

**Region of Queens Municipality Regular Council**

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2020**

**9:00 A.M.**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Darlene Norman, Chair  
Deputy Mayor Kevin Muise  
Councillor Ralph Gidney  
Councillor Maddie Charlton  
Councillor Vicki Amirault  
Councillor Jack Fancy  
Councillor David Brown  
Councillor Carl Hawkes  
Chris McNeill, CAO  
Christine Watson, Admin. Assistant – Planning & Development

**1.0 CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Norman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**2.0 CHANGES/APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**It was moved by Councillor Gidney and seconded by Councillor Amirault that the Agenda be approved as circulated.**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

**3.0 PRESENTATIONS**

There were no presentations to come before this meeting.

**4.0 TABLING OF PETITIONS**

There were no petitions to come before this meeting.

**5.0 PUBLIC QUESTION/COMMENT SESSION**

Leon Robertson – College Street, Liverpool – Mr. Robertson stated under Item 9.2 – Provincial Safe Re-Start Agreement in the amount of \$590,735 was a good thing, and enquired if after the allotted funds have been distributed, would the remainder go into general revenue. Mayor Norman stated yes.

Mr. Robertson further offered his comments on Item 14.1 – Evening Council Meetings, stating in the past there were not many members of the public who attended. Members of Council and staff commute across the Municipality and weather conditions should be taken into consideration.

David Huskins, 160 Church Street, Liverpool – Mr. Huskins enquired about signage at the end of Jubilee Street which was not replaced when the road work was completed. Mayor Norman stated the signage not being reinstalled was intentional and motorists can turn either way.

## **6.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

### **6.1 Regular Council – November 10, 2020**

Councillor Gidney stated his comment under Item 12.1 Queens Place Emera Centre Board of Directors was omitted and asked the following be added to the minutes:

Councillor Gidney stated some Board members contacted him that they received notice on November 5 that the Board had been discontinued; however, the matter had not been discussed at Council. Councillor Fancy stated the members were also asked to return their binders.

**It was moved by Councillor Brown and seconded by Councillor Hawkes:**

**THAT the minutes of the Regular Council meeting held November 10, 2020 be approved as amended.**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

### **6.2 Public Hearing – November 10, 2020**

**It was moved by Councillor Gidney and seconded by Councillor Charlton:**

**THAT the minutes of the Public Hearing held November 10, 2020 be approved as circulated.**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

## **7.0 DANGEROUS OR UNSIGHTLY PREMISES**

There were no items to come before this meeting.

## **8.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

There were no items to come before this meeting.

## **9.0 CORPORATE SERVICES**

### 9.1 Cost Sharing of J-Class Roads – 2021-2022 Fiscal Year

**It was moved by Councillor Gidney and seconded by Councillor Charlton:**

**THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality notify Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal that it does not wish to participate in the cost-sharing program for 2021-2022.**

Chris McNeill, CAO, stated each year Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (NSTIR) asks rural municipalities if they wish to cost-share in capital upgrades to roads in their jurisdiction.

Before amalgamation there was a provincial/municipal exchange of services. There was an exchange where the province took over the full cost of community services, more of education and housing, etc. The exchange was to be revenue neutral. Because RQM was to receive more, they allocated a certain amount of J-Class roads to us and billed at \$3,500/km times the number of kilometers in order to get us to revenue neutral.

The province owns and maintains the roads, but a program is in existence where if the Municipality wants to help fix those roads, then they will consider it. The provincial annual budget is \$1 million and is matched by the municipalities.

The only roads available are listed in the agenda package. There is a provincial committee working to get rid of this structure and make it more efficient. This may be the last year for this list of roads and may be a different program going forward.

Councillor Fancy stated there are roads on the list that are in need of repair and RQM is in receipt of money to subsidize our losses this year.

**MOTION CARRIED with 7 in favour, 1 against.**

9.2 Provincial Safe Re-Start Agreement

**It was moved by Councillor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Amirault:**

**THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the transfer of \$25,674 to Queens County Transit as required by the Nova Scotia Safe Re-Start Agreement for municipalities;**

**AND FURTHER THAT Council authorize a contribution of \$2,020.15 to Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia to be divided equally between Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.**

Mayor Norman stated Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing (DMAH) announced that funding will be available to all municipalities from its provincial Safe Re-Start Agreement (SRA) and RQM was allocated \$590,735.

DMAH has noted \$25,674 is to be provided to local transit. RQM has also been asked to provide \$2,040.15 to NSFM and AMANS to help cover their losses.

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

9.3 Creation of Audit and Internal Control Committee

**It was moved by Councillor Amirault and seconded by Deputy Mayor Muise:**

**THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the Audit and Internal Control Committee Terms of Reference.**

Mayor Norman stated RQM currently has a Finance and Audit Committee consisting of one member of the public and all members of Council. Several years ago the province requested a change in the audit committee.

Mr. McNeill stated the current Finance and Audit Committee meets once a year to review the draft financial statements with the municipal auditor. One member of the public sits on that committee.

A couple years ago the province put in place new rules that required more involvement from the public and review of financial information of the municipality and not just financial statements. The proposed Terms of Reference for the Committee are very comprehensive. The committee will review the financial statements, and will also work with the auditor to determine what the scope of the audit will be. They will review the management letter, which is any internal operational day to day staffing efficiencies or deficiencies and work to correct those, our accounting systems and internal controls and how we safe guard the financial resources entrusted to us by the public to make sure there is no fraud, no inappropriate spending of money, appropriate collection of money, and transparency. The Committee will also look at risk management, any type of wrong doing, making sure we're following all the regulatory requirements, etc. The financial and accounting rules are very strict and staff have to follow them.

