

**Region of Queens Municipality Regular Council
Tuesday, May 23, 2023 6:00 p.m.**

Minutes

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

1.0 Call to Order

Mayor Norman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2.0 Changes / Approval of Agenda

Add Item 7.2 Valuation Allowance and Item 7.3 Sick Leave Accrual.

It was moved by Councillor Gidney and seconded by Councillor Brown that the Agenda be approved as amended.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

3.0 Presentation

3.1 Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute – Municipal Species at Risk Stewardship

Mayor Norman welcomed Marie Racioppa, Communications and Outreach Coordinator, Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute (MTRI), to Council.

Some highlights included:

MTRI are a science based research group focused on protecting biodiversity. Projects are dedicated to the research and conservation of multiple species at risk including turtles, eastern ribbon snakes, bats, likens, monarch butterflies and Atlantic coastal plain flora (ACPF species).

MTRI is a partner organization with the Family Forest Network and is a member of the Kespukwitk Conservation Collaborative (KCC).

The KCC is a group of 18 partners including Mi'kmaq organizations, non-government organizations, academic institutions, and federal and provincial government departments and was established in October 2017 to collaboratively work to conserve species at risk and biodiversity in the Kespukwitk/Southwest Nova Scotia Priority Place.

An environmental stewardship survey was sent to municipalities to get responses to the following:

- How can we support municipalities in Species at Risk (SAR) Stewardship?
- What environmental concerns are the greatest concern for the municipalities?
- What are the barriers that municipalities face that are impeding their ability to do an environment stewardship? Identify opportunities to link municipalities with various environmental groups and initiatives that can help with environmental initiatives and provide support and expertise.

There were 56 respondents to the survey that came from 22 municipalities of the 24 within the Kespukwitk. Fifty percent of the respondents were council members and other fifty were staff members from a variety of departments including planning, bylaw enforcement, and administration.

- What do you think makes your municipality unique?

Ecosystems,
Services they provide to humans including recreation,
Sense of place, and
Habitats that species at risk use.

Respondents were knowledgeable about species at risk; 61% were able to name at least one within their municipality and the ecosystems within their municipality. Fifty-four percent of respondents were unfamiliar with the term ecosystems services.

Participants did not consider the loss of vital ecosystem services as a high concern, which could be the term acting as a barrier for understanding the question, as 59% of the respondents reported that species at risk are important to healthy ecosystems.

There was a low familiarity with the Kespukwitk Southwest Nova Scotia party place initiative with only 23% of the respondents being familiar with it. Currently there are eleven party places across Canada including the Kespukwitk party place which are being funded through the Federal government for conservation.

- What is the main environmental concern for your municipality?

Climate change was the main concern across municipalities and Kespukwitk, with 21 of the 22 municipalities mentioning this and most also mentioned related issues such as extreme weather events, sea level rise and erosion. In addition, water quality was the second most common response.

- What are the challenges to environmental stewardship?

A lack of funding, lack of capacity, lack of multi-level government support and a lack of political will.

Concerns were raised on the lack of information on species at risk and not knowing what to do if you find a species at risk.

- What tools and Resources would make environmental stewardship more accessible?

Access to experts that can help with outreach and education events.

Information on species at risk, both in terms of mapped habitat or mapped ranges of species at risk as well as guidelines for action.

Municipalities working in silos and wanting to find more ways to work together and engage with other levels of government but needing help with building these relationships and repairing lost trust.

NGO's support was also raised, although over 60% of respondents were not aware or unsure of any NGO's working with their municipality for environmental stewardships.

Region of Queens Specific Results – Survey

- Respondents noted some special features of the area including protected lands, forests, wetlands and ocean access.
- Climate change issues such as erosion and extreme weather events.
- It was agreed that municipalities have a role to play in conserving species.
- There was a positive response that Municipalities have the authority to act as environmental stewards; i.e. through policy, planning, education and engagement.
- Greatest challenge to stewardship is the lack of priority given to environmental issues stemming from a lack of awareness and resources available to address these types of issues.
- The Region did not mention any NGO's they are currently working with suggestions potential for more engagement and support.
- Respondents were not aware of any policies or planning strategies implemented by the municipality that are aimed at the environmental stewardship. This is untrue as there are a strong set of policies to protect vegetated buffers but no mention of species at risk in the bylaw documents.

