



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2018090

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RE: Town of Amherst adopts new expense reimbursement and hospitality policies

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – Amherst town council rescinded its existing travel policy and adopted new expense reimbursement and hospitality policies during its Nov. 26 council session.

The changes bring the town in line with new provincial legislation that came into effect after expense irregularities were found in some Nova Scotia municipalities. The changes in provincial legislation required the town to establish separate expense and hospitality policies.

The expense policy prohibits the municipality from reimbursing expense claims for alcohol, identifies those who have the signing authority to reimburse expenses, sets out the rules for using corporate credit cards, outlines permitted expenses and the procedures for claiming them.

The hospitality policy defines what a hospitality event is, establishes the expenditures, including an alcohol purchase, that may be approved, establishes the process for authorizing hospitality expenses and the process for claiming them.

CIBC Children's Foundation grant

Council accepted an \$8,000 grant from the CIBC Children's Foundation. The grant was given to the town on the condition that it give \$5,000 of it to the Fundy Hockey School and \$3,000 to Amherst Bantam Baseball.

The foundation gave the funds to the town because it can only give donations to registered charities, which the town is under the Income Tax Act.

The hockey school will use the grant money to cover operating expenses, while Amherst Bantam Baseball will use the funds to offset the costs of the junior championships they hosted.



Parking lot leases

Town council approved the signing of lease agreements with eight different owners of parking lots in order to continue providing free public parking in the downtown area.

The town has historically leased various parking lots in the downtown. Those leases expired, so council sought new leases via a request for proposals that was issued earlier this year.

Under the new agreement, the town will lease a total of 368 parking stalls from the parking lot owners for a period of 10 years. The lease payment per lot will be \$1 plus the cost of maintenance and snow and ice management services.

Unlike the old leases, the town will not cover the cost of the property taxes, which will result in about \$6,000 per year in savings for the town.

PAC citizen appointment

Council approved the appointment of Larry Pardy to the town's Planning Advisory Committee. Pardy's term will run until March 31, 2021.

Land-Use Bylaw amendments

Council gave first reading to proposed amendments to the town's Land-Use Bylaw that would regulate cannabis-related uses in the town.

The amendments would define licensed production facilities and allow them in industrial zones, with a minimum 70-metre setback requirement from residential properties, parks, daycares and religious institutions.

The amendments would also define cannabis retail sales and cannabis lounges, and clearly prohibited those uses in any zone, with the exception of the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission cannabis outlets, which under current provincial legislation is the only entity in the province allowed to sell cannabis.

The proposed amendments are intended to mitigate the potential negative impacts of cannabis-related uses by establishing minimum separation distances, and limiting the risk of youth exposure. Conversely, the amendments will not place undue limitations on those wanting to consume or produce cannabis for a medical and/or recreation purpose.

Before the proposed amendments to the Land-Use Bylaw can be approved, a public meeting where people can provide input – pro or con – must be held. It is scheduled for Dec. 17 at town hall, beginning at 6:30 p.m. After that, council will have to approve a second reading of the amendment before they go into effect.



Coun. Jason Blanch's residency

Council received a report on a legal opinion sought by the Town of Amherst on the status of Coun. Jason Blanch's residency. The report states Blanch is ordinarily resident in Amherst within the meaning of the act and is therefore qualified to continue as a town councillor.

Asphalt Plant

Coun. Darrell Jones reported he and Coun. Rhindress attended a recent meeting with Costin Paving, Environment Department and neighbourhood representatives and Cumberland North MLA to discuss the air quality around the Costin Paving asphalt plant in Amherst.

The paving company plans on making updates to the asphalt plant that should reduce the amount of blue smoke and smell coming from the plant, Jones said. The upgrades will be implemented before the plant resumes operating the in spring.

Jones said he and Coun. Rhindress felt the meeting was productive and believe the upgrades to the plant will improve the air quality in the area.

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