

**TOWN OF AMHERST
Regular Council Meeting
Minutes**

Date: May 25, 2020
Time: 4:00 pm
Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members Present
Mayor David Kogon
Deputy Mayor Sheila Christie
Councillor Vince Byrne
Councillor Darrell Jones
Councillor Wayne MacKenzie
Councillor Terry Rhindress

Staff Present
Greg Herrett, CAO
Jason MacDonald, Deputy CAO Operations
Dwayne Pike, Police Chief
Greg Jones, Fire Chief
Shelley Rector, Chief Financial Officer
Sarah Wilson, Manager of Financial Services
Andrew Fisher, Manager of Planning & Strategic Initiatives
Tom McCoag, Corporate Communications Officer
Kim Jones, Municipal Clerk
Natalie LeBlanc, Deputy Clerk

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement for physical distancing, this was a virtual meeting held via Zoom.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kogon called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

2. TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Mayor Kogon gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

3. HEARINGS/PRESENTATIONS/PETITIONS

3.1 Library - Denise Corey

Denise Corey gave a presentation, included as part of the agenda package.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

4.1 Approval of the Agenda

Moved By Councillor Byrne

Seconded By Councillor MacKenzie

To approve the agenda as circulated.

Motion Carried

4.2 Approval of Minutes

4.2.1 April 27, 2020 Regular Council

Moved By Councillor Jones

Seconded By Councillor Rