



## MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MR# 2018075**

**DATE: 20 September 2018**

**RE: Work begins on proposed cannabis regulations**

**AMHERST, Nova Scotia** – Amherst town council's committee of the whole has asked town staff to gather more information before it takes any action on developing any new bylaws related to the legalization of cannabis on Oct. 17.

The committee particularly wants information on enforcement as well as evidence from other jurisdictions detailing where the growing of cannabis on private property is permitted and what restrictions other areas have placed on the smoking of cannabis and tobacco as well as vaping.

They felt this information was needed to help them develop local regulations that would determine where cannabis might be cultivated for personal use within town boundaries and establish restrictions on where it could be consumed on public property.

The committee's action was taken Sept. 17 during the monthly committee of the whole meeting after staff presented for their consideration a proposed Nuisance Bylaw. Modeled after one developed by the Halifax Regional Municipality, it would replace the Amherst Smoke Free Recreational Places Bylaw, and would prohibit all forms of smoking (ex. tobacco, cannabis and vaping) on all town properties, except those areas designated for smoking tobacco and vaping.

The proposed bylaw would also restrict cultivation of cannabis to a dwelling or accessory building.

The committee also referred any potential planning document amendments, as a result of the legalization of cannabis on Oct. 17, to the Planning Advisory Committee for review. The amendments, based on work already done by the Halifax Regional Municipality, would define licensed production facilities and the location where these facilities would be permitted, such as in an industrial zone with minimum setbacks from residential and other sensitive land uses.

The amendments could also define where cannabis retail sales outlets and cannabis lounges may be located in the event the province changed its legislation. Currently, provincial regulations do not allow the establishment of cannabis lounges and only allows the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation to sell cannabis.



Staff made it clear to the committee of the whole that the work to establish the Nuisance Bylaw and develop amendments to planning documents is just beginning. They also indicated there would be opportunities for stakeholders to comment on the proposed new bylaw and any amendments to the town's planning documents as the process moves forward.

### **Debenture resolution sent to council for approval**

The committee of the whole approved sending a resolution for pre-approval of a debenture issue in the amount of \$916,677 to the Sept. 24 town council meeting for approval.

The long-term financing, which would come from the Municipal Finance Corporation, would provide funding for the water main replacement and street reconstruction of East Victoria Street, from Rupert Street to Civic No. 250, and the storm water separation work on Station Street.

Staff indicated this form of financing via the Municipal Finance Corporation is a well-established process for borrowing funds for capital purposes.

### **Fire truck funding resolution sent to council for approval**

The committee referred a resolution to transfer \$525,907 from the operating reserves to the general capital fund to Amherst town council's Sept. 24 session for approval.

The transferred money, surplus funds from last year's budget that was previously placed in the operating reserves, would cover the cost of purchasing a new fire truck without having to borrow money to make the purchase.

Council will save \$379,607 in debt repayment interest between this purchase and the use of surplus funds to pay to develop the Community Credit Union Business Information Centre and upgrades to Mill Street, staff said. Using surplus funds to cover the costs of the latter two projects was approved in May.

### **PACE resolution sent to council for approval**

The committee approved a staff recommendation to have the first reading of the Respecting Charges for the Property Assessed Clean Energy Program Bylaw take place at the Sept. 24 council session.

The proposed bylaw would allow the town to offer financing to homeowners for energy efficiency retrofits that are paid back via their tax bill over a 10-year period.

Staff indicated there would be a \$14,000 startup cost to the town, but that could be recovered from the province. They also indicated that all costs to provide the program are paid for by participants and there would be no cost to property owners who do not participate.

Similar programs are already in place in Bridgewater, District of Lunenburg, Richmond County, HRM and others. The Municipality of Cumberland is taking steps to offer a similar program.



## **Support and concern over Border Entrance Bylaw**

The committee recommended the overall support of a Border Entrance Sign Bylaw proposed by the Municipality of Cumberland for the area between Fort Lawrence and the town boundary.

They also expressed concerns with a portion of the proposed bylaw.

Those concerns centered on a portion of the bylaw that would prevent businesses and services located in the Town of Amherst from advertising in Zone A, an area where committee members believe most tourists make the decision to return to the Trans Canada Highway or head in to downtown Amherst.

The committee was told the inter-municipal committee entrance committee, which has been working to help develop the bylaw, is aware of the concerns, which have also been shared with the municipality, and that a compromise solution may be possible.

## **Sign bylaw to be reviewed**

The committee of the whole instructed the town's Planning Advisory Committee to conduct a review of all signage provisions in the town's land-use bylaw. The PAC is to report back to council with recommendations – if any – at a future date.

## **Intersection to be examined**

The committee of the whole received a complaint about safety at the intersection of Park and West Pleasant streets. They instructed the town's traffic authority to investigate the complaints and to develop recommendations to improve the safety of the intersection if any improvements are warranted. The traffic authority will report its findings to the committee later this fall.

## **Seniors' walking program**

The committee of the whole received an update on a possible seniors' walking program at the Amherst Stadium that said a trial run for a designated seniors' walking time between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. would start on Oct. 9.

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