

RICHMOND COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

MAY 8, 2006

Location: Council Chambers, Municipal Office

Deputy Warden Martell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the singing of O'Canada.

The CAO took roll call of Councillors.

The CAO indicated that Warden Cotton was unable to attend tonight's meeting because he is in Halifax on UNSM business.

Items Added to the Agenda

Deputy Warden Martell indicated that Councillor Rankin wished to add awards received by Richmond County residents and consideration for the role of Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia and the CAO wished to add an "In-Camera" report.

Moved by Councillor McNamara, seconded by Councillor C. Boudreau that the items added be accepted as presented. Motion carried.

Review of Minutes: April 10, 2006

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor Rankin that the minutes of April 10, 2006 be adopted as presented. Motion carried.

Presentations and/or Delegations:

- (a) VIBE Creative Group re: Multicultural Centre

Deputy Warden Martell welcomed Maureen Carroll and Tracy Boutlier to the meeting.

Ms. Carroll thanked Council for the opportunity to make a presentation.

Ms. Carroll noted that it was great to see the industry support in the audience this evening.

Ms. Carroll indicated that her report also recommended that the Destination Richmond Tourism Co-Op proceed with a business plan for the Tourism Co-Op organization

Ms. Carroll indicated that the scope of their engagement included the development of a business plan for Cape Breton's Heritage Coast Centre. Ms. Carroll indicated that they worked in consultation with a Steering Committee. Ms. Carroll also indicated that their reporting deliverables include development of key findings and recommendations for the project, financial projections, ownership and management model as well as action plans.

Ms. Carroll indicated that the Destination Richmond Tourism Co-Op had hired Vibe Creative Group to improve the Tourism Centre plan that had been provided by EPG in their consultant study.

Essentially, Vibe is suggesting that the Co-Op build the building and convey it to the Municipality, with the Co-Op leasing space from the Municipality, and being responsible for items such as product development, industry liaison, and providing an advisory role to the Municipality for marketing issues.

Ms. Carroll indicated that the Cape Breton's Heritage Coast has lots of product, noting that they are rural and far apart, however if positioned correctly this could be a prime destination for tourists.

Ms. Carroll noted that the Fortress of Louisbourg has 130,000 visitors annually.

Ms. Carroll indicated that the Centre will act as the hub for the "Cultural Spokes", making it easier for visitors to find things, with defined areas so visitors know what to expect.

Ms. Carroll indicated that they are proposing for the building to be located in St. Peter's, near the St. Peter's Canal, noting that the new building they are proposing is approximately 6,600 sq. ft. as opposed to the original proposal from EPG of 11,500 sq. ft..

Ms. Carroll indicated that the 6,600 sq. ft. building would be Phase 1 of the project, noting that they will also incorporate a library and public area in future expansion of the building.

Ms. Carroll reviewed the ownership options and outlined the issues of public vs. private ownership.

Ms. Carroll pointed out that if the facility was privately owned there is potential for transfer of ownership.

Ms. Carroll indicated that they are recommending that the building and site be owned and operated by the Municipality of Richmond with a long term lease to Destination Richmond Tourism Cooperative with annual reporting and conditions regarding activities and accountability.

Ms. Carroll indicated that they are also recommending that the building be managed by an employee of the Municipality's Public Works Department to ensure quality control and a consistent look and feel of the site, ensuring that financial costs are kept to industry standards.

Ms. Carroll indicated that the new facility would replace the existing centre, with the human resources structure maintained with a VIC Supervisor and VIC Counsellors in place, along with the addition of a Director of Sales and Marketing and a Heritage Interpreter.

Ms. Carroll reviewed the capital costs and funding sources for the building, indicating that they have the Municipality down for \$300,000 of the \$3,125,000, noting that this is basically the estimated costs of the land.

Ms. Carroll indicated that she spoke with Mr. Rick Beaton of ECBC and he indicated that this is where he thought the costs would be and he is comfortable with this.

Ms. Carroll indicated that the Marketing costs for year 1 will be \$225,000, which would be the most for year 1, noting that they have the Municipality's portion as being \$85,000.

Ms. Carroll noted that the Signage Program would be significant in Year 1, being estimated at \$400,000, with the Municipality requested to contribute \$100,000.

Ms. Carroll indicated that the annual estimated annual contribution from the Municipality would be \$100,000.

Ms. Carroll indicated that financial projections were prepared by an accounting firm and are based on a worse case scenario.

