

RICHMOND COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

MARCH 12, 2001

Location: Court House, Arichat

Warden Cotton called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for O'Canada.

The Clerk took roll call of Councillors.

Warden Cotton indicated that Councillor Boudreau was absent because of sickness in his family, Councillor Bourque was sick with the flu and Councillor Johnson was away visiting relatives.

Items Added to the Agenda

Warden Cotton indicated that Councillor McNamara wished to add a road name change.

Moved by Councillor McNamara, seconded by Councillor MacPhee that the item added be accepted as presented. Motion carried.

Review of Minutes: February 12, 2001

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor MacNeil that the minutes of February 12, 2001 be adopted as presented. Motion carried.

Petitions and/or Delegations:

(a) L'Ardoise Economic Association for Development re: Business Builders Program

Warden Cotton welcomed Allison Martell, Florence Reynolds and Brandie Pottie to the meeting.

Ms. Allison Martell, Project Coordinator (LEAD), Florence Reynolds, Assistant Project Coordinator (LEAD) and Brandi Pottie, Youth Coordinator (Dept. of Tourism, Culture and Recreation) presented their proposal regarding the Business Builders Program (copy attached).

Ms. Martell indicated that the Business Builders Program was a collaborative effort by the L'Ardoise Economic Association for Development, Richmond County Economic Development and Richmond County Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

Ms. Martell indicated that this program will be offered to youths aged 7-17 years and will provide them with basic training in bookkeeping, advertising marketing etc., and upon completion of the training youths, will be given \$100 to start up their business for the summer months. She noted that presentations will be given at schools so that all youths will have access to information regarding the Business Builders Program. She also noted that in addition to benefiting the youths that participate in the Business Builders Program, Mentors/Sponsors have an opportunity to build relationships with future leaders, help promote positive work habits, partner with important CED organizations, receive good publicity of their organization, as well as tax benefits.

Ms. Martell indicated that since 1995, over 250 youth have been successful participants in the Guysborough County RDA Business Builders Program, and they have had great success with this program.

In response to a question from Councillor MacNeil, Ms. Martell indicated that the budget for the Business Builders Program for the first year is \$44,650 and continued to explain exactly how the budget is broken down.

Councillor McNamara and Councillor Sampson complimented Ms. Martell and Ms. Reynolds for their initiative.

Deputy Warden Goyetche indicated that a similar project is in existence at La Picasse and believes it is going very well.

Ms. Martell indicated that she will be meeting with Mr. Gabriel LeBlanc and Mr. Yvon Samson, Administrators of La Picasse, to discuss their project.

In response to a question from Warden Cotton, Ms. Martell indicated that she will be seeking grants from HRDC for two summer students to work on the Business Builders Program.

Moved by Councillor Sampson, seconded by Councillor MacNeil that the presentation of the Business Builders Program be accepted as presented and their request for funding be tabled until budget deliberations. Motion carried.

(b) Strait Richmond Hospital re: Update on Strait Richmond Caregiver's Committee

Warden Cotton noted that representatives were unable to attend tonight's meeting and requested to be placed on the agenda for the April Council Meeting.

(c) Sable Offshore Energy Project re: Community Partnerships

Warden Cotton noted that representatives were unable to attend tonight's meeting and requested to be on the agenda for the April Council Meeting.

(d) Richmond Information Technology Study re: Final Report

Warden Cotton welcomed Mr. Andre LeBlanc to the meeting.

Mr. LeBlanc presented the final report of the Richmond Information Technology Study (copy attached) and indicated that it was discovered through an extensive series of surveys conducted throughout Richmond County, that computer usage among businesses was very low, only 60% had computers and used them in their daily operation and only 36% use computer software to manage their finances.

Mr. LeBlanc noted that it was found that only 43% of businesses surveyed had an Internet connection and only 19% have a Web site, further noting that he believed that this is mainly due to fears of insecurity.

Mr. LeBlanc indicated that proper computer training is lacking in many businesses, noting that only 35% of businesses maintain their computer systems.

Mr. LeBlanc noted that connectivity and infrastructure were lacking in Richmond County, suggesting that incubator space should be established and rented out to companies and organizations that require better line speeds to develop online markets. Mr. LeBlanc indicated that he spoke with representatives of MTT and they indicated that it would be at least 2 years before M-powered Internet connections become available in Richmond County.

In relation to education and training, Mr. LeBlanc suggested that two summer students be hired that are pursuing education in the IT field to carry out computer consulting in Richmond County, noting that he will be applying through HRDC for grants to employ two students for the summer.

