



## Minutes of the Regular Council Meeting

Place: Conducted through Zoom, streamed live to Town of Oxford FaceBook, per the authority provided by direction by the Minister of Municipal Affairs while under a State of Emergency on March 22, 2020, under the authority provided in Section 14 of *the Emergency Management Act*

Date: Monday, May 19, 2020

Presiding Officer: Mayor Patricia Stewart

Councilors present: Councilors Dave Clark, Dawn Thompson, Rick Draper and Wade Adshade

Councilor arrived late: Councillor Brenton Colborne (6:13 pm)

Regrets: Councillor Wendy Sweet-Kontuk

***A quorum was present throughout the meeting.***

Staff in attendance: CAO – Rachel Jones and Deputy Clerk – Linda Cloney (recording secretary)

### 1. Call to order

Mayor Patricia Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Mayor Stewart and Council recognized Jayla Spence, Jersey Spence and Olivia Melay. They worked together on a craft project and sold some of their crafts. Part of the proceeds went to the Oxford and Area Food Bank Association. Mayor and Council are very proud of their action of kindness to the community.

Mayor Stewart and Council also recognized Shelly Mattinson and Carly Moore for all their dedication and hard work. They have organized banners to be made of the graduates for the OREC graduating class of 2020. These banners will be displayed along Main Street in Oxford during June until graduation day. Mayor Stewart and Council recognized how much they have gone above and beyond to collect money and were successful to get enough donations to cover all costs. Hats off to everyone who has been involved to make this happen.

### 2. Approval of Agenda

It was moved and seconded that the agenda of the Regular Town Council Meeting for May 19, 2020 be approved, as presented.

***Motion Carried***

### **3. Approval of Previous Minutes**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Regular Town Council for April 20, 2020 be approved, as presented.

***Motion Carried***

### **4. New Business**

#### **4.1 RFD #006-2020: Alternative Voting Bylaw 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading**

It was moved and seconded that Town Council give second reading of Bylaw #01-2020, Alternative Voting Bylaw.

***Motion Carried***

#### **4.2 RFD #007-2020: Appointment of Solid Waste Bylaw Enforcement**

It was moved and seconded that Town Council appoint CJSMA employees Brenda Lynn Rioux and Michelle Lynn Canfield as Solid Waste Bylaw Enforcement Officers for the Town of Oxford, in conjunction with the Town of Oxford Chapter 52 Solid Waste Bylaw.

***Motion Carried***

#### **4.3 RFD #008-2020: COVID-19 Property Tax Financing Program Policy**

This initiative came forward because the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) approached the Province for a solution to help taxpayers that have had income/sales affected by to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Property Tax Financing Program Policy is a Municipal Short-Term Loan Program; that the Province will facilitate through the Municipal Finance Corporation (MFC). Municipalities are not allowed to borrow money for operating or cashflow purposes. The COVID-19 Property Tax Financing Program Policy has given the municipalities the authority to borrow. This will allow the Town of Oxford to offer support to ratepayers who have had their income/sales impacted by COVID-19 and provide a policy that ensures everyone is treated equally.

Qualifying criteria for residential properties are that you must be the owner/occupier (primary residence in the Town of Oxford) and prove that your income has been affected by COVID-19.

Qualifying criteria for commercial properties are that they have a commercial assessment under \$2,000,000 or be a registered tourism operator.

The Town of Oxford has been collaborating with the County of Cumberland and the Town of Amherst to have a similar policy to present to the residents and businesses.

The essence of the policy allows those who qualify for the program to make a \$25.00 payment per month for the first six months. The remaining taxes will have a 1.1% interest rate on the municipal loan and a 0.25% interest to cover administrative fees. A total of 1.35% interest with the remaining taxes will be averaged over the next 24 months. In total, this is a 30-month program. The Town of Oxford will borrow the money through the MFC at an interest rate of 1.1% with at 30-month payment term.

Staff will communicate this program to the public through a notice on social media, the Town website, and a mailout to property owners, so they are fully informed of it.

It was moved and seconded that Town Council approve the COVID-19 Property Tax Financing Program Policy as presented; and,  
Further that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town of Oxford waive interest on the current 2020/21 property tax accounts for the month of June 2020 and accounts that remain outstanding after June 30 will attract interest; and,  
Further that, any and all outstanding taxes for previous fiscal years will continue to attract interest.