Ms. Carroll indicated that direct impact highlights include building supplies and local labour in the construction phase of \$2.8 Million, three full time and six seasonal employees of the Centre and an increase in visitation of Cape Breton Island of 5% (\$2 Million) and indirect impacts will be increased employment potential for small business and linkages between Richmond County and CBRM.

Ms. Carroll indicated that social impacts will include pride of place, partnering with stakeholders, preservation of culture and heritage and the strengthening of the social fabric of eastern Cape Breton.

Ms. Carroll announced that their current agenda includes approval of the Tourism Centre ownership model business plan, in principle.

Ms. Carroll noted that their next steps will include the DRTC Operational Plan, completion of detailed architectural drawings and capital costs, submission of applications for capital funding and development of MOU for County/DRTC for tourism sector.

Councillor J. Boudreau indicated that he is very pleased with the work that has been done by VIBE, noting that they have taken the EPG study that was not done well, and remedied it.

Deputy Warden Martell indicated that perhaps this issue should be tabled to the Committee of the Whole for further debate/deliberations, noting that some Councillors that are not directly involved with the Steering Committee for this project may require some interpretations or may have some questions.

Councillor J. Boudreau indicated that the motion he is introducing is recommending approval “in principle”, noting that there will be time to address any issues that councillors may have, noting that if this is put off any longer another season will be lost.

The CAO indicated that normally a request such as this one would be referred to staff, who would provide Committee of the Whole with a report on the project and various options for the Municipality; and he further asked Councillors if they were aware or understood the financial commitment request outlined in the presentation.

No Councillors replied, however, Ms. Carroll indicated that they are proposing the following financial contributions from the Municipality:

- An annual contribution of \$100,000
- A Year 1 contribution of \$100,000 towards the Signage Project
- A Year 1 contribution of \$85,000 towards marketing
- Capital contribution of approximately \$300,000 for the purchase of land

The CAO indicated that he had only one meeting with the consultants where one of the major issues discussed was the ownership of the building, noting that the consultant suggested the idea of securing capital funding for the building and then turning the facility over to the Municipality.

Councillor Rankin indicated that he believes that there is a willingness by Council to partner with this project, noting the motion on the table is requesting to accept “in principle” and with “conditions” and it is time to take a step for the tourism sector and to go forward with this positive project where all communities will benefit.

The CAO indicated that if it is the wish of Council to go forward with this project then so be it, however he is not even sure if each Councillor has even seen the plan completed by EPG. The CAO also indicated that he wasn’t aware of any project of this magnitude, that had been given approval by Council, at the first presentation.

Councillor McNamara indicated that she doesn’t believe that money is being spent tonight, noting that this is only approval in principle, allowing time to further examine the facts.

Councillor J. Boudreau once again clarified that his motion is for approval of the ownership model in principle and approval of the business plan with conditions.

In response to a comment from Councillor J. Boudreau, the CAO indicated that the decision to commit money to the Civic Center was not decided in one night but rather a process that took a year.

Councillor Rankin indicated that the Municipality is only being requested to commit 1/10 of the capital costs, noting that this is a great deal, and that Richmond County is getting the Visitor Information Centre that Port Hastings lost.

Councillor C. Boudreau indicated that he concurs with the motion made by Councillor J. Boudreau, noting that the Municipality will have this piece of infrastructure in St. Peter's at a cost of \$300,000 and expressed his support for the motion.

Moved by Councillor J. Boudreau, seconded by Councillor Rankin that Council approve in principle the ownership model and approve the business plan with the conditions that the funding contribution of the key partners is in place and that the budgets are confirmed by the architectural reports. Motion carried.

(b) Strait Regional School Board re: Overview of Activities/Future Challenges

Deputy Warden Martell welcomed Mrs. Mary Jess MacDonald and Mr. Phonse Gillis to the meeting.

Mrs. MacDonald indicated that she is the vice-chair of the Strait Regional School Board, thanking the Municipality for their ongoing support, noting that students are the most important resource for the future.

Mrs. MacDonald indicated that Mr. George Kehoe sends his regrets for not being able to attend the meeting.

Mr. Gillis indicated that he is very proud to have such a great school system, with great staff, facilities and students.

Mr. Gillis indicated that sometimes the regions greatest assets, its students, are exported, noting that they must make opportunities and encourage youths to return to the area to begin their careers.

