

**Region of Queens Municipality Regular Council
Tuesday, September 26, 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 7.4 – Milton Centennial Pool
Add Item 7.5 – Condenser Replacement, Queens Place Emera Centre
Remove Item 8.1 – Update Public Hearing Intervenor Status – Nova Scotia
Aquaculture Review
Item 8.2 Water Utility becomes Item 8.1
Remove In Camera Item 9.1 – Contract Negotiations

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

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Mayor Norman welcomed Municipal Advisor, Andrea Hyslop, who was present in the gallery.

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

David Huskins, 160 Church Street, Liverpool – Mr. Huskins asked if there was documentation available on the water utility discussion. A copy of the discussion paper which had been circulated was provided to him.

6.0 Approval of Minutes

6.1 Regular Council – September 12, 2023

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

THAT the minutes of the Regular Council meeting held September 12, 2023 be approved as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

6.2 Special Council – September 21, 2023

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

THAT the minutes of the Special Council held September 21, 2023 be approved as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Policy 82 – Fire Department Capital Purchases and Operating Grants

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

THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality adopt revised Policy 82 – Fire Department Capital Purchases and Operating Grants as presented.

Joanne Veinotte, Director of Corporate Services, stated this was discussed at the September 12th council meeting and that the policy be updated to enable the distribution of the incremental funding for the Fire Departments that was passed in the 2023/2024 budget.

A new formula will be based on 5 cents on the tax rate each year as agreed upon by all Chiefs.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.2 Appointments as Building Official

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

THAT Council of Region of Queens Municipality appoint Graham Hopkins, Bruce Parks, Kyle Whynot, Ryan Whynot, Earl Woodworth and Amanda Esterbrooks to the position of Building Official for Region of Queens Municipality.

Dan McDougall, Interim CAO, stated Building Officials are required to be appointed by Council in order to administer and enforce the Nova Scotia Building Code.

Nova Scotia Building Officials Association establishes three levels of qualification for Building Officials. The Region's current Building Officials have yet to attain all the necessary requirements to carry out Level 2 inspections, which are the most complicated.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.3 CAO Hire

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

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality authorize Mayor Darlene Norman and Deputy Mayor Jack Fancy to sign the employment agreement for the hiring of Cody Joudry for the Chief Administrative Officer position for the Region of Queens Municipality.

Mayor Norman provided background on the hiring process of Mr. Joudry. She stated Mr. Joudry comes with 16 years municipal experience and worked in various departments. He has strong communication skills and understands the importance of public engagement.

She further thanked Dan McDougall who filled the position as Interim CAO and the Region's Directors who were appointed as Acting CAO during a period of time Mr. McDougall was not available.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.4 Milton Centennial Pool

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

THAT the Council of the Region of Queens Municipality approve a budget for repair of the Milton Centennial Pool facility at a cost of up to \$50,000 plus HST.

Adam Grant, Director of Engineering and Public Works, stated during the rain event in July 2023, the pool and surrounding area had considerable damage.

The base for the pool requires substantial work to repair and the liner cannot be installed until the spring of 2024. The pool walls will need to be braced over the winter.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.5 Condenser Replacement, Queens Place Emera Centre

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

THAT the Council of the Region of Queens Municipality approve the purchase of a replacement condenser for Queens Place Emera Center at a cost of \$255,000 plus HST, 10% contingency, plus installation to be funded from operations.

Director Grant stated in late summer early September the refrigeration equipment began to malfunction and staff diagnosed

the condenser had a minor ammonia leak. Cimco Refrigeration were hired to repair and identified several more that were compromised.

The condenser has been severely reduced and needs immediate replacement. Nova Scotia Department of Labour has requested a long-term plan be submitted by September 29, 2023.

Staff are recommending the stainless steel as it will mitigate future issues and provide a longer useful life.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

8.0 Discussions

8.1 Water Utility

Director Veniotte stated Region of Queens residents have been under a boil water advisory since August 7, 2023. Staff have been asked to provide options for possible one-time reductions in water bills for water utility customers.

The Utility and Review Board must approve any change to the rates as outlined in their order. Staff will have to apply to the UARB should Council wish to proceed in this direction. The Utility is expected to post a significant deficit this year with the increase in supply costs and the significant investment in equipment repairs. This may impact the decision of the UARB.

The Utility does have an operating reserve that was set up for periodic sediment removal costs. The reserve balance is approximately \$180,000. If Council decides to apply for a one-time reduction to the UARB the use of this reserve could be explored.

Staff have asked the Municipal Solicitor to determine if the Council has the authority to use municipal general revenue for a one-time reduction. If there is authority to do so Council would have to decide if this is an option they would consider.

Staff have looked at options for reducing a future bill. There are two fees charged each quarter; base rate and consumption. Base rates range from \$39 (for a 5/8 inch meter) to \$1867 (6 inch meter) per

quarter and are based on the size of the meter serving the property. There are 8 different base rates.

The consumption rate is the same for all users and the current rate is \$1.24 per cubic meter (1,000 liters).

There are a variety of uses of potable (drinking) water depending on the use of the property being serviced. Residential uses would typically be drinking, cooking, and hygiene such as brushing teeth, etc. Commercial uses would include residential uses and may also include use in beverages for resale such as soft drinks and coffee, etc., process water for food products, etc. Staff do not have detailed information for each property served with respect to the percentage of water consumed for drinking/potable uses.

Staff have developed an estimate of the cost to the utility for a variety of scenarios based on the consumption rate, as follows:

- A 25% reduction would range from approximately \$11.00 to \$54.00 for the customer base and would cost the utility approximately \$20,000.
- A 40% reduction would range from approximately \$16.00 to \$87.00 and would cost the utility approximately \$32,000.
- A 70% reduction would range from approximately \$31.00 to \$153 and would cost the utility approximately \$56,000.00.

The higher end of the range reflects commercial users.

Please note that the water bills include an amount for Sewer also, which will not be affected by any one-time reduction.

Councillors offered suggestions to approach this issue:

- A reduction of 50% which would equate to \$40,000,
- Use a different approach if this issue happens again,
- Businesses receive a bigger reduction than residents,
- Reduction to be paid from the water utility reserve and note paid from the general reserve,
- The percentage reduction the same for both residents and businesses and keep the formula simple,
- Reduction of 70% for all users.

Mayor Norman noted RQM water rates are the lowest in the province.

Consensus given to Director Veinotte to proceed with applying to the UARB to issue a 70% reduction on the consumption charge for the next quarterly invoice for all utility users, source of funds to be the Utility's operating reserve for all utility users. She will bring a recommendation forward at the next council meeting.

9.0 In-Camera Items


There were no In Camera items to come before this meeting.

10.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.



Mayor Darlene Norman, Chair



Dan McDougall, Interim CAO



Christine Watson, Administrative Assistant – Planning & Development

Date Approved: October 10, 2023