

# Amherst Town Council

## Special Meeting

### Minutes

Date of Meeting:	Monday, November 30, 2015
Location:	Council Chambers, Town Hall
Members Present:	Mayor Robert Small Deputy Mayor Terry Rhindress Councillor George Baker Councillor Frank Balcom Councillor Robert Bird Councillor Lisa Emery Councillor David March
Staff Present:	Greg Herrett, CAO Ian Naylor, Police Chief Jason MacDonald, Deputy CAO Operations Bill Schurman, Director Recreation Rebecca Purdy, Executive Assistant
Media and Others Present:	Darrell Cole, Amherst News Colleen Dowe, SOAR

---

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Small called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

#### 2. PRESENTATION - Don Mills, CRA re Policing Survey Results

The CAO introduced Don Mills from Corporate Research Associates, Inc. Mr. Mills presented the Town of Amherst Future of Policing Research Study in a PowerPoint presentation. He said he believes this report represents the voice of the silent majority.

Mr. Mills said the Town needs to acknowledge and celebrate the fact that 86% of the respondents were either completely or mostly satisfied with the level of services provided by ADP. He went on to say it is important that the police department does an annual report that tracks crime rates and compares them to other units. The media is a big source of information about crime; they need the right information to write about. The Town/APD needs to provide dependable information to the media to get the message out.

The survey finds that there is no abiding fear of crime increase. Of those who think it will increase, they believe the reasons are the economic situation and concerns about drugs. The economic condition in NS and Atlantic Canada, because of our aging population and slow growing economy, means jobs are hard to find and at least 40% of the working population did not receive pay increases in the past year. Many have not seen pay increases in six years, yet inflation continues to erode household incomes. All units in this region are facing this now. With projections on demographics and population growth, unless there is growth, this will be the situation for quite a long time. Council needs to understand this is not an Amherst issue, it is a Nova Scotia/Atlantic Canada issue. The Ivany Commission said we need a net immigrant of 7000 per year. Amherst needs to be part of that solution. We need to be a part of the Serian immigrants.

There was no support for raising taxes for police services. The economic conditions are driving a lot of the opinions regarding taxes and policing. The majority thinks that the number of police officers should stay the same. Those who would like to see the number decreased, he believes, is driven by cost.

The key areas to focus on were: drug enforcement, foot patrols and youth crime prevention.

Police service at the same level or consider other options - Mr. Mills said he believes this is driven by people's concern about costs. APD is doing a fantastic job, but we have to

be worried about costs because our capacity is compromised at the moment. Major Crime investigations is not what people think; it's crime that require lots of investigation. It is a communication issue to define this for the population. The perception is that RCMP have more resources for major criminal activities.

Level of support for a study on municipal structure. There was wide spread support for this, again, due to the economic situation in the region. "It's going to happen. It's inevitable. If the population is stagnant/aging, this is inevitable."

Three things to consider:

1. These findings need to be shared with the residents. The good story is about the level of satisfaction with the force and it should be recognized and celebrated. No one ever achieves these numbers.
2. Under the shared service model, integrated policing model will have to happen with structure discussions.
3. People need evidence to make good decisions. We have the facts about crime, and it is recommended that an annual report be generated about current and historical statistics with national and regional comparisons.

The one thing that citizens appreciate is the visibility of police officers, i.e. foot patrols.

Darrell Cole asked what happens now. Chief Naylor responded that this will part of the overall study and APD can take things from this report on how to do things better. Change in financial services needs to be recognized. "The better we keep up with change the more successful we will be."

CAO said this survey is a piece of the puzzle as we continue to study the operations of APD. Benchmarking APD against similarly tasked or sized police departments is an important piece of the puzzle as well. ABPC needs to ensure the police department reflects community values, and this is an indicator of what community values are.

Councillor Baker expressed his objection to the last question on the survey about the municipal units in Cumberland County participating in a discussion about municipal structure; he said he believed people didn't understand the question. Mr. Mills quoted the survey question, "There has been some discussion regarding municipal structure in Cumberland County" and Councillor Baker confirmed that yes, that is true. Mr. Mills said he believed people did understand that, and the remainder of the survey question, which said, "Do you personally support or oppose having all municipal units in Cumberland County, including the Town of Amherst, participate in an evidence based discussion on municipal structure?"

Councillor Emery - pleased with 86% approval rating. The people who gave the 86% approval rating are the same ones who gave the 76% support of participating in a discussion on municipal structure.

Mayor Small thanked Mr. Mills on behalf of the Town. This survey reflects facts and data on which we can base strategic decisions for the future. He extended congratulations to the police force on its exceptional approval rating.

### 3. ADJOURNMENT

**Moved By: Councillor David March**

**Seconded By: Deputy Mayor Terry Rhindress**

**To adjourn at 6:55 PM**

---

Gregory D. Herrett, CPA, CA  
Town Clerk and CAO

---

Robert Small  
Mayor