

SPECIAL COUNCIL MINUTES
21 SEPTEMBER 1998

Present: Chairman Mayor John P. Prall
 Deputy Mayor Michael J. Munday
 Councillor Bruce H. Morse
 Councillor Thomas S. Banks
 Councillor Donald E. Clarke
 Councillor Michael E. Trinacty
 Councillor Gary W. Whittier
 Judith Mitchell, Town Clerk

1. The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Items Announced by the Mayor

- (i) Correspondence from Councillor Alan Sponagle about involvement in an FCM partnership program next June 1999: possible Valley Tour. (Clerk instructed to find out more about membership costs and requirements).
- (ii) Quotes for roofing materials are in from Berwick Building Supplies and Fraser's Supplies. Awaiting labour quotations from six contractors. (Will finalize at Council on October 13th).
- (iii) Looking at Emergency Centre that combines Fire and Police Services in one building, but now contemplating an extension on the northern side of the building (adjacent Patterson's). Mr. Hettema is still working out the logistics and drawing up a tentative floor plan. Not sure if Berwick and District Volunteer Fire Department will favour these changes or not: plan to meet with them when the plans are ready, as well as the Police Department.

3. Roles and Responsibility Review by UNSM/DHMA

Council discussed all of the ramifications of coping in difficult times for Municipal Units generally, and small towns in particular; as well as what kind of issues should be singled out for a submission to prepare for facilitator, Mr. Rick Ramsay, for the October 8th regional meeting. After lengthy and well-rounded discussion, it was agreed the Clerk would write up a draft submission and send it out by October 2nd in Councillor's packages. (Any final changes should be brought to the Clerk's attention by October 6th, at the latest; in order to have the final submission ready for October 8th).

The following points are the highlights of that discussion: (in no particular order)

- One size does not fit all. Level of standards expected are often not reasonable, especially when applying Halifax standards to rural or country areas;

- Cooperation between Provincial Departments and Municipal Affairs is sadly lacking;
- Minister of Municipal Affairs should be made aware of what other Provincial Departments are doing that impacts on Municipal Units;
- No more forced amalgamations: increases the costs and bureaucracy, but not the efficiencies;
- Municipal Charter should be looked at to give local government statutory rights and powers as a bona fide level of government, (and not simply "a creature of the province");
- Municipal Units try to meet all of the various Provincial Regulations, but little support or assistance is made available to help Municipal Units comply. (example: Occupational Health & Safety procedures, Department of Justice audits);
- It would be better if Municipal Units could raise local taxes for local expenditures and discretionary items, and let Province assume "mandatory" expenditures like Education, Social Services;
- Municipal Units should not have to pay for things we have no say over Province is governing by regulation;
- Service delivery and funding levels should be made more equitable between rural/urban areas. (Full assumption of costs for roads and police has not happened in rural areas the way it was intended to);
- Too many Provincial Regulations without consultation or input from Municipal Units;
- Tax burden on local residents is a real concern: "only one taxpayer";
- Better definition required between people services and property services (and who is responsible for each service);
- Cost-sharing of arterial highways should be reinstated, especially for Berwick's unique situation, (between Highway 101 and Trunk 1);
- Rewrite Equalization Grant's formulas to remove the rural bias, or remove altogether and replace with a more equitable transfer payment system;
- Municipal Governments are over-regulated and underfunded;

- Help to preserve/safeguard the viability of small towns to continue to exist in this Province.

4. **RDA Funding Issue**

Based on a letter received from the Minister of Economic Development concerning the future of RDA's, Council discussed the pros and cons of continuing to fund one-third of the revenue base each year for the Kings CED Agency (with other 2/3 provided by Provincial and Federal levels of government). Councillor Banks, as the CED representative, tabled his own list of Pros and Cons and comments to help facilitate the discussion, (copy attached to formal copy of the Minutes).

After rounded discussion of the matter, the following points were noted:

- If CED doesn't spend all dollars allocated for seed money, any unspent monies should be returned to the respective levels of government, (not retained by CED Agency).
- CED provides some "local say" into economic development within the region, as opposed to the Province's methodology of parachuting dollars into mega-projects.
- Level of success depends on level of local involvement from the community at large.
- Municipal Units should have more say than they currently do, if they're being expected to continue funding RDA's.
- Local community members need to know more about what RDA's can offer, what they are all about, and how to access the opportunities that a well-run RDA can offer.
- Full efforts of John Parker and the Antigonish RDA have been instrumental in making Sable Gas a province-wide issue: a "wake-up call" for the rest of the Province.
- Need a local business person(s) or community member(s) to make a commitment and start attending the sectoral meetings.
- Need to take advantage of the Sector Committee system: local projects like Margeson Museum and a possible Boardwalk for the Cornwallis River could just be the start of it, (and may stimulate local interest). Don't want to bailout too soon.
- Question is whether \$1 0,000/year is well-spent.
- Discussion of whether or not municipal intervention is needed in the Berwick area to jump start the process in order to trigger local community involvement. May even have to recruit some community members to give it a try. (Also: Board of Trade members).

- Need to brainstorm and come up with ways to approach the local RDA with ideas and projects.
- Would appreciate clarification from the Province: Are program funds available from the Provincial or Federal governments for local projects (i.e. ACOA money) without funneling it through the RDA?
- RDA's have to better communicate to local business people and local communities why they are here and what they're all about.

The Clerk noted that in a brief telephone conversation with Mr. Chris Bryant earlier today, he noted that the Economic Diversification Agreement ends soon (this is between the Provincial and Federal levels of government). As well, the first five years of RDA's is drawing to a close; whether or not to continue the program for the next five years is a key question. Need Municipal Units to "respond with the unvarnished truth" so that the two other levels of government can help solidify their position. It may be suitable to give a conditional reply, such as "we're willing to continue, but. ." (and then list the specific changes you'd like to see).

5. There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

John P. Prall
Chairman

Judith Mitchell
Town Clerk/Treasurer

ADA'S (KCED)

PROS

CONS

- looks at projects in a larger scale
- - -
- diversified committees
- staff assists project planning
- small business counselling - Natural Gas advocate
- retirement campaign

- \$10,000
- no committee involvement = nothing - local projects are few in number
- should look for big business as well - duplicating municipal efforts
- should target volunteers as well

FUTURE FUNDING

Based on my involvement with this process, I would be concerned that small municipalities are going to be handed a smaller portion if Provincial or Federal support is lessened. I would, however, recommend that we continue to set aside the CEO funds to help local projects.

QUESTIONS

(1) Without clear benefits arising, the answer should be no.

(2) Federal and Provincial support should continue without input from Municipalities.

(3) Perhaps the funds should be managed by a single provincial authority which would make easy access available for any group to leverage cash for their projects. Considering that the KCED allocates barely 50% of its seed funding and uses 25% of its core funds for administration, this could prove a more equitable sharing of funds.

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