Information on the Stewardship Toolkit can be found at

<http://kswnsconservation.ca/resources/resources-for-municipalities>

- The Spatial Tools - Includes 2 interactive maps, one of which will show which municipalities are missing key planning documents from their website highlight the municipalities that incorporate species at risk into the documents, and a map that includes species at risk habitat data. Also included will be a decision tool to help users find recovery actions they can take to help SAR.

- Conservation and Municipal Tools – Consolidate existing planning tools and find examples of strong bylaws or strategies enacting within Kespukwik and across Canada that could be implemented by local governments.
- Funding and Organizational Support – MTRI will host interactive tables to help find organizations offering funding opportunities or their support.
- Community, Action, Reports and Guides – MTRI have compiled existing resources based on key issues brought up in the survey.

If there are any questions or suggestions, you can contact:
marie.racioppa@merseytobeatic.ca

Councillor Charlton enquired when the tool kits will be made available. Ms. Racioppa stated by early fall.

Mayor Norman asked what type of polices would MTRI like to see; i.e. actions that municipalities should take or enforcement of private lands, or the role of municipalities? What do you mean when you refer to policies? Ms. Racioppa stated the most effective way would be to have municipalities create policies for species at risk and would be in the land use policy. If there was development, the developer would have to check the area for species at risk or species at risk habitat. If there was any there, then the development could not proceed.

Setback laws is a great way to protect buffers and keep lake shores natural.

Coastal management plans are being released from the government and MTRI hope the municipalities will uptake more protection of coastal areas as well. Annapolis has policies on how they deal with evasive species which helped them be more proactive.

Birds Canada is also trying to get municipalities to adopt a policy that if there is an old building with a chimney that is set for demolition, that it first be inspected in case it is being used as a roosting place.

Mayor Norman asked of all the municipalities in Kespukwik, which does MTRI see as leaders. Ms. Racioppa stated although everyone has a unique history and land use zoning, there are a few that mention species at risk in their municipal planning strategy, their municipal action climate change plan and integrated sustainability plans. Lunenburg has a lot of mentions in theirs but have an issue where they haven't zoned most of the district.

Barrington is doing a good job with their policy and planning, but as things change they are updated.

Mayor Norman thanked Ms. Racioppa for her presentation.

4.0 Tabling of Petitions

There were no petitions to come before this meeting.

5.0 Public Question / Comment Session

There were no members of the public present for this meeting.

6.0 Approval of Minutes

6.1 Regular Council – May 9, 2023

It was moved by Councillor Brown and seconded by Councillor Charlton:

THAT the minutes of the Regular Council meeting held May 9, 2023 be approved as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

6.2 Variance Hearing – May 9, 2023

It was moved by Councillor Amirault and seconded by Councillor Hawkes:

THAT the minutes of the Variance Hearing held May 9, 2023 be approved as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 Privateer Farmer's Market for Waiver of Policy 58 – Consumption of Alcohol on Municipal Property

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

THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality agree to waive Policy 58 – Consumption of Alcohol on Municipally Owned Properties at the request of Privateer Farmers' Market at Centennial Park, Liverpool on Saturdays from June 3 to October 28, 2023.

AND THAT the applicant be required to submit proof of insurance in no less than \$2,000,000 per occurrence with the Region of Queens Municipality as additional insured, and copy of the in effect liquor license from the Province of Nova Scotia to the Region, and that all municipal, provincial, and federal laws be strictly adhered to.

Councillor Charlton asked where this is an Operational Policy, if staff could deal with this request rather than it coming to Council. Some organizations may not be aware of this and it could become a problem. Dan McDougall, Interim CAO, stated when policies are waived they normally go to Council. If the policy authorizes staff to make a decision then they can, but this subject may not be eligible to delegate to staff for the decision making.

Mayor Norman asked Council if they wished these type of requests to come before Council or be dealt with by staff. The majority of Council wished them to be brought before them.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.2 Valuation Allowance

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

THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the Valuation Allowance for the 2022/2023 fiscal year of \$99,905.

