



Committee of the Whole

July 7, 2020

8:30 a.m.

Via Virtual – Zoom Meeting

Agenda

1. **Approval of Agenda**

2. **Approval of Minutes**

- a. Committee of the Whole Minutes, March 3, 2020

3. **Presentations**

- a. Marilyn Keddy - Campaign to Protect Offshore Nova Scotia
- b. Fire Chief Todd Crowell – General Update
- c. Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce – Financial Support Request
- d. Dean Smith, Intelivote – Electronic Voting Security
- e. CBCL Consultants – Wolfville Flood Risk Study Overview
- f. Acadia University – Return to Campus Discussion

4. **Public Input / Question Period**

PLEASE NOTE:

- Public Participation is limited to 30 minutes
- Each Person is limited to 3 minutes and may return to speak once, for 1 minute, if time permits within the total 30-minute period
- Questions or comments are to be directed to the Chair
- Comments and questions that relate to personnel, current or potential litigation issues, or planning issues for which a public hearing has already occurred, but no decision has been made by Council, will not be answered.



5. **Committee Reports (Internal)**
 - a. Audit Committee
 - b. RCMP Advisory Board

6. **Staff Reports for Discussion**
 - a. RFD 032-2020: Payment Relief Measures - Changes

7. **CAO Report**

8. **Committee Reports (External)**
 - a. Kings Transit Authority (KTA)

9. **Public Input / Question Period**

10. **Regular Meeting Adjourned**

COMMITTEE UPDATE

Title: Audit Committee
Date: July 7, 2020
Department: Committee of the Whole



UPDATE

The Audit Committee held a meeting May 8th. The Committee reviewed the Audit Plan developed by the new auditors Grant Thornton, outlining their approach. The audit started May 25th.

Next regular meeting to be held on Friday July 10th, 2020.

COMMITTEE UPDATE

Title: RCMP Advisory Board
Date: July 7, 2020
Department: Committee of the Whole



UPDATE

The RCMP Advisory Board met June 16th. Sgt. Buckle provided the Board with his regular report. The Board welcomed Laura Fisher to her first meeting. Regular weekly meetings will be held between the University and RCMP surrounding the expectations around the return of students, the start of classes and off campus students.

Next regular meeting to be held on September 15, 2020.

REQUEST FOR DECISION 032-2020

Title: Payment Relief Measures - Changes

Date: 2020-07-07

Department: Finance



SUMMARY

Payment Relief Measures - Changes

In March 2020, Council passed a motion effectively suspending, on a temporary basis, the charging of interest on overdue receivables. This covered property taxes and water/sewer utility bills. As noted at the time, this was not intended to be a permanent change and the item would be discussed later in the fiscal year.

This Request for Decision (RFD) is being brought forward to allow Council to consider the timing of ending the period of no interest on arrears.

DRAFT MOTION:

That Council direct staff to re-establish charging interest on outstanding property tax receivables and water/sewer account receivables, as follows:

- Property Tax Receivables
 - Interest to be applied to Property Tax accounts receivable owing after September 30, 2020
 - Interest on overdue amounts to be charged at a rate of 1.00% per month
- Water/Sewer Utility Receivables
 - Interest to be applied to Water/Sewer accounts receivable owing after November 2, 2020
 - Interest on overdue amounts to be charged at the 1.5% per month in accordance with the NS Utility and Review Board approved rates

That Council direct staff to utilize water disconnections for arrears, in accordance with the regulations approved by the NS Utility and Review Board.

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1) CAO COMMENTS

The CAO supports the recommendations of staff.

2) LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- Municipal Government Act (MGA) Section 65
- NS Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) approved Water Utility Regulations

3) STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend re-establishing the application of interest charges on overdue receivables and that the option to disconnect water customers be available for accounts seriously in arrears.

4) REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS

1. Motion from March 17, 2020 Council approving budget.
2. NS Utility and Review Board approved Rates and Regulations for Wolfville Water Utility
3. RFD 017-2020 Payment Relief Measures – March 27 Special Council Meeting

5) DISCUSSION

Similar to a number of municipalities, Wolfville took steps early in this fiscal year to provide some temporary relief for members of the community who owed property taxes and/or water/sewer amounts. At the time it was acknowledged that the steps taken would be temporary in nature and that as the impact of COVID became known, further decision points would be brought back to Council.

Council has received a number of Financial Update Reports in the last three months, which have included information related to cash flows and lost revenues. As of today, the cash flow situation is:

- Property taxes
 - Receipts are just over \$327,000 slower this year compared to last year
 - Total outstanding taxes = \$808,000
 - Commercial accounts comprise almost \$300,000 of the total
- Water/Sewer
 - Just over \$7,100 is outstanding
 - Typically almost all water/sewer amounts are paid in full before the June billings go out.

Both category of receivables reflect a slow down in receipts.

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Without charging interest on arrears, the Town runs the risk of continuing to have cash receipts lag behind the of collections in past years. Slower receipts also results in fewer dollars on hand to earn investment income, ultimately lowering expected revenues.

The proposed timing of re-establishing interest charges, as presented in this report, coincides with the next cycle of billing runs. Final 2020/21 Tax Bills are issued at the end of August with a due date of September 30, 2020. The second quarter Water/Sewer bills are issued September 30th with a due date of November 2, 2020 (allowing for October 31st falling on a weekend).

Approving the change now will allow staff to notify the community well in advance and allow the appropriate indication of interest rates/charges to be noted on the bills when they are issued. Effectively the Town will have provided a half year interest free relief. ***To the credit of the Wolfville community, the majority have paid their bills on time or shortly thereafter.*** This has helped ensure the Town is able to continue to provide the essential services the community expects.

Staff have considered the interest rate approved for tax arrears, and believe a reduction is warranted. The currently approved rate is 1.25% per month (or 15% per year). This rate has been in effect for years. During that time, the prime rate at all financial institutions has dropped and current bank rates are at all time lows. It would be possible to lower the towns arrears rate and still achieve an incentive for people to pay their bills on time. It should be noted that some municipalities still charge more than 1.25% with some as high as 2% per month. There is no correct interest rate. Staff believe a reduction to 1% per month (12% per year) would offer a small amount of relief to those unable to pay by the due date, but remain at a level that will encourage payment.

The interest rate on Water/Sewer bills is in accordance with NS Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) approved Water Utility Regulations. The Board approved the temporary lifting of charging interest, but a return to applying interest will be at the rates established during the last Rate Study (2018).

6) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In terms of lost revenues from COVID related to interest please refer to previous reports this year. The recommendation in this report should help ensure continued cash receipts. The precise positive impact has not been quantified and would be an estimate at best.

7) REFERENCES TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN AND TOWN REPORTS

Nothing provided at this time

8) COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

REQUEST FOR DECISION 032-2020

Title: Payment Relief Measures - Changes

Date: 2020-07-07

Department: Finance



Staff will utilize social media and the Town’s website to inform the public of Council decision. In addition, information will be provided with the August tax bills and September water/sewer bills advising people of the return to normal billing and collection processes.

9) ALTERNATIVES

Council can decide to extend the period of time before interest is applied to overdue amounts. This approach is not recommended at this time. As noted in previous reports, just like any business the Town requires cash flow to provide services. There is now clear data that receipts are slower this year than in past years. Re-establishing interest charges will help with efforts to follow up on collection of arrears.

