

**Region of Queens Municipality Regular Council  
Tuesday, September 12, 2023 9:00 a.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  
Mike MacLeod, Acting 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**

Move Item 8.4 – NSFM Convention Attendance to Item 7.5.

Add Item 8.4 – Public Hearing Intervenor Status – Nova Scotia Aquaculture Review

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

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

**3.0 Presentation**

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**

Mable Wisniewski - 34 Mersey Avenue, Liverpool – Mrs. Wisniewski stated the water issue is costing residents and asked Councillors to think about giving those residents a rebate on their next bill. Mayor Norman stated it is highly unlikely that a rebate will be issued as the bills are based on water consumption.

Mayor Norman further stated only the customers of the utility are responsible for everything within the utility. RQM is legislated under the UARB respecting rates. Bills are based on water consumption and it is unlikely that there will be a credit. The water at Cowie well is free to residents and is potable.

Janice MacMillan, 5711 Highway 3, Liverpool – Ms. MacMillan stated she suffers from fibromyalgia. She sells photography art to start a support group for the South Shore Chronic pain sufferers and their families. She voiced her disappointment that there is no support group on the south shore. The Canadian Mental Health – NS is the only group to date that has offered and is providing support.

## **6.0 Approval of Minutes**

### **6.1 Regular Council – August 8, 2023**

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

**THAT the minutes of the Regular Council meeting held August 8, 2023 be approved as circulated.**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

### **6.2 Public Hearing – August 8, 2023**

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

**THAT the minutes of the Public Hearing held August 8, 2023 be approved as circulated.**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

6.3 Special Council – August 24, 2023

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

**THAT the minutes of the Special Council meeting held August 24, 2023 be approved as circulated.**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

## **7.0 Recommendations**

7.1 Community Investment Fund 2022-2024 – South Shore Multicultural Association

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

**THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality provide grant funding to the South Shore Multicultural Association in the amount of \$3,000 from the 2023-2024 Community Investment Fund.**

Stephanie Sereda, Community Development Coordinator, stated a request from South Shore Multicultural Association was received and is for assistance with hosting a two-day event to commemorate National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and Treaty Day on September 30 and October 1, 2023.

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

7.2 Audited Financial Statements Fiscal 2022/2023

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

**THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality adopt the Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2023.**

Joanne Veinotte, Director of Corporate Services, stated on August 7, 2023, Gloria Banks, Principal from Grant Thornton, presented the audited financial statements to the Audit and Internal Control Committee. The Committee members thoroughly reviewed and

recommended they be adopted by Council.

Consolidated statements are a combination of the statements of all the separate funds.

#### B2 – Statement of Financial Position – Operating Fund

Cash and Cash Equivalents include the GIC's as they are all redeemable within less than 12 months or on demand.

Valuation Allowance for Doubtful Accounts – There is a zero balance as the uncollectible accounts were removed this year with permission from Council as there was no chance of recovery. Current collection policy is designed to prevent this from occurring in future.

Payables and Accruals are higher mainly due to trade payables increase of \$400,000. Large invoices for capital jobs submitted close to year end.

Deferred Revenue increase due to Sustainability Growth Fund payment at year end of \$763,000 to be utilized for infrastructure investment in fiscal 23/24.

Due to Special Operating Fund contains the surplus transfer and that was less than prior year transfer of \$3.4M.

#### B3 – Statement of Financial Position – Capital Fund

Asset Retirement Obligations are part of this statement. The ARO asset value is part of the Tangible Capital Asset line.

There is also a new liability recorded – Asset Retirement Obligation. These changes were made to the prior year also and that is why you see a balance here for both years.

Landfill Liability has also been calculated using the Asset Retirement Obligation Method.

Our landfill liability is \$14,444,980 and the reserve balance is \$5,932,812. Council should be aware of this for discussion during budget deliberations.

#### B3 – Statement of Financial Activities and Changes in Fund Balance

The compactor rebuild was funded from the Landfill Equipment reserve, hence the \$1.1M transfer.

There are new accounts here due to the Asset Retirement Obligation changes.

The accretion expense is broken out into Landfill and Other, as is the amortization for the Asset Retirement Obligation. Then there is amortization calculated on TCA's as normal.

Principal payment are higher than last year due to the balloon payment on debenture 27.

#### B5 – Statement of Operations

Section 1 – Taxes: Deed transfer tax exceeded the budgeted amount by \$505,560. When budgeted, staff used a conservative number of their best estimate.

Recovered taxes is \$40,500 less than budgeted which is a result of less properties sold than expected at tax sales. Title searches submitted to the lawyer resulted in more than half coming back with title issues that needed to be resolved before the Region was able to take to tax sale.

Nova Scotia Power Corporation payment was \$87,169 higher than budgeted.

Section 2 - Grants In Leiu: Decided by Federal and Provincial Governments.