Joanne Veinotte, Director of Corporate Services, stated the valuation allowance is done on a yearly basis and follows policy, so is very easy to calculate, and is based on our accounts receivables. It is based on the years that the taxes have not been paid, and then is transferred into the valuation allowance and the following year they go to tax sale.

The good news this year is we have a negative valuation allowance. We are putting money in to recover taxes to adjust the balance where it should be. Last year there was an \$80,000 expense to uncollected taxes. This year it's roughly \$4,400 because we've done a good job managing our collections. The balance of \$99,905 is the balance you will see on the financial statements.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.3 Sick Leave Accrual

It was moved by Councillor Brown and seconded by Councillor Charlton:

THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the Sick Leave accrual for the 2022/2023 fiscal year of \$18,203.

Mrs. Veinotte stated this is the second year we've had a sick leave accrual. It is vacation time owed to workers at our residential care facility because under their collective bargaining group they can save and bank vacation. This will add \$2,200 to the Hillsvue deficit.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

8.0 Discussions

8.1 Council Implementation Report

There were no questions or discussions arising from this report.

8.2 Marketing Levy – Councillor Charlton

Councillor Charlton stated she discussed with Mayor Pam Mood how they utilized their marketing levy. The province had changed the legislation in the fall to allow all municipalities the opportunity to collect these levies. Mayor Mood stated the monies collected is put back in the community for tourism and used for attraction for tourists. The people within the community benefit by taking part in these events and does not cost the tax payer any money.

The Region has an events manager and feel that utilizing this marketing levy then our economic development department under our events manager would have money every year to be able to plan different events.

Councillor Charlton circulated documents to councillors depicting the monies collected from accommodations by Mayor Mood for Yarmouth.

A marketing levy can be imposed of up to 3%. Recently the Province released legislation that Airbnb's and short term rentals of 28 days or less have to register with the Tourism Registry.

She further stated she feels there is a lot of value in this and would benefit Queens County.

Mayor Norman stated Bill 204 was introduced and had its third reading this past November 1st which clearly outlines this. This is a fee that is collected from tourists that is collected and is used to promote tourism. The Region will have to create a Bylaw to enact this. She

asked if council wished to pursue this further. If we are creating a Bylaw, then our finance department will need to be involved.

Mrs. Veinotte stated it would be good to discuss with businesses before making final decisions. She voiced a concern on what enforcement tools that we will be permitted to use if the facilities we have in our region refuses. How will we know that the reporting is right, as the reporting all costs money? It will require resources for the businesses to collect the money. Where is the accountability to make sure that the numbers being given are correct?

She further commented that from a finance point of view, we can figure out how to make it work for us. She commented that Yarmouth has high room numbers when the ferry runs as the schedule is such that the people stay there the night before and the night they arrive.

We do have tourism operators in this region that spend hundreds of thousands of dollars already promoting themselves and therefore, our region, who may have a concern about this levy because even though it's on the bill, it's always the front facing people who are asked to explain it.

She stressed the importance of getting businesses together to discuss and validate what the money is going to be used for.

Mayor Norman asked council if they wish to have staff investigate and bring back at a future meeting. The majority of council stated they would like to have this. Mr. McDougall stated he will ask Richard Lane, Director of Economic Development, to prepare a discussion document with components that would include confirmation of what exists in the legislation, what authority the Region has, look at a jurisdictional scan of what other municipalities are doing, what their levies are, where the funding is going to get a sense of what our neighbours are doing, and work with Mrs. Veinotte on what the collection process would look like, what enforcement would look like, what the administration implications are, identify a consultation plan and the potential uses for it.

9.0 In-Camera Items

It was moved by Councillor Gidney and seconded by Councillor Charlton that the proceedings go In-Camera at 7:12 p.m. to discuss the following:

9.1 Contract Negotiations

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

It was moved by Councillor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Amirault that the proceedings exit In-Camera at 7:24 p.m.

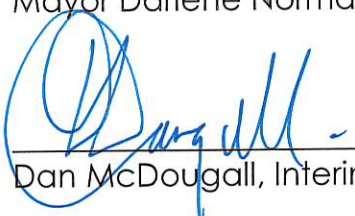
MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

10.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.



Mayor Darlene Norman, Chair



Dan McDougall, Interim CAO



Christine Watson, Administrative Assistant – Planning & Development

Date Approved: 