



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2018093

DATE: 17 December 2018

RE: Amherst keeping its police force

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – The Town of Amherst is keeping its police force.

The decision to keep the local department and not request a proposal from the RCMP was made by Amherst town council on Dec. 17 after it received two reports on policing that it commissioned last May.

In passing the motion, council also directed town and police department staffs to work together on an expanded internally focused review that would seek ways to increase efficiencies within the department while also examining opportunities to expand the services offered by the force.

“One of council’s top priorities has been to conduct an in-depth study on the costs of policing in Amherst,” Mayor David Kogon said. “By doing these studies and making the decision we made tonight, council has done its due diligence and will continue to do its due diligence on one of the town’s major cost drivers.

“We have an excellent police force and by working together, I am certain we can continue to provide excellent policing to the citizens of Amherst in a fiscally responsible manner.”



The Town of Amherst has decided to keep its municipal police force.



Acting police chief Dwayne Pike welcomed the decision to keep the local force.

“Providing a service to the Town of Amherst includes being fiscally responsible and ensuring operations are efficient,” Pike said. “The needs of the community can only be met when they are accurately identified, an effective strategy is designed and proper resources are allocated.

“Efficiency is a continuing process. The decision of council provides the Amherst Police Department with a means to review and fine tune the way we do business.”

The Amherst Board of Police Commissioners previously passed a motion supporting the reports.

The reports - Amherst Police Sustainability Review Report and Policing in Amherst Today - looked at policing cost drivers on a national and local level, summarized the services currently provided by the local department and examined the cost of each of those services.

In addition, the reports studied the cost of providing those services over the next 10 years and estimated the costs would rise a further 21 per cent over the next decade, resulting in policing costing almost \$850,000 per year more in 10 years than it does today. The operating budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year is just over \$4.2 million.

In recommending the town not pursue the RCMP option, the report noted there were uncertainties around the cost for the RCMP as its staff is moving forward with unionization, the potential impacts to service by moving from the Amherst Police Department to the RCMP is not fully understood and there has been at least one recent case where a municipality voted to end its contract with the RCMP and create its own municipal force.

The report also noted correspondence from the Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Minister that indicated the RCMP is unable to respond to requests to provide municipal policing at this time.

“These reports allowed us to look at policing costs from a macro and micro level,” CAO Greg Herrett said. “Going forward, having town and police department staffs working together will allow us to find efficiencies that could result in budget savings, place the focus on internal rather than external solutions and ensure continuous improvement as well as an opportunity for a deeper level of review on what we deliver and how best to deliver it. This, in turn, will provide a process to engage and educate the community should the services provided or service levels change.

“We have developed a very much improved relationship with the Atlantic Police Association Local 104 in recent years and we look forward to working with them as our partners to ensure the sustainability of municipal policing in Amherst.”

Tom Wood, president of the local, acknowledged the cost of policing is an issue for municipalities across Canada.



“Our officers look forward to working with the town to address inefficiencies and improve our overall service delivery,” Wood said. “Our local is committed to working towards a sustainable policing model for the Town of Amherst.”

The reports are available on the town’s website at amherst.ca/police-department.html.

-30-

Direct Inquiries to:
Tom McCoag
Corporate Communications Officer
902-694-6265
tmccoag@amherst.ca
Amherst.ca