Mr. Gillis indicated that excellence in lifelong learning must be taught to the students from the very beginning, noting that the days of entering a career without going back to school is a thing of the past.

Mr. Gillis noted that the mission of the School Board is to provide students with educational opportunities that will help them gain the necessary skills to develop

mentally, physically and socially in a learning environment that enhances and fosters positive self esteem.

Mr. Gillis indicated that one of the issues/challenges facing the School Board is declining enrolment, noting that next year's enrolment will decline by 381 students, which is the largest rate of decline seen in the region and in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Gillis indicated that every board across the Province is experiencing declines, with the exception of the CSAP.

In response to a question from Councillor Sampson, Mr. Gillis indicated that a decline of over 300 students was anticipated but not this high.

Mr. Gillis indicated that the Strait Regional School Board covers the largest geographic area of a board in Nova Scotia, noting that they have 145 buses on the road each day.

Mr. Gillis indicated that they have prepared a five year enrolment projection, indicating that from 1996 to present, student numbers have declined by over 4,000.

Mr. Gillis indicated that despite the declining enrolment they will not be closing a single school this year, they will still run the busses and will offer the same programs to students, noting that even though the students are decreasing costs are remaining the same.

Mr. Gillis indicated that because of the small, rural, isolated school issue the Province will have to come up with a different funding formula for these schools.

Mr. Gillis indicated that the average time spend on buses for students is 55 km one way, noting that these are Department of Education figures.

Mr. Gillis noted that there are many programs that are not offered in the Strait, noting that they need to provide new and better opportunities for students, noting that students learn in many different ways and improvements will only happen by increasing the programs offered.

Mr. Gillis noted that there are 25 schools in operation under the Strait Regional School Board, noting that they currently have a major job in St. Peter's with the expansion of the elementary school to a P-8 facility, noting that they need the support of Council for these projects.

Mr. Gillis indicated that in future planning, together they must build confidence with the system and not criticize it and show young people that they can be proud of the schools that they attend and to realize the value of living and working in the region with a lifestyle second to none.

Mr. Gillis indicated that part of the Strategic Plan includes offering new skills sets as they move forward, focusing on literacy, numeracy and skills development.

Mr. Gillis indicated that today it is more difficult to enter community college than university, very different then things were years ago.

Mr. Gillis indicated that the Board insisted that there be more than just a financial plan but rather an “Educational Business Plan”.

Mr. Gillis wished to thank the Municipality for their contributions over the years, indicating that the funds that the Municipality collects for education are very significant.

In response to a question from Councillor Sampson, Mr. Gillis indicated that mandatory reductions in teaching staff are required at a rate of 1 teacher for every decline in student enrolment of 35 students.

Mr. Gillis noted that there is approximately \$15,000 per position saved when a teacher retires and is replaced by a new teacher.

Mr. Gillis noted that there are 60 teachers retiring this year and there were 40 that retired last year.

In response to a question from Councillor Sampson, Mr. Gillis indicated that they have an Early Hire Incentive Initiative where they actively recruit in universities, noting that there are demands for teachers in French, Maths and Sciences.

Mr. Gillis indicated that they have already hired six new teachers and are actively recruiting, noting that there are also a number of substitute teachers that are looking for full time employment that are now getting this opportunity.

Councillor Beaton thanked Mr. Gillis for the update.

Mrs. MacDonald indicated that they are in the process of adding new services, including guidance services at the P-8 level, as well as assistance to principals in the smaller schools, noting that Youth Service Facilities in the schools have proven to be a very important asset.

In response to a question from Councillor C. Boudreau, Mr. Gillis indicated that the school expansion in St. Peter’s will move forward but the funding is not all in place, requesting that Council pay attention to this project and any weight that they have to ensure that this facility is completed to the extent that all other school facilities in the Province would be appreciated.

Councillor McNamara indicated that as an employee of the School Board she has observed that over the past few years the staff and administration of the School Board has much improved, noting that they are more in tuned with the needs of the students.

In response to a question from Councillor J. Boudreau, Mr. Gillis indicated that they have a good working relationship with the Community Colleges, noting that they are looking at expanding options at the high school level and partnering with community colleges and local businesses to ensure that students are able to get in.

Councillor Rankin noted that the ratio of students that enter the trades and that stay in the area to work and raise a family seem to be higher than those students who go to university and something should be done to change this.

In response to a question from Councillor Rankin, Mr. Gillis indicated that the expansion of the school in St. Peter's will occur, phased in over a three year period, beginning in 2008.