Section 3 – Services Provided To Other Governments: Only a 2% increase from budgeted amount to actual.

Section 4 – Sales Of Services: The 6% increase is related to Mixed and sorted C&D for those outside of Queens being over budget by \$33,000. Metal sales were \$7,000 more than budgeted.

Section 5 - Revenue From Other Sources: Return on investments is higher (\$139,000 than budget) due to continued increases in prime rate. Cash deposits have now been invested in GIC's per strategy approved by the Audit and Internal Control Committee. The operational cash is being managed weekly to maximize the incremental interest. It is only interest on operational cash that is included in the operations budget.

Queens Place Ice Rental and Fitness Memberships totaled \$107,000 more than budget, the result of a full year with minimal covid restrictions.

Miscellaneous revenue increase is due to non-budgeted items such as the Murphy Donation of which \$188,800 was brought into revenue and expensed in Section 15. We received \$5,500 from TIANS for VIC staff funding which was unbudgeted as well as an additional \$6,000 in recreation revenue.

Section 6 – Unconditional Transfers From Other Governments: received \$700 more than budgeted for the farm property. Municipal Grants Act payments came in as budgeted at \$1,217,234.

Section 7 – Conditional Transfers from Other Governments: \$50,000 more than budgeted was able to be claimed from the Safe Restart Funding, other amounts above budget come from funding from various projects that were completed during the year. It was hard to budget for these with supply availability issues and shortages of staff.

#### Section 8 – Other Transfers

This is where the funding is brought in from reserves for budgeted items and for Council approved unbudgeted items.

The transfers are as follows:

South Shore Hospital Foundation Donation – Unbudgeted \$100,000  
RQM Contribution to playground from CIF - Previous budget year \$111,773

Comfort Centers – Unbudgeted \$4,850

Post Closure Report- \$121,719

LDBC Lease Commission - \$93,750

Pension Surplus from prior year - \$336,000

Broadband funding - \$175,000

Pine Grove transfer - \$25,000

Fire Department loan payments- \$173,611

Garika & Veinot Land sales - Unbudgeted \$98,000

The Post Closure transfer was more than budget because AECOM was unable to complete the majority of the work in 21/22.

#### Section 9 – General Government Services

Mayor and Council Wages - under budget as COLA was used for budget in error.

Bank Charges - Over as credit card charges for Queens Place are in this account. Next year these will be allocated to Queens Place.

Low-income tax rebate additional rebates of \$13,268 distributed.

Tax sale costs appear higher, but this is a timing difference. We will recover most of the title search costs upon the tax sale in Fall of 2023.

Council audio was not completed before March 31, 2023 therefore no costs related to this are here.

Vault Access project not completed due to lack of staffing in EPW. There was substantial savings of \$160,000 on the ARO report.

The valuation allowance only expensed \$1,300 compared to the \$105,000 budgeted. There has been a significant decrease to Region of Queens taxes receivable from outstanding properties being sold at tax sale to payment arrangements implemented and maintained.

#### Section 10 –Protective Services

It was expected to have two full time building inspectors for the entire year, however due to recruitment issues the second building inspector did not start until September 2022 which resulted in \$24,000 less paid in wages.

Unightly premise cost accrual was \$29,000 on a demolition. In F2023, when complete, the amount will be transferred to tax account relating to the AAN.

There was one loan payment less than budget which saved \$26,482.

The Fire station building required radiator repairs along with increased fuel costs put it over budget by \$13,000.

#### Section 11 – Transportation Services

Engineering and Public Works Wages under budget by \$52,417 due to employee shortage.

Equipment operations over by \$160,666 which comes from: oil (\$8,449) gasoline (\$6,954), diesel (\$45,345) and repairs all over budget. Loader repairs \$19,000 spent in pistons and sleeves. This equipment is over twenty years old.

Small equipment maintenance includes a \$5,000 scissor lift circuit board and \$13,000 front axle on the 2012 Trackless as largest contributors to overage.

Roads and streets under budget by \$56,277 which is a combination of sidewalks material and snow removal salt.

Airport is over as insurance was not budgeted. During budget process last year, it was expected that the airport would be sold. Also the purchase of a hangar at \$25,000 was an unbudgeted expense.

#### Section 12 – Environmental Health Services

Sewage collection and disposal costs were over budget by \$68,031 which includes overage of electricity, sewer materials, and gate installation.

Garbage and waste collection fuel surcharge paid was over \$44,000 which was over budget.

There were position vacancies at the Recycling Facility which resulted in wages being \$112,863 under budget.

#### Section 14 - Environmental Development Services

Administration is under due to inability to fill staffing positions that were included in budget.

Other planning was over budget as accessibility projects were completed.

Tourism and economic development under due to inability to fill staffing positions that were included in budget and the wayfaring project costing less than anticipated.