***Motion Carried***

#### **4.4 RFD# 009-2020: Asset Management Cohort Program**

The gas tax agreement is between the federal and provincial governments and provides consistent infrastructure funding based on a set formula for municipalities. As part of the requirements for municipalities and provinces to continue to receive gas tax funding there are timeframes in which the province must feedback about outcomes on what progress is being made by municipalities regarding asset management. One of the dates for the Outcomes Report was in 2018 and the next one is in 2023.

It is a requirement for municipalities to have an asset management plan and strategy in place in order to continue to receive gas tax funding.

The Atlantic Infrastructure Management (AIM) Network Asset Management Cohort Program is typically an 18-month process that brings a group of municipalities together to work through the process, support each other in learning and developing asset management plans, and provides support for grant funding through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to assist with the projects. They have successfully worked with 14 municipalities in Nova Scotia already and come highly recommended for the process and achieved outcomes from their process.

It was moved and seconded that Council approve funding in the amount of \$7,500 from the Town of Oxford's Gas Tax Fund to participate in the Atlantic Infrastructure Management (AIM) Network Asset Management Cohort Program beginning Spring 2020.

***Motion Carried.***

#### **4.5 Financial Variance Report: 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020**

Council had discussion regarding the Financial Variance Report presented. It is anticipated that the Town of Oxford will have a \$126,000.00 deficit this year.

CAO Jones gave a verbal report explaining some of the reasonings for the deficit.

- wage increases from the collective agreement were not included in the approved budget.
- funding was provided by the Province for the Oxford Sinkhole expense and the unused funds were not carried over from last year. Staff will consult with the auditors; we may need to reinstate the 2018/2019 financial statements and bring that balance forward to the 2019/2020 year.
- Council decided to use strictly salt versus sand and salt combination for the winter plowing season. This cost was an extra \$19,000.
- Extra accounting and audit fees cost was an extra \$25,000.
- We had unexpected maintenance issues at the arena and town hall that were necessary to fix. This cost was an extra \$30,000
- Tipping fees at CJSMA had an extra cost of \$22,000. All units experienced higher than anticipated tipping fees.

Based on approving a very tight budget, there is no room to absorb any unforeseen or unexpected overages.

Council had a discussion regarding the Policing Review results. Council would like to know the expected time frame for a response back from the Minister regarding the letter sent from the Policing Review Committee and Council. CAO Jones will follow up.

Council had a discussion regarding the results of using strictly salt versus the salt and sand combination during the winter plowing season. There was not a lot of feedback provided from staff as to if there was a significant change regarding drains and clean up of the streets. Council did notice there was not as much of a mess this year to clean up versus other years. Public Works did a great job cleaning up the streets.

The deficit will need to be the first thing paid in the 2020/2021 year.

It is anticipated to have a preliminary draft 2020/21 budget for discussion at the June Committee of the Whole meeting.

#### **5. Reports**

CAO Jones presented the Public Works report.

Council had a discussion regarding the sidewalk maintenance and crosswalk painting starting soon.

It was moved and seconded that Council receive the report as presented.

***Motion Carried***

## **6. Correspondence**

### **6.1 NSCC Thank You**

Mayor Stewart and Council received a nice thank you letter from the NSCC Foundation for the \$5,000 contribution.

This year the NSCC Foundation presented to Mayor and Council the 2019-2020 recipients, Megan Corbett – Practical Nursing and Ruby Hannah – Social Services. Congratulations were extended to these two ladies.

## **General Discussion**

Council had a discussion regarding the damage that was done to the Bunny Trail recently.

Council would like to mention to residents that if you see any activity that damages property to call the RCMP.

It is understood that 40 – 50 people use the Bunny Trail every day from all ages.

Council wants to express their acknowledgment of all the hard work that Al and Maxine Clark put into our community. They are the Town of Oxford's Volunteers of the Year.

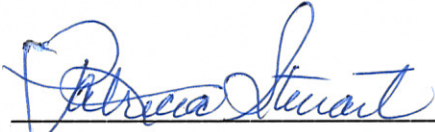
Council also had a brief discussion regarding the Strategic Priorities Chart and would like to have an update soon.

## **7. Adjournment**

Mayor Patricia Stewart advised Council that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 15, 2020 at 6:00 pm.

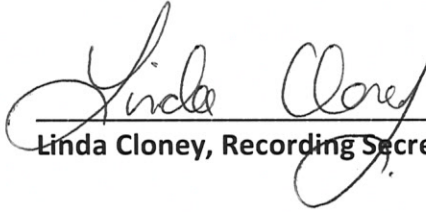
At 6:35 pm, it was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned.

***Motion Carried***



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Patricia Stewart, Mayor



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Linda Cloney, Recording Secretary