RQM also has significant investments. We have an investment policy but it has never been reviewed by the Committee or by Council except for approval. The Committee needs to review to ensure we are investing our money wisely and maximizing interest.

RQM has a banking services contract with a local bank that gets reviewed every few years and has always been a staff function.

RQM has a very comprehensive insurance coverage program for all our assets and has always just been a motion of Council.

It will take time to get the Committee up and running, to go through all the functions and rules and responsibilities. It will make Council and the public much more aware of our operations and how we do things. By changing it from one member of the public to 3 and 2 members of Council will increase the transparency.

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

## **10.0 ENGINEERING & PUBLIC WORKS**

There were no items to come before this meeting.

## **11.0 FINANCE**

### 11.1 2020 TIR-Queens-2019-109

**It was moved by Councillor Gidney and seconded by Councillor Brown:**

**THAT Council of the Region of Queens Municipality approve payment to Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for 50% of Old Port Mouton Road paving expense of \$20,011.64 from General Operating Reserve.**

Mallory Plummer, Acting Director of Finance, stated RQM entered into a Cost Share Agreement with Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for repaving (0.2 km) of Old Port Mouton Road with an estimated cost share of \$32,500. The invoice for this work was not received until July 2020 in the amount of \$20,011.64.

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

## **12.0 RECREATION AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

There were no items to come before this meeting.

## **13.0 PLANNING**

There were no items to come before this meeting.

## **14.0 REPORTS**

### 14.1 Evening Council Meetings – Councillor Charlton

Councillor Charlton stated she is bringing this topic forward to obtain support for evening council meetings. Before running for Council she was interested in how Council works, but didn't have an opportunity to attend as meetings are held during the day. This was also something brought forward when campaigning by constituents that they would like a change as they were interested in attending.

RQM is moving forward to be more accessible and inclusive in Queens. We have Inclusive and Accessibility Committees, and we need to look at extending further out into the community. We need to be more accessible and this would allow people the opportunity to come out.

As mentioned by Mr. Robertson there has not been a great turnout in the gallery in the past, but we don't have a great turnout in the day time either. It would be an equal opportunity to allow other options. Investigation into how other municipalities meet showed Shelburne meets all in the evening 7 – 9 on Mondays, Mahone Bay meets at 7 and alternates Tuesdays and Thursdays, Bridgewater meets at 6 on Mondays and Yarmouth meets at 7:30 every fourth Wednesday and every second Thursday at 3:30 so they do a hybrid option.

It's not about just allowing the community to come in during the evening or day time. During campaigning she was told there were people who would like to run for Council, but given the fact that the meetings all happen in the day time, they're not able to do so due to other commitments and feel the way Council is run now is for people who are retired.

Councillor Amirault agreed with Councillor Charlton. There are teachers and other people who can't make day time meetings and suggested having one a day time meeting and one an evening meeting. This would provide a wide range of time to allow people to attend.

Councillor Hawkes agreed with Councillor Amirault and stated he felt hybrid meetings would work best for RQM.

Councillor Brown suggested that with the amount of travel that he and Councillor Hawkes do that we would like to see a trial done during the non-winter season, maybe in the spring/summer because of snow and icy roads, travelling at night long distances is a risk. If we start holding Council meetings in the evening all staff members who have to report will have to come in as well and will increase the cost of Council to run, may cause some departments to be understaffed by staff not working the following day. He further clarified that his concern was not only driving at night during the winter storms but that the road conditions in his area are icy all winter long.

Councillor Charlton agreed with Councillor Hawkes that a hybrid option would be best and recognized the staffing challenges. The safety concern is a valid concern. She enquired about previous Councillors who travelled in the day time through the winter weather. Mayor Norman stated during severe weather the office would normally be closed.

Councillor Charlton stated where staff are concerned, as done in other municipalities, staff would tweak their hours and not be expected to work their regular hours to accommodate the evening meetings.

Councillor Fancy stated he resides close enough that either way would work for him, but to remember that we are a municipality and people have to travel rather than a town such as Bridgewater or Shelburne who are within the town. He further stated he didn't know how a hybrid program would work for anyone wanting to be on council, with a mixed schedule, but would be in agreement with however we chose.

Mayor Norman requested Mr. McNeill to bring forward a motion and policy changes to a future Council meeting for discussion and debate for a hybrid model.

## **15.0 IN-CAMERA ITEMS**

**It was moved by Councillor Brown and seconded by Councillor Hawkes that the proceedings go In-Camera at 9:40 a.m. to discuss the following:**

### **15.1 Litigation**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

Mayor Norman announced a 10-minute recess at 9:40 a.m.

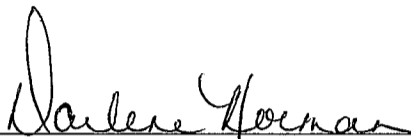
**It was moved by Councillor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Fancy that the proceedings exit In-Camera at 10:45 a.m.**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

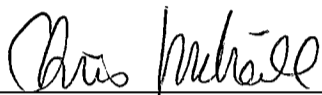


**16.0 ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.



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Mayor Darlene Norman, Chair



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Chris McNeill, CAO



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Christine Watson, Administrative Assistant – Planning & Development

Date Approved:

December 8, 2020