

**COVID-19 COMMITTEE**  
**Meeting Notes**

**DATE:** April 7, 2020  
**TIME:** 10:00 a.m. - 11:46 a.m.  
**PLACE:** Zoom online platform

**PRESENT:** Deputy Mayor Gary Clow; Councillors Jill Burridge; Gail MacDonald; Steve Gallant; Derek Smith; Darren MacDougall; Robert Hughes, CAO; Jeremy Crosby, Deputy CAO and Director of Infrastructure; Wendy Watts, Community and Business Engagement Manager; and Mary McAskill, Recording Clerk

**REGRETS:** Nil

**CHAIR:** Mayor Steve Ogden

Councillor Gallant noted that there were a number of items on the agenda and Robert replied that because we are not holding committee meetings, he puts them on this agenda to keep Council updated.

**1. Operating Update**

**a) Pace Program**

Robert noted that there was a virtual meeting last week and FCM was also included in the meeting. FCM just released their funding program and the applications are due by the end of May. We are going to move ahead and try to get the application done and sent in. Robert noted that he had the opportunity to meet the other CAO's and staff members on the video-conference call who are involved from the other communities which are Berwick, Digby, Kentville, Wolfville and Charlottetown. It was noted that the program won't start until late in the year or even next year. It will take a while to get through the FCM funding program. However, we do have some leg work to do in the interim. We will need to draft a bylaw and an operating agreement between the municipalities and Equilibrium Engineering.

Mayor Ogden asked Councillor MacDougall if there would be any way to involve the Sustainability Committee when drafting the bylaw and the operating agreement between the six municipalities and Equilibrium Engineering. Robert suggested that we send them some information by email and ask for their feedback. We could decide after we receive the feedback if we need to have a virtual meeting.

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Councillor MacDougall agreed that the way to approach the committee at this time would be by email, and if something needs to be voted on we can do an email poll.

Mayor Ogden noted that the costs are still within our budget and Robert replied that there is not really much in the way of cost. It is more of a commitment to using our borrowing power to allow residents to borrow. He added that he hopes we can use the FCM funding which would minimize what we would have to borrow. However, we don't have much in the way of detail just yet.

Deputy Mayor Clow asked if there would be an interest cost involved and Robert replied that the residents would pay interest on what they borrow.

Councillor Burrridge has been a little concerned about taking this bankroll on with this program, but if FCM is going to take on that role she is more on board with the idea.

Mayor Ogden noted that the only concern he had was the administrative burden on staff and he hoped that would be kept to a minimum. Robert replied that we are trying to design it so it has the least amount of impact on our staff.

### **b) Bylaw Enforcement RFP**

It was noted that we are at the end of our contract with our bylaw enforcement person and an RFP will be in about a week. It is similar to our last RFP but a few things have been added such as utility billing. Councillor MacDougall asked if it would be an option to have the RCMP enforce the bylaws, and Robert replied that they do enforce the Noise and Nuisance Bylaw on our behalf. They do have primary responsibility for the Noise and Nuisance Bylaw, but they also help with the other bylaws as needed.

Councillor Gallant asked if the police are working with the conservation officers in regards to social distancing and Councillor MacDougall replied that the police are involved, but the conservation officers have been mandated to take the lead on this issue.

### **c) Management Team and Employee Evaluations**

Robert noted that he completed the staff evaluations and he is in the process of drafting an email to each staff member explaining the changes of the cost of living and staff increases. We previously used the Results Matter form for evaluations, but

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this year the management team developed an evaluation form and staff found it quite useful.

### **d) Concord Properties Planning**

It was noted that the Concord Properties had a virtual meeting this week and Kevin Reynolds, Director of Planning; and Blaine Yatabe, Town Planner; were included in the meeting. Concord Properties has hired Ekistics (Rob LeBlanc) to do their overall design, and they are starting to develop a plan for the core area. It was noted that Rob LeBlanc was on the team that developed our core area plan in the past and Robert doesn't see any issues. It was noted that at this point they are just in the discovery process.

### **e) Utility Bills**

It was noted that the Utility bills will be going out next week. Robert stated that we put the information out last week that we will not be disconnecting people and we will work with clients on any financial issue. We are still looking into the issue of whether or not we are using more water because of Covid-19, and we will bring that back to Council at a future meeting.

### **f) Park/Sport Field Review**

Jeremy Pierce is checking all of our parks and sports fields out to create a list of what needs to be on the maintenance this year. The maintenance crew is getting geared up for their spring work. There is also a lot of opportunity to get work done at the Town Centre while the building is closed.

The infrastructure director stated that we are making a list of all our priorities to see which ones should be done now and which ones can be deferred. He noted that we are waiting for a company to come in and do a repair on the rotating biological contactor at the waste water treatment facility. The company is off Island and they are not comfortable travelling to the Island at this time. Work is continuing on the pipe to Charlottetown project.

We are still hoping that the company from New Brunswick will come and do the sludge removal of cell 2. Of course there are some issue with leaving the province and travelling to PEI. We did provide letters stating that the sludge removal is an essential service and we would like to get this work done so that it doesn't affect our schedule.