1. Improving Quality of Life for All

- Staff have been working to inform the development of the provincial Sustainable Goals Development act, including planning and liaising with Clean Nova Scotia, the organization implementing the Province's public engagement strategy; and working with staff from Quest and from other municipalities across the province to develop a set of municipal priorities for climate action;
- Staff have been working with PACE Atlantic CIC and representatives from participating communities on the development of a collaborative PACE program and an application of funding to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Community Efficiency Financing program;
- Staff are working with community groups and organizations to bring programs back, i.e. Summer Concert Series (Deep Roots), Yoga in the Park (Lahara Yoga), Pickleball (community group), Ultimate Frisbee (community group), Floorball (community group), tennis (Wolfville Tennis Club);
- Staff are developing "Try it in Wolfville" opportunities for July/August;
- Staff are developing resources to offer "Virtual Memory Cafés", to finish the first series started at Charts Café (6 of 8 completed before COVID-19, remaining 2 to be completed virtually). Depending on outcomes, this could be further developed to offer a full slate of virtual cafés;
- Staff are working on "Memory Boot Camp" offering, likely virtual. These workshops were being offered by Gail Eskes, professor of neuroscience at Dalhousie University, in Halifax and elsewhere via libraries and were very popular. Plans were in place to offer this in-person in Wolfville before pandemic;
- Staff collaborated with Kentville to offer online Skill Sharing Series: Kombucha making, Embroidery, Whittling, Mindfulness, Nature Art;
- Staff developed a recreational Equipment Loan Program;
- Staff delivered "virtual" Canada Day programming for Wolfville and collaboratively for Kings Region;
- Staff worked with L'Arche Homefires, Homes Coordinator, to provide driveway programming for the L'Arche community. Programming consisted of Dance Breaks with Mudley and bagpipe performances by the local Wolfville Pipe Band;
- With support from Mud Creek Rotary staff are organizing two Earth Leadership Camps to be offered in the last two weeks of August;
- Staff coordinated a community art project for the Stay Healthy Main Street initiative. 85 community members participated in painting wooden flowers for planters along Main Street in downtown Wolfville;
- In April, staff coordinated a community wide vigil for the 22 lives lost between April 18th - April 19th in Nova Scotia;
- Staff created and installed 22 interactive sidewalk signs, to enhance walker experience throughout town;



- Work is underway in Reservoir Park: removal of the old pump house, regrading and increasing the beach area and green space, improving drainage, trail realignment and significant trail work on the 101 trail;
- Staff supported the Horton High Safe Grad Committee and the WBDC in planning the Horton High Walking Grad Parade on June 25th;
- Staff have been working with the Sustainable Solutions Group on the development of a Low Carbon Scenario modelling process to support the Town's Climate Change Mitigation planning efforts;

2. Maximizing Our Infrastructure Investments

- With the approval of our new Planning Documents by Council on June 30th, staff are now working on final edits and sending the package to the Province for review. Once returned from the Province, a notice of passing will be published and the new documents will be in effect (estimated to be sometime in August). Staff will be working on updating forms and procedures to align with the new documents. Development Agreement discharges and Design Review changes will come to Council in September;
- The Stay Healthy Main Street pilot project is moving ahead with a team of staff meeting regularly on implementation, communications, and programming. The WBDC will be a key partner in our efforts to make this project a success;
- Staff are working with CBCL consulting Engineers on finalizing a flood risk study for the Town. A presentation to Council will take place July 7th;
- Staff facilitated the installation and activation of the rooftop Solar PV system for the Town's Public Works and Community Development building;
- Staff began asphalt patching with the asphalt recycler in June;
- The Asphalt supply contract was awarded to Dexter Construction; Dexter have been in to repair asphalt cuts and mill and pave work is scheduled for July;
- The Line Marking contract was awarded to PPM and the majority of line marking has been completed;
- Staff will carry out unidirectional watermain flushing scheduled to begin July 27th and completed August 7th;
- Staff have upgraded Accessible Parking spaces on Main Street between Elm Ave and Gaspereau Ave;
- Shoreline Protection, Seaview Avenue, the installation of Solar Panels at Public Works and the East End Gateway capital projects have been substantially completed;

3. Leveraging our Economic Opportunities

- Staff are working with the Wolfville Farmers Market on longer-term strategic planning and funding applications, including working toward the utilization of the DeWolfe building;



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- Staff worked to prepare the VIC for the July 1st opening. The staff implemented adjustments inside the VIC, to ensure physical distancing space is provided and regulations are respected during staff and patron interaction. VIC has reduced hours for this season;
 - Staff are participating in a regional working group to bring NS Trails Conference to the Valley in 2021 (originally planned for Fall 2020, delayed);

