

MINUTES OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 14, 2006

Present: Chairman Mayor John P. Prall
 Deputy Mayor Donald E. Clarke
 Councillor Mike Trinacty
 Councillor J. Richard Horsburgh
 Councillor Beth Easson
 Councillor Gary W. Whittier
 Councillor Anna Ashford-Morton
 Mr. Bob Ashley, Chief Administrative Officer
 Ms. Carol Boylan, Recording Secretary

In Attendance: Mike MacLean, Accountant, Town of Berwick
 Ms. Nancy Kelly, Kings Register
 Ann Drummond
 Bob Lancanshire

1. The Chairman welcomed members of the gallery and called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. **Approval of the Agenda**
The Agenda was approved with the addition of the following: Item 5(d) Wellfield Project – Councillor Easson will give an update on this, Item 6(a) Kings County Economic Summit and (8) In Camera Session. The Agenda was approved as amended.
3. **Approval of the Previous Minutes**
The Chairman approved the Council minutes of May 9, 2006 as circulated.
4. **Committee Updates and Recommendations**
 - (a) **Police Services Advisory Committee**
Bob Ashley reviewed the Police Services Advisory Committee report. Discussion followed. There were concerns about the date when files would be closed from the expanded zone to which Bob Ashley replied that he will check with Corporal Buglar on this issue. It was suggested that at the Committee of The Whole meeting on June 27th, Corporal Buglar be asked to provide Council with information on the time being spent on the previous system and these files can go on for some time. It was also brought up that citizens can go into any RCMP office and ask for service and the amount of time spent on these inquiries was a concern.
 - (b) **Committee of the Whole**

Vacant Position in Planning Advisory Committee

This position was advertised on the website and newspaper. An application was received from Mr. Mark Flawn who has impressive experience as a Councillor at 14 Wing Greenwood and familiarity with local planning matters.

IT WAS MOVED and seconded that Council appoint Mr. Mark Flawn as a citizen member of the Town's Planning Advisory Committee.

Motion Carried

5. Ongoing Business

(a) REMO Agreement and By-Law

Mr. Ashley reviewed his report. The CAO's from the towns of Wolfville, Kentville, Berwick and the Municipality of Kings have recently have collaborated to produce a by-law and an inter-municipal agreement on this issue. The ultimate purpose of REMO is to respond to events that cross municipal boundaries.

Discussion followed. Councillor Trinacty raised the question about a budget for REMO. There have been preliminary budget talks with a minimum of \$1,000 budget between all units being required to start. There has not been a lot of work on the budget to date. Each Municipal Unit will have direct input on the budget and any further funding would require Council's approval.

Councillor Morton questioned the insurance and asked if the County was paying for insurance. Mayor Prall would like clarity on the insurance issue. Mr. Ashley noted that anything in the agreement is amendable. Our present EMO stays in place and the old by-law needs to stay in place. Mr. Ashley will confirm this. There is good cooperation and opportunities to share the work in an emergency. REMO has no effect on mutual aid. Our EMO Coordinator would call for help if he decides it is needed. Councillor Trinacty asked if there was an opportunity to come up with a formula that only those municipal units involved in the disaster pay. Mayor Prall agreed that the Agreement needs to be worked on.

IT WAS MOVED and seconded that Council approve the Kings Regional Emergency Services Agreement and authorized the Mayor/Warden and CAO to sign it on behalf of the Town/Municipality.

Motion Carried

IT WAS MOVED and seconded that Council approve first reading to the Regional Emergency Management By-law.

Motion Carried

Councillor Horsburgh asked if the Town presently has a full time Coordinator appointed to EMO to which Mr. Ashley responded that Calvin Boudreau took over from the previous Coordinator Dan Noebert and that the Town is looking for an assistant to Mr. Boudreau. Several people have been approached to take on this position, but to date have been unsuccessful in filling it.

(b) Operating and Capital Budgets 2006-07

Mr. Ashley reviewed his Report concerning the approval of 2006-07 Operating and Capital Budgets and fully explained Scenario A and Scenario B as outlined in his report.

Mike McLean, Accountant for the Town of Berwick further explained the report. Councillor Trinacty asked if there were any other changes that may impact our budget given the results of this election, ie. education costs. Mr. Ashley replied that his understanding is that the Conservative Government would likely retable their budget with small variations. This Provincial Government are going to be seeking early cooperation from the other political parties and a few changes are expected. There is a dollar amount around education and equalization grant in the amount of \$15,000 that Mr. McLean reported would be to the Town's benefit. If the Provincial budget passes and this takes place, we should first look at reducing the amount currently included in the budget as a transfer from accumulated surplus.

Mr. McLean explained that the big hurdle this year is that the new cost of policing comes on stream and we have lost assessment dollars due to the Avon Foods closure, although this year we have had growth in residential.

