



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RE: Amherst planning event to honour first responders

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – An ad-hoc committee has been tasked with planning an event that will honour the first responders who serve the Town of Amherst.

The ad-hoc committee, consisting of Mayor David Kogon, Deputy-Mayor Sheila Christie, Coun. Wayne MacKenzie, Coun. Terry Rhindress, Acting Police Chief Dwayne Pike, Fire Chief Greg Jones and an as yet un-named EHS representative, was appointed Oct. 15 after town council's committee of the whole heard two options from staff on how the town could recognize the efforts of about 100 first responders who serve the community.

The first option suggested issuing a proclamation declaring First Responders Week, taking the first responders to an Amherst Rambler hockey game and putting on a display of the vehicles and equipment used by first responders.

The second option would see all first responders invited to a breakfast where the mayor would issue a first responders' proclamation and the leads for each emergency service would outline the work performed by their organization.

Committee of the whole members all agreed honouring the first responders was a priority and indicated they liked parts of both options, but decided to leaving the planning with the ad-hoc committee.

Development agreement discharge recommended

The committee agreed to send a request to discharge a development agreement to the Oct. 22 council session for approval.

The request came from the new owners of a property at the corner of Dickey and Rupert streets who indicated they were not interested in building a 30-unit townhouse on the property as laid out in the development agreement that was reached between the town and the previous owner in 2007.



Staff indicated the property would be subject to the town's land use and subdivision bylaws once the discharge is completed.

Discussion paper on the use of a gender-based analysis tool ordered

The committee instructed town staff to prepare a discussion paper on the possible use of the Gender-Based Analysis Plus tool.

The tool is used in other communities to assess how diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people are impacted by policies, programs and initiatives. When used, councilors would not only hear about the environmental and financial impact of a proposed policy decision, but would also hear about gender, age and diversity impacts as well.

Gritty to Pretty Beautification Plan

The committee is forwarding a plan that would provide grants to assist businesses upgrade the appearance of their properties to Amherst town council's Oct. 22 meeting and are recommending its approval.

A joint effort between the town and the Amherst & Area Chamber of Commerce, the Gritty to Pretty Beautification Plan has received a \$25,000 grant from the Municipal Affairs Department. This enables the partnership to then offer commercial and streetscaping grants, to a maximum of \$5,000, to local businesses.

The Chamber of Commerce will administer the program.

Planning Advisory Committee

A staff report that looked at possible changes to the town's Planning Advisory Committee has been sent back for more review.

The report was initiated by a committee request earlier this year to look into the possibility of increasing the number of councilors sitting on the Public Advisory Committee or disbanding it. The report indicated the town could do either, but recommended keeping the current six-member committee as it is, with an even mix of councilor and members of the public.

The report also suggested two amendments to the policy that gives the PAC its mandate. The first would see council appoint the chair of the committee. The second would ensure that committee decisions wouldn't be made on the same day that public engagement sessions are held.

Committee of the Whole members rejected the suggestion that council appoint the chair, agreed the Planning Advisory Committee should continue, but asked staff to take another look at the timing between presentations and decisions.



Ice helmet policy remains unchanged

A request for a policy change to allow senior citizens to skate at the Amherst Stadium without a CSA-approved helmet was rejected by the committee. The majority noted the helmet policy was introduced earlier this year in order to ensure safety of skaters of all ages. They felt exempting one age group would open the door to others seeking an exemption from the policy.

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