In response to a question from the CAO, Mr. Gillis indicated that other schools boards are experiencing declines but none are declining as fast as the Strait Regional School Board, noting that CBRM is losing close to 700 students, the South Shore 400-500 and HRM over 1000.

Moved by Councillor C. Boudreau, seconded by Councillor Rankin that Council table discussions regarding Council's written support for the expansion of the school in St. Peter's. Motion carried.

Deputy Warden Martell thanked Mr. Gillis and Mrs. MacDonald for their presentation.

Notice of Motion - Deputy Warden Martell: to adopt the Policy for Private Road Curbside Collection Requests, as attached in Appendix "A"

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor Rankin that Council adopt the Policy for Private Road Curbside Collection Requests, as attached in Appendix "A". Motion carried.

Committee Reports:

Councillor Beaton presented the Committee of the Whole Report for the month of May 2006.

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor Johnson that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and that the Municipality enter into the new Intermunicipal Services Agreement proposed by the Rural Cape Breton District Planning Commission, attached as Appendix "A". Motion carried.

In response to a question from Councillor J. Boudreau, the CAO indicated that the RDA will look at more than just TDC as a possible supplier of high speed service for those parts of Richmond that do not have access to high speed internet.

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor Sampson that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and that this project move forward and that Council request that the RDA investigate and develop a plan to provide this high speed service supplied by TDC to those parts of Richmond who currently do not have access to high speed internet and also that the RDA do the necessary planning and seek funding to begin this project and further moved that a letter be written to the MLA and MP to request support for the Municipality's efforts. Motion carried.

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor McNamara that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and that the amended Council cost recovery initiative apply to major projects for water and sewer, with major projects being defined as projects with a minimum gross cost of \$300,000 and a minimum net municipal cost of \$100,000;

AND FURTHER MOVED that the Committee recommend to Council that the municipal funding for these major projects be 50% of the net municipal cost, to be funded through the municipal general rate;

AND FURTHER MOVED that Municipal Council commence an initiative for funding the net costs of community studies relating to water and sewer projects by committing to municipal funding from the general rate of 75% of the net municipal cost, with the remaining 25% of the net municipal costs being levied on the property taxpayers in the community; with the intent that the municipal funding of studies of 75% of the net costs cannot be combined with any other municipal programs or grants;

AND FURTHER MOVED that staff and the Solicitor be directed to draft the appropriate by-laws or policies that are required.

In response to a question from Councillor Rankin, the CAO indicated that regarding the cost recovery initiative for major water and sewer projects, a draft by-law will be prepared by staff and the solicitor and be brought back to Council for further direction.

Councillor J. Boudreau indicated that he missed the last Committee of the Whole meeting where this issue was addressed, however Council had previously set six priorities for water and sewer projects and if the proposed motion is passed then three of these six projects will not be eligible for this funding.

The CAO noted that one of the issues in the Committee of the Whole discussion was definition of major projects, and the recommendation provided that definition. The CAO also noted that the Solicitor had been present at the Committee of the Whole Meeting, to assist Council with deliberations.

Moved by Councillor Boudreau, seconded by Councillor McNamara that the Committee recommend to Council that the cost recovery initiative for major water and sewer projects be tabled to the Committee of the Whole for further debate. Motion carried.

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor Rankin that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and that the grant request from the Two Rivers Development Association be denied, because their request was received after the March 1st deadline. Motion carried.

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor Sampson that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and that the request from the Cape Breton Help Line be denied, because the request was received after the March 1st deadline. Motion carried.

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor McNamara that Council accept the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole and that a grant in the amount of \$7,000 be given to the Riverdale Community Services Society, to be taken from the Municipal District Infrastructure Fund - \$17,000, for District #5. Motion carried.

Councillor Beaton gave notice that he will introduce a motion at the next regular Council Meeting to amend the Awards of Recognition Policy, to recognize 35 years of service.

Moved by Councillor Beaton, seconded by Councillor Johnson that Council adopt the Committee of the Whole Report for the month of May 2006. Motion carried.

Correspondence:

(a) Department of Transportation and Public Works re: Road Name Change - West Side Petit De Grat

The CAO indicated that this correspondence from Mr. Webster, Regional Manager, indicates that they were simply posting the name of the road as it appears in their records, requesting to please let him know if the residents would like to proceed with the petition to change the name to "Boudreauville Road".