Mr. Ashley noted that early tendering results came back for patching and paving and they are noticeably lower than what was expected.

Councillor Morton questioned whether there was any way to tighten up the budget and not put taxes up and asked if there were areas that could be cut that had possibly not been considered.

Councillor Clark noted that Council was given the information by staff and they did an excellent effort showing where the Town could cut costs. Our roads are not terrible and when we're going through a tough year and the citizens expect something, this is a place where funding can be cut. Tax rates have not been going up in other towns in this province. Berwick and Canso are the only towns that have raised their tax rates. Councillor

Clark said that we have to do something to keep tax rates under control, although cutting staff or services should not be done.

Councillor Whittler said he has been approached by concerned citizens; they can't afford more taxes and some of them are going to have to sell their homes.

Mr. McLean explained that in order to leave the tax rate where it is, we would be going back to the beginning of the budget process. To maintain the rate of \$1.55 there are serious decisions to make. Mr. Ashley noted that in January doing Council's Priority Setting Exercise, the tax rate did not rank on the list. The collapsing of the RCMP pilot project and education affected us in an extraordinary way.

Councillor Easson noted that it is unfair to compare us to the Town of Kentville. They sold their utility and that is to a large degree what they are drawing from.

Councillor Trinacty said that staff did an excellent job in providing Council with the information asked for regarding the budget and felt it was unfair to go back and review that process again.

IT WAS MOVED and seconded that

(a) Council approve 2006/07 Operating Budget totalling \$3,218,000

Discussion followed.

Ann Drummond who lives at 101 Margeson Avenue and purchased the property on August 1, 2001 told Council of her concerns about rising taxes and assessments. She would like Council to look at the budget to see where they can cut costs. Ms. Drummond also questioned the number of RCMP officers working in town and Mayor Prall responded that the Province requires the Town to have five officers.

Councillor Horsburgh is concerned that the Town is taking on heavy duty long term debt and that the increases aren't over, they are just beginning. He understands that the Town cannot put off doing repairs to the streets but doesn't like the 2% tax increase anymore than anyone else.

Mayor Prall noted that the Town is very well off as far as the conditions of the streets are concerned. We need to keep our streets repaired and we are doing a great job on our streets and keeping this budget under control. Mayor Prall also complimented staff on a great job.

Councillor Morton said it would be remiss not to thank staff for a great job done on the budget.

Mr. McLean reported that staff sympathizes with the position Council is in and that Council has done a good job at evaluating what has been put in front of them.

Motion Carried

b) Council approve the 2006-2007 Residential tax rate of \$1.581 (property tax \$1.581 + sewer tax \$0.130) and 2006-2007 Commercial Tax rate of \$2.968 (Commercial property tax of \$2.968 + sewer tax of \$.130)

Motion Carried

(c) Council approve the three year Capital Budget for 2006-2009 totalling \$2,028.900

Motion Carried

Councillor Clark asked about the part of business assessments that were occupancy tax as he had a call from a concerned business owner. Mr. McLean will send a standard information item on budget in all electric bills and provide businesses with information to understand the new business taxes.

(c) Public Open Space Strategy

Councillor Easson reviewed the final document that was distributed to Council and suggested Council take document home for review and bring back to COTW.

Councillor Clarke asked if there was a list of inventory of open spaces and if there were any surplus lands that the Town could sell. Councillor Morton responded that the Open Space Committee felt that it was the duty of Council to look at surplus space and they did not want to look at this issue. Councillor Trinacty reported that the Committee actually wanted to look at the Town can acquire more open space.

(d) Wellfield Project

Councillor Easson went to Kings County Council which was very informative. The County have passed the 1st reading and goes to a Public Participation Meeting. Councillor Easson will attend that meeting and will go to the final reading.

6. Other Business

(a) Kings County Economic Summit

Councillor Trinacty asked who was planning to attend and said that the Town should be represented. Mayor Prall, Bob Ashley and possibly Councillor Easson are planning to attend. Bob Lancashire reported that this is a business focused summit but that municipal participation would make sense. Mr. Lancashire also reminded Council of the Kings CED Annual General Meeting taking place on Thursday, June 15th in Sheffield Mills. Bob Ashley will attend on behalf of the Town.

(b) Apple Blossom Princess Berwick Jill Trinacty

Councillor Horsburgh noted that since the last Council meeting, Princess Berwick, Jill Trinacty was crowned Queen Annapolis 74th. The town should send Jill a congratulatory letter and Ms. Trinacty will be invited to July's Council meeting.

7. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of Council will be held July 11, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.

8. Council adjourned at 8:45 pm and went into an "In Camera" session.
9. Hearing of no further business the Chairman adjourned the Council meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Mayor John P. Prall
Chairman

Carol L. Boylan
Recording Secretary