#### Section 15 – Recreation and Cultural Services

Both Milton and North Queens pools were under budget due to inability to fill staffing positions.

Beach Meadows Beach Maintenance of boardwalks and grading not complete due to staff shortages.

Astor Theatre repairs not completed as budgeted for due to staffing issues.

Tractor purchased (\$33,000) in October to support operations and is funded by operations.

The unbudgeted grant payment to the Liverpool Curling Club shows an increase in Sundry Revenue and an Increase to community grants expense.



Queens Place Emera Centre Revenue for the year was \$503,257, an increase of \$114,540 from the prior fiscal year. Expenses totaled \$1,348,869 therefore Queens Place Emera Centre has a deficit of \$841,612.

#### Section 16 – Fiscal Services

Budgeted transfers from reserve with the exception: \$100,000 donation which was unbudgeted but approved by Council, \$111,773 CIF contribution to playground.

Region of Queens Operating Fund had a surplus of \$1,669,497 for fiscal year ended March 31, 2023.

#### Queens Place Emera Centre

Revenue: \$503,257 - \$106,000 or 27% over budget

Expenses: \$1,348,870 - \$36,200 under budget (staffing)

Annual loss: \$845,613

Budget loss: \$988,323

Councillor Muise stated he has heard from residents on the loss at QPEC, which every year is big, and something needs to be done. Mrs. Veinotte stated options are being investigated.

Mayor Norman stated when QPEC was build it was done as a social and economic driver for the community and to encourage people to want to live in the area.

#### B12 - Hillsvie Acres

Funding from emergency repair and capital projects included in revenue. This is expensed under Expenditure Other. A new revenue account has been added for the coming fiscal year to separate these sources of revenue.

#### B13 – Statement of Operations and Surplus - Water Utility

The deficit of \$88,488 came from increased cost of supply, particularly chemicals and a write off of pipe and fixture inventory at year end of \$31,000. Administration office supplies, contracting services and insurance were all slightly over budget.

Metered sales were under budget by \$23,196 whereas other revenue was over budget by \$7,280. The other revenue increase is due to connection fee revenue not budgeted for.

Interest revenue over budget by almost \$30,000 due to initiation of investment policy and increased interest rates.

B14 – Statement of Financial Position – Water Utility  
Cash and cash Equivalents are down because of balloon payment on debt.

Debenture associated with the building of the Water Treatment Plant is now paid in full.

The GIC is separated for UARB.

B17 - Statement of Financial Position – Operating Reserve  
Short Term Investments (GICs) are broken out on this statement.  
Significant Receivable to Special Operating Reserve is the surplus transfer.

B17 – Statement of Financial Activity and Change in Fund Balance  
Significant difference in Annual Surplus is caused by Interest revenue increase in current year and previous year increased surplus, gas tax revenue and sewer reserve reimbursement.

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

### 7.3 IT System Evaluation RFP

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

**THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality contract Bulletproof Solutions ULC Cyber Center to complete an IT Systems Evaluation of Region of Queens Municipality.**

Mrs. Veinotte stated there is no strategic plan in place for IT infrastructure management. The IT Manager has brought our systems up to date and now an independent company will come in and look at the systems to make sure we are fully covered.

The RFP will provide the foundational information that the IT Manager can use to complete these tasks. The RFP was posted on the Nova Scotia Procurement site on October 13, 2022. A meeting was held with staff in January with top companies to better understand the expectations and Bulletproof Solutions was determined to have the best understanding of our needs.

During a meeting with the Bulletproof Team there was discussion surrounding which standard should be used as benchmarking for our

systems; Cybersecurity Canada or NIST CSF. It was determined that Cybersecurity Canada framework would be the better fit and would result in a reduction of price. In a follow-up meeting in August 2023, the Bulletproof Team noted that upon further reflection and consultation with colleagues, that NIST CSF was the better fit for municipal units. This is why the budgeted cost was \$60,000 and the proposal is for \$61,425 + HST. The unbudgeted cost will be \$4,000.

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

#### 7.4 Compensation Review RFP

**It was moved by Deputy Mayor Fancy and seconded by Councillor Gidney:**

**THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality contract KBRS to complete a Municipal Compensation and Benefits Review for Union and Non-Union staff and Elected Officials of Region of Queens Municipality.**

Mrs. Veinotte noted RQM and other municipalities are experiencing a shortage of staff. The first step to ensure we can recruit and retain staff is the compensation review. The review will provide benchmark and comparative compensation levels for union, non-union and elected officials. Once this is completed, a presentation will be made to Council.

The Request for Proposal was posted on the Nova Scotia Procurement site on August 9, 2023 and closed August 25, 2023. Six submissions were received and scored by staff according to the scoring matrix in the RFP document. The proposal with the highest score was KBRS from Halifax who have considerable experience in compensation reviews in Atlantic Canada, both in government and private sector.