Moved by Councillor J. Boudreau, seconded by Councillor Johnson that correspondence be sent to the Department of Transportation indicating requesting that the road name "West Side Petit De Grat" be changed to "Boudreauville Road". Motion carried.

(b) Municipality of the County of Annapolis re: Support for Volunteers

Councillor J. Boudreau indicated that "Volunteers" would not be "Volunteers" if this was supported.

(c) Ecole Beau Port re: Scholarships

It was the consensus of Council that this request be tabled until budget deliberations.

(d) St. Anne Board of Directors re: Board Representative

Moved by Councillor J. Boudreau, seconded by Councillor McNamara that Councillor C. Boudreau be re-appointed as the Municipal Representative to St. Anne's Board of Directors. Motion carried.

(e) West Bay Road & District Volunteer Fire Department re: Area Rate

Moved by Councillor McNamara, seconded by Councillor Rankin that this item be referred to budget deliberations. Motion carried.

(f) Victor David, Jeantie's Mini Mart re: Venture Investment

The CAO indicated that this correspondence indicates that an organization that has applied for tax exemption of a building contains a café and a clothing store.

Councillor C. Boudreau noted that Council must be careful when granting these tax exemptions, noting that in instances such as this it gives an unfair advantage of an organization versus an entrepreneur trying to provide the same services, suggesting that this issue be addressed further at a Committee of the Whole Meeting.

The CAO indicated that the issue of ownership of the organization in question is still outstanding, noting that the Solicitor is still researching the consolidation of these tax exemptions into a by-law.

The CAO indicated that it is good to be made aware of these potential situations and if Councillors are aware of other organizations, to please let him know.

Moved by Councillor C. Boudreau, seconded by Councillor J. Boudreau that Council table the issue of tax exemptions of not for profit organizations to the Committee of the Whole for further discussions. Motion carried.

(g) West Arichat & District Village Circle Society re: Sunken Vessels/West Arichat Wharf

The CAO indicated that the West Arichat & District Village Circle Society is requesting Municipal support in having these sunken vessels removed from the waters.

Deputy Warden Martell indicated that the Society has approached many government departments/ organizations and they seem to be getting the run around.

Councillor J. Boudreau indicated that he visited the site after the instance happened and spoke to a Mr. Mike Brittan, Regional Manager of Small Crafts and Harbours, who admitted at that time that this was under their jurisdiction.

Moved by Councillor J. Boudreau, seconded by Councillor Rankin that Council write a letter to Mr. Mike Britten, Regional Manager, SCH, requesting that this situation be resolved and the sunken vessels removed and that copies of the letter be forwarded to the MP and the Minister responsible for that department. Motion carried.

(h) Isle Madame Columbus Club re: Request for Tax Exemption

(i) St. Peter's United Church re: Request for Tax Exemption

The CAO noted that both of these requests for tax exemption are to be included in the consolidated by-law and that he will refer these to staff.

Items Added to the Agenda:

(1) Councillor Rankin re:

(i) Awards Received by Richmond County Residents

Moved by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor C. Boudreau that a letter of congratulations be sent to Joanna MacNeil, a grade 12 student at Richmond Academy, for receiving the National Toyota Green Scholarship for her project on the Sydney Tar Ponds. Motion carried.

Moved by Councillor J. Boudreau, seconded by Councillor Sampson that a letter of congratulations be sent to Mr. Louis Samson, congratulating him on winning the RRFB Volunteer of the Year, for his efforts in organic composting. Motion carried.

(ii) Consideration for the role of Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia

Moved by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Beaton that Council write a letter to the Prime Minister with a copy to the Premier of Nova Scotia in support of Mrs. Eva Landry's consideration for Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia. Motion carried.

In response to a question from Councillor Sampson, Councillor Rankin indicated that he is unsure if there is a list of the individual being considered, noting that he heard of Mrs. Landry's nomination through the Provincial media.

Councillor McNamara indicated that Mrs. Landry's name was also mentioned on CBC.

(2) C.A.O. re: "In-Camera" Report

To be discussed at the end of the meeting.

Fifteen Minute Question Period

There were no questions.

Moved by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor C. Boudreau that the meeting proceed to “In-Camera” session. Motion carried.

Deputy Warden Martell re-convened the regular meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Moved by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor C. Boudreau that the meeting adjourn. Motion carried.

There being no further business, Deputy Warden Martell adjourned the regular Council session at 9:15 p.m.