In response to a question from Councillor MacPhee, Mr. LeBlanc indicated that he arranged computer training sessions that were offered free of charge to residents of Richmond County in an effort to better educate and make people aware of the true capabilities of their computers.

In response to a question from Councillor MacNeil, Mr. LeBlanc indicated that he has not yet spoken with local cable companies regarding their provision of high speed Internet service in Richmond County but he will certainly explore the idea further.

Moved by Councillor McNamara, seconded by Councillor MacNeil that the final report of the Richmond Information Technology Study be accepted as presented. Motion carried.

Notice of Motion – Councillor Sampson: to amend By-Law #49, Heritage Property By-Law, by deleting the “Members at Large” on the Heritage Advisory Committee and appoint one additional Councillor to serve on the Committee

Moved by Councillor Sampson, seconded by Councillor MacNeil that Council give approval of First Reading to adopt an amendment to By-Law #49, Heritage Property By-Law, by deleting the “Members at Large” on the Heritage Advisory Committee and appoint one additional Councillor to serve on the Committee. Motion carried.

Committee Reports

(a) Committee of the Whole

Councillor Beaton presented the monthly report of the Committee of the Whole (copy attached).

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor McNamara that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and make representation immediately to the appropriate federal and provincial departments, and perhaps the Premier, for economic development funding and an economic development organization, to be effective April 1, 2001;

AND FURTHER MOVED that Municipal Council also make representation to the affected federal and provincial Ministers on the inequities that exist in services in Richmond County, with the representation to be reviewed on a monthly basis by Committee of the Whole. Motion carried

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor MacNeil that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and respond to the proposal of the U.N.S.M. Provincial Roles and Responsibilities Review and indicate that Richmond Council is opposed to the concept of sharing our revenues through an equalization fund, because it is felt that the Municipality would be funding services in other municipal units;

AND FURTHER MOVED that the Richmond response also include that the Municipality feels the total proposal must be considered, including business occupancy, if the proposal does proceed;

AND FURTHER MOVED that Richmond wishes to have an opportunity for input in the calculations of standard expenditures and standard tax rates for an equalization grant, irregardless of how the program is funded;

AND FURTHER MOVED that the Municipality express to the U.N.S.M. and to the Province that the debate concerning revenue sharing and service exchange must cease if this proposal is accepted. Motion carried

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor Sampson that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and indicate to the Province that the Municipality of Richmond is in favor of the elimination of business occupancy assessment and taxation, because of the difficulties in collecting the tax, and because of the confusion created with commercial property owners;

AND FURTHER MOVED that the Province be advised that Municipal Council feels the position paper on business occupancy is redundant, since essentially it is the same proposal as included in the presentation forwarded from the Province regarding service exchange and revenue sharing/equalization. Motion carried.

Moved by Councillor Beaton that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and that Richmond Municipal Council give consent to the U.N.S.M. Implementation Plan for Resolution 19(A), which involves agreeing to the contracting of a Facilitator to participate with Richmond County and Port Hawkesbury to discuss the possibility of revenue sharing and the cost sharing.

There was no seconder for the motion.

Warden Cotton suggested that the mover withdraw the motion, and that it be reviewed again at Committee of the Whole, following the provincial decision on the equalization proposal.

Councillor Beaton agreed to withdraw the motion.

Moved by Councillor Sampson, seconded by Councillor MacPhee that discussion on Resolution 19(A) be tabled until the April session of the Committee of the Whole. Motion carried. (1 Nay – Deputy Warden Goyetche)

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor MacPhee that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and accept the quote from Aon Reed Stenhouse in the amount of \$15,663 for the provision of insurance services for the period April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002;

AND FURTHER MOVED that the manner in which quotes are obtained be changed from an annual basis;

AND FURTHER MOVED that staff be authorized to hire an Advisor next year who would conduct an evaluation to ensure that the Municipality is properly tendering our municipal insurance, with the proper insurance coverage, and to assist with tenders. Motion carried.

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor McNamara that the Committee of the Whole Report for the month of March 2001 be accepted as presented. Motion carried.

Correspondence:

- (a) Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations re: Municipal-Provincial Roles and Responsibilities Proposal

For information purposes.

- (b) Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations re: Collection of Municipal Deed Transfer Tax

The Clerk indicated that this information has been passed on to staff and is for information purposes.

- (c) Rural Cape Breton District Planning Commission re: Request for Funding from E-911 Cost Recovery

The Clerk indicated that the District Planning Commission is requesting funding from the Emergency Measures Organization for E-911 services from the E-911 Cost Recovery Fee.