4. Operational Updates

- Staff continue to work on weekly monitoring of cash flows impacted by COVID and identifying opportunities to offset expected losses in revenues during the balance of the year;
- Staff are supporting the work of the Town's auditors to ensure audited March 31, 2020 Financial Statements are ready for the July 10th Audit Committee meeting and ultimately forwarded to the July 21st Council meeting;
- Staff announced that Mud Creek Days 2020 has been cancelled;
- The Contract for Legal Services for the Town, after initially being extended, was awarded to Charles Thompson, Burchell MacDougall beginning April 22nd;
- Staff have begun planning for the 2020 Municipal Election in October; visit Municipal Election on Wolfville.ca for ongoing communications;
- Staff continue to provide building and development services and are currently providing (limited) building inspections services to the Town of Middleton while a longer-term solution is worked on;
- Staff have begun working on the Library RFD and will be reviewing this with the Management Team in the coming weeks;
- The Taxi Bylaw has been overhauled to include other vehicles for hire, transportation options that are forecasted for the future and will be ready for a future Council meeting;
- Staff have been meeting regularly with staff from the other municipalities in King's County as part of an informal climate action working group to develop projects of common interest addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Staff completed data collection and analysis for the development of a parking study for Acadia University;
- Staff have begun preliminary work on the development of a community transit feasibility study, including applying for funding support from the province, reviewing case studies and best practices, and reaching out to stakeholders;
- Staff have completed background research towards the development of a forest management strategy;
- Staff developed and submitted an application to the Connect2 sustainable transportation funding program to secure additional funding for the Stay Healthy Main Street pilot project;

CAO REPORT

July 7, 2020

Department: Office of the CAO



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- Staff have been working with faculty from Acadia's school of engineering on a research project to identify energy saving options and technologies for the Town's Waste Water Treatment Plant;
 - Staff have hired two summer students, through the Clean NS leadership intern program and the Canada Summer Jobs program, to provide support for the Town Climate Change Mitigation planning and implementation initiatives;
 - Staff welcomed a Parks and Recreation Special Events Acadia Co-Op student, who supported Canada Day 2020 planning, facilitated the June Online Skill Share Sessions, as well as began planning the Try it in Wolfville 2020 summer series, with focus on programming opportunities that can be delivered with physical distancing;
 - Staff hired two new VIC Counsellor & Magic Wine Bus Ambassadors. New staff were trained on June 29th and 30th and hiring was carried out for two Parks positions for the season;
 - Staff continued work with ValleyConnect.ca project, Valley Recreation, Annapolis Valley Trails Coalition;
 - Staff have tenders out for the cleaning and video inspection of sanitary sewer pipes throughout town;
 - Staff have the tender for the Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades out; the tender will close July 30th;
 - Staff are working on the tender documents for the Public Works & Community Development Building renovations and they should be ready the week of July 6th;

COMMITTEE UPDATE

Title: Kings Transit
Date: July 7th, 2020
Department: Town Council



UPDATE

The Kings Transit Board met on March 27th, 2019.

New Business:

1. Kings Transit has returned to operation. Ridership was significantly down (95%) during the first quarter due to CoVid-19 related decisions of the Board to suspend transit. Only the Digby Route operated during this period. Since resumption no fares have been collected to minimize the need for contact with cash. Fares have now resumed as of the beginning of July. Passengers are strongly encouraged to wear masks.

A route change to eliminate Route 6 (which was the reverse of Route 1) was approved by the Board. Now there is a Route 1 east and Route 1 west. This has now been approved by the UARB. As well adjustments with routing will now create ½ hour (rather than 1 hour) service from Grand Pre to Kentville.

2. The Audit for KTA has been completed with some recommendations related to needed policy development. The Board provided direction to the GM at the last Board meeting for the GM to come back to the Board with a process to update and add to existing policies.

The Board has been meeting by Zoom since March. We will consider whether to meet in person at the end of the month for the July Board Meeting closer to the date.

Respectfully Submitted

Councillor
Wendy Donovan