Robert noted that at the last meeting we talked about tenders – particularly about painting the gym and the management team is going to make a list of all the projects we have in our budget and prioritize which ones make sense to do now and which ones have to be deferred.

### **g) Program and Events Reviews and Contingency Plans**

Jeremy Pierce has his staff going through every program and every event that we offer, to look at renewing and updating them. They have a manual for their events and programs and they are taking the time to go through it. The staff is also developing a more robust

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contingency plan for both events and programs. Mayor Ogden agreed that we don't know how long this social isolation is going to last.

### **h) Senior Engagement Project**

We can't launch the Senior Engagement Project at this time because people can't get together and the whole idea was for seniors to be less isolated. Wendy and Jade are working to complete the project with the consultant so when the social isolation is over the project will be ready to go.

### **i) Website**

Wendy and Jade are going to go through the website while they have the opportunity, so if Council has any concerns please let them know. Councillor Burridge noted that she had a few and will email them to Wendy.

## **2. COVID 19 Operational Status Report**

Robert noted a copy of the report was circulated by email to Council with the package and he will continue to send a copy each week to both Council and EMO. Robert asked Jeremy if there was anything he wanted to highlight and Jeremy explained that everything in bold is what has been added since the last report, so you can just read the latest update.

Jeremy noted that EMO has been providing the Town with hand sanitizers and we are very grateful. We contacted Christmas Discounters regarding masks and the shipment has come in. We will be able to pick up some masks and some additional hand sanitizer.

Robert noted that the province has been in touch to tell us that anyone looking to put water and/or sewer in a subdivision will not get approval to do it. They have also suspended testing for the sewer treatment plant but they reinstated testing for fecal coliform to try and make sure that if there is any impact on the shell fishery it is identified. Jeremy added that he believes that one of our utility technicians Jerry Villard is sending samples to an off Island lab to test the BOD and TSS.

Robert informed everyone that Zoom is not encrypted end to end and he would suggest any personal information be kept out of the conversation.

Mayor Ogden noted that the following resolutions are on the agenda for the Council meeting. Robert stated that everyone received the resolutions in their agenda package yesterday, but he wanted to include them in case anyone had any questions.

## **3. Council Resolution Items**

- a. Transit funding
- b. Library lease

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- c. Summary Proceedings Bylaw Schedule amendment re Building Bylaw
- d. Fire company lease (still waiting on HST answer)
- e. Solar Panel cancellation
- f. Amendments to Building Bylaw re: 2017 National Energy Code
- g. Meader Park Naming
- h. Extension of the Line of Credit

The above resolutions were reviewed and were all recommended for approval by Council.

#### **4. COVID Contingency Fund**

- a. Resident and Business Survey

Robert noted that we had this fund when we did our budget and as the Mayor suggested we may also want to do one for the Utility. We haven't looked at that yet, but we will to see what would be the difference between our revenue and expenses because of this pandemic. It may not be as much on the Utility as there is on the Town as we are still providing that service and it hasn't slowed down at all.

Robert noted that he spoke to Peter Kelly last week and the City of Charlottetown is being very cautious about going out and basically getting ahead of the provincial and federal governments. The federal government has quite a bit that they are rolling out and most of the provincial programs are in advance of the federal government because it has taken the feds some time to roll things out. We have to remember that both the provincial government and the federal government can run a deficit, but we can't do that as a municipality; we must deliver a balanced budget. Robert stated that his recommendation is that we be cautious with this contingency fund that we have. He felt that we should not be too proactive and go out ahead of the provincial government or the federal government who are developing new programs every day.

Robert stated that he felt that there are a couple of things we can do to help and one would be to do a survey of residents and of businesses and ask them how things are going. We can ask what issues they are experiencing and if there is anything the Town can do to help out. That would at least give us some feedback from the residents and businesses. The second thing is that Jeremy Pierce has agreed to take on the task of gathering all the information on federal and provincial programs so we have a good sense of what they are doing and then we can try to identify any gaps. We will start the process on both of those ideas if everyone is okay with that approach. Robert suggested that we be cautious about what we are doing with the

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fund. However, if we do identify an immediate need, we should definitely try to fill it.

Mayor Ogden stated that when he and Councillor MacDonald spoke about the contingency fund he felt the concept was on the property tax side as we wanted to make it as simple as possible to administer. If a business was having difficulty we could either forgive the increase or we could forgive a certain percentage of their property tax in certain situations. The criteria was going to be the difficult part. Mayor Ogden didn't want to look at doing a survey because it wasn't meant to be a stimulus thing and some may take it that way. On the Utility side, it is something we could use in certain situations to forgive Utility charges. I think this is what we envisioned from the start. Mayor Ogden reiterated that if we did a survey we would be raising expectations.

After much discussion and input from all of Council, it was agreed there would be no survey conducted because some residents and businesses might take it to mean it is stimulus for them.

b. Review of Federal and Provincial programs

This item was discussed earlier in the agenda.

### 5. Easter Activity

Wendy plans to do an Easter Egg Hunt where we ask residents to search windows for Easter Egg decorations while out on their routine walks. She and Jade felt that maybe people might be getting overwhelmed so we wanted to make it very simple.