Moved by Deputy Warden Goyetche, seconded by Councillor McNamara that a letter be written to Mr. Mike Myette, Emergency Measures Organization, expressing Council's support to the Rural Cape Breton District Planning Commission's request for funding from the Emergency Measures Organization E-911 Cost Recovery Fee. Motion carried.

- (d) U.N.S.M. re: Municipal Mandatory Contributions to Education

The Clerk indicated that the U.N.S.M. President is requesting that Municipalities oppose any increase to the \$131 million that municipalities have contributed towards public education.

Warden Cotton indicated that he and the Clerk will be attending a meeting with senior officials of the Department of Municipal Affairs on Wednesday, where they will request clarification regarding municipal contributions to education as well as the proposed equalization fund.

- (e) Hon. Angus MacIssac re: Limitation on Municipal Grants to Charitable Organizations

The Clerk indicated that correspondence was forwarded to the Hon. Angus MacIssac, on behalf of Council, requesting that the Municipality be allowed to increase the restriction of 1% of taxable revenue that is permitted to be allocated towards municipal grants to charitable organizations.

The Clerk indicated that the correspondence indicates that this request will be reviewed in consultation with the UNSM.

(f) Nova Scotia Power re: Good Neighbor Energy Fund

The Clerk indicated that correspondence indicates how residents in need can access this assistance.

Councillor MacPhee noted that applications can only be accessed from branches of the Salvation Army, to which the closest branches are located in Sydney and New Glasgow.

Moved by Councillor MacPhee, seconded by Councillor McNamara that a letter be written to Nova Scotia Power requesting a geographic assessment on a county basis of how the Good Neighbor Energy Fund has been allocated in past years. Motion carried.

(g) West Bay Road & District Volunteer Fire Department re: Fire Protection Rate

Moved by Councillor McNamara, seconded by Councillor MacNeil that this item be tabled until budget deliberations. Motion carried.

(h) St. Peter's & District Volunteer Fire Department re: Tax Levy

Councillor MacPhee expressed concern over the request for a .02 cent increase in the tax levy, indicating that before any decisions are made he would like to know the reasons for the increase as well as consult with the residents of District #7 for their input on the increase.

Councillor MacPhee requested information from staff on the amount of the area rate and the taxes generated, for the past several years.

Councillor Sampson indicated that fire departments should not be requesting a rate but rather a dollar figure and that staff should be calculating a rate that would result in the desired funding.

Councillor MacNeil indicated that the St. Peter's Volunteer Fire Department recently held a public meeting, which was poorly attended.

The Clerk indicated that he is aware that the St. Peter's Volunteer Fire Department recently purchased a new truck, which may or may not be the reason for the requested increase.

Moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor MacPhee that this item be tabled until budget deliberations. Motion carried.

(i) Cole-Layer-Trumble Canada Inc. re: Cost of Property Assessment Services

The Clerk indicated that alternatives providers of assessment services do exist and whereas municipalities will be paying for the cost of assessment services delivered by the province beginning April 1, 2001 that it may be beneficial to explore this option on a regional basis.

Moved by Deputy Warden Goyetche, seconded by Councillor Sampson that a letter be written to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities requesting that they investigate the option of having property assessments carried out by private sector assessment firms. Motion carried.

(j) Rural Cape Breton District Planning Commission re: Request for Road Name Change from “MacDonald Road” to “Peter F. Campbell Lane”

Moved by Councillor McNamara, seconded by Councillor MacNeil that this item be tabled until Councillor Johnson is present because this road is located in her district. Motion carried.

(k) East Richmond Health Services Association re: Request for tax Exemption

(l) Isle Madame Historical Society re: Request for tax Exemption

Moved by Councillor MacNeil, seconded by Councillor Beaton that the requests for a tax exemption from the East Richmond Health Services Association and the Isle Madame Historical Society be tabled until budget deliberations. Motion carried.

(m) Stora Enso re: New President Announcement

Moved by Councillor McNamara, seconded by Councillor Sampson that letters be sent, on behalf of Richmond Municipal Council, to Mr. Jack Hartery congratulating him on his retirement and to Mr. Tor Suther congratulating him on his appointment as President and General Manager of Stora Enso. Motion carried.

Items Added to the Agenda

Moved by Councillor McNamara, seconded by Councillor MacPhee that Municipal Council give approval to the road name change to “Heavy Water Road” in Point Tupper (District #5), if this road name change meets policy approval and receives the approval of the Department of Transportation and the District Planning Commission. Motion carried.

Fifteen Minute Question Period

There were no questions.

Moved by Councillor Sampson, seconded by Deputy Warden Goyetche that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried.

There being no further business, Warden Cotton adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.