Visits: 22

Phone Visits: 40 – 29 emails and texts from or to agency and/or caregivers

Referrals to RCMP: 1

Referrals from RCMP: 1

Referrals to Adult Protection: 0

Referrals to Home Care: 1

Referrals for Housing: 1

Town of Yarmouth Referrals: 2

High Risk Clients: 14

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Meetings and Zoom:

Zoom Senior Safety Coordinators

Virtual presentation to NSCC CCA students