***It was moved, seconded, and carried that the meeting resolve into the Stratford Seniors Corporation.***

### 6. Seniors Complex – Stratford Seniors Complex Director's Meeting

#### **SPECIAL REPLACEMENT REERVE ALLOCIATION**

A letter was received from Canada Mortgage and Housing (CMHC) dated April 2, 2020 advising that the operating agreement of the non-profit housing project between the Town of Stratford and CMHC will come to an end in the next few years. CMHC took the opportunity to review the latest Capital Replacement Plan submitted, and found that the replacement reserve balance was underfunded. CMHC determined that \$589,778.50 is required to keep the building in good condition, as well as the health and safety of the tenants.

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The contribution must be deposited into the Replacement Reserve Fund and any subsequent use of the funds will be subject to CMHC approval. This special allocation will be subject to all requirements of the existing Operating Agreement.

Upon motion duly made seconded, and carried, it was RESOLVED that the Board of Directors accept the replacement reserve allocation of \$589,778.50 from CMHC.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

It was moved, seconded, and carried that the meeting resolved back into the Committee of the Whole.

### **7. Communications to Residents**

Robert stated that this is a standing item on the Agenda to talk about what is coming up next week. Wendy is currently working with Viola Murley – Viola has reached out to us with a list of people that she would like to have contacted. We also discussed sending a note to all of our committee members to give them an update drafted from the Mayor. We will let them know how we are conducting business in the short term and we will try to keep in touch with the committee members via email, but we will not be holding meetings just to keep everyone safe. We could ask them in the memo if they would like to be on the list of those contacting people to have a friendly chat. Viola has identified 40 widows and widowers who live alone. Wendy thought we could ask our committee member if they would be interested in making some phone calls and have a conversation.

Councillor Burrridge stated that we don't know how long this is going to go on and she doesn't mind making calls. If you are looking at this as long term, within the group that Viola has created they could call each other. Councillor Burrridge felt that would be more sustainable over the long term. Wendy stated that the people on the list that Viola created don't necessarily know they are on her list, so there are privacy issues.

Mayor Ogden noted that he would be happy to make some phone calls and just talk about general issues – not Town related issues.

Councillor Gallant liked the idea and he would have no problem making some calls.

Councillor Smith felt that there should be some guidelines for these telephone calls. Wendy noted that she would be happy to put in some guidelines if we expand it to

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committee members. Wendy noted that it is not about giving them information, it is just about checking in and asking how things are going.

Councillor Burrridge felt it would be more meaningful if we could have widowers calling widowers. There is more of a chance of a friendship blossoming this way. Mayor Ogden agreed, but how do we make that happen. The Senior Engagement Program was the goal for that, but he doesn't know how we can make it happen right away.

Wendy stated that once she sees the list and councillors can ask the person they call if they would be interested in having another resident call them.

Mayor Ogden – people are really going to remember what we did at this time and we want it to be a positive memory.

### **8. Council Inquiries**

Councillor MacDonald asked if anyone is keeping track of our lost revenue and Robert replied that he will talk to Kim about it. Mayor Ogden added that money we are not spending should also be included.

Councillor Smith stated that there was an incident with the Arts and Culture last week and he wondered if we should put a short guideline about the process that needs to take place. Robert stated that we do have a guiding document that shows the process and he will bring it back and maybe we could update it and send it around to committee members so they understand what role they play and what role Council plays and what role staff plays. Councillor Gallant noted that it was a great initiative by Sandy MacMillan and we had all agreed around the table. With the Arts and Culture Committee Tanya is doing a fantastic job with her events and if we are making money does that profit go back into the Town budget and Robert replied that any surplus we have goes into a reserve for future capital.

Councillor Smith noted that he received an email from staff informing him about a program where vegetables are delivered using the Town parking lot. (It was noted that this program has not started yet.) Councillor Smith asked if here are there any guidelines of who can open a business in the town Centre parking lot and is it a smart thing to do, to operate a business that is not in Stratford. Should we let them come to Stratford and do business out of our parking lot. Councillor Smith felt that Sobey's, No Frills and MacKenzie Produce might be a little upset over this. In Stratford there are no permits for anyone selling things such as vegetables, but Robert noted that we will look into it.



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Councillor Smith asked if it would be possible to send an id and password every morning to get on these Zoom sites as he is finding it very difficult to logon.

Mayor Ogden asked Jeremy to look into the issue of the parking lot.

Councillor Gallant asked about the boat launch and Jeremy replied that there was a preliminary design done about five years ago. He noted that the boat launch is not intended to be for the fisherpersons. It is meant to be an area for Kayaker or someone with a small craft. There will also be some amenities there for people to be able to sit and enjoy the area. It is actually more of a public space and not meant for any commercial fishers. What we can do is take the preliminary design we have now and give it to a consultant through an RFP and get a design on it. Robert added that we haven't received funding for this project yet, so we have to wait for the funding to move ahead with the project. For clarification, Robert noted that the plan is to rejuvenate what is there now. There is no intent to change the use – just make what is there a little bit better.

### **9. Other Business**

Nil

### **10. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.