The operational budget includes \$50,000 for this review and recommended proposal is quoted at \$22,950 plus HST plus travel if required, therefore it is within budget.

Councillor Charlton asked about the timeline for this issue to come back to Council. Mrs. Veniotte stated as soon as possible, and 10 weeks would be reasonable turnaround time.

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

## 7.5 NSFM Convention Attendance

Mayor Norman stated the budget enables five members of Council to attend the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities Annual Fall Convention on November 7 to 10, 2023 in Halifax. She asked which Councillors are interested in attending.

Councillor Gidney, Councillor Muise, Councillor Charlton, Councillor Brown and Mayor Norman indicated they wished to attend this convention.

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

**THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the attendance of Councillor Gidney, Councillor Muise, Councillor Charlton, Councillor Brown and Mayor Norman at the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities Annual Fall Convention November 7 – 10, 2023 as per Administrative Policy 7.**

**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

Mayor Norman announced a 10 minute recess at 10:24 a.m.

## 8.0 Discussions

### 8.1 Council Implementation Report

Councillor Amirault asked about the HVAC investigation at Town Hall Arts and Cultural Center from March 14, 2023. Adam Grant, Director of Engineering & Public Works, stated the draft report has been received and reviewed. Final report should be completed in approximately 4 weeks.

### 8.2 Queens County ATV Association & Queens Rails to Trails Association

Mayor Norman stated a presentation was made previously to Council by the Queens County ATV Association and Queens Rails to Trails Association. As a follow-up to their presentation, a letter of request was received from David White, President, Queens County ATV Association and Secretary, Queen's Rails to Trails Association, asking for RQM's support for the designating / amending of the trail

corridor from West Street behind RQM office to Silver Rock Road in Hunts Point to include multiuse.

Consensus given to Mayor Norman to send a letter of support to include the amendment of the trail from West Street behind the Region's office to Silver Rock Road in Hunts Point only.

### 8.3 Policy 82 – Fire Department Capital Purchases and Operating Grants

Mrs. Veinotte stated during budget discussions, fund was approved for the fire departments based on a different formula. We used to have a base rate and then added 2 cents, but that was changed to 5 cents. In order to distribute the funding to the fire departments, the policy needs to be revised. The grant section of the policy is updated.

The section for capital purchase trucks is not updated. In order to do so, all fire chiefs have to agree on the purchase schedule of all trucks (emergency vehicles, pumpers, tankers) and the amount for each vehicle. It has been a challenge in getting all fire chiefs together. The monies have to be distributed before the end of the fiscal year.

Councillor Brown asked that there be clarity in the motion that it specifically pertains to the grant funding formula. Mrs. Veinotte stated yes and that all the fire chiefs have agreed to the grant funding formula.

Councillor Charlton suggested that an email be sent to the fire chiefs to advise them of this decision so there are no concerns.

### 8.4 Public Hearing – Intervenor Status – Nova Scotia Aquaculture Review

Mayor Norman stated the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Review Board has given notice of the Public Hearing from February 5 to 9 and March 4 to 8, 2024 at the Best Western Hotel in Liverpool. These hearings are for the lease adjustment to finfish operation at Coffins Island for two new finfish applications at the mouth of Liverpool Bay.

Mayor Norman asked Council permission for her to fill out the application for intervenor status for the three sites as Region of Queens, and advised that this is just the application. The Aquaculture Review Board decides who can and who cannot intervene.

Councillors agreed to Mayor Norman filling out the application and being the spokesperson. They agreed that we have many beaches and resorts that need to be protected.

Mayor Norman stated if the application is approved it will be come back as a formal discussion at a future council meeting.

## **9.0 In-Camera Items**

**It was moved by Councillor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Gidney that the proceedings go In-Camera at 11:00 a.m. to discuss the following:**

- 9.1 Contract Negotiations
- 9.2 Contract Negotiations
- 9.3 Contract Negotiations
- 9.4 Personnel
- 9.5 Personnel

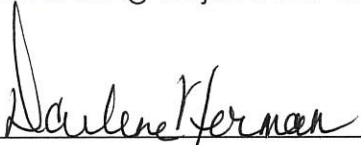
**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

**It was moved by Councillor Gidney and seconded by Councillor Charlton that the proceedings exit In-Camera at 2:05 p.m.**

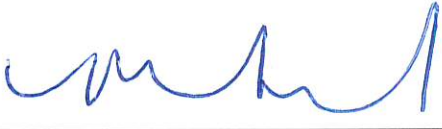
**MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

## 10.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

  
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Mayor Darlene Norman, Chair

  
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Mike MacLeod, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

  
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Christine Watson, Administrative Assistant – Planning & Development

Date Approved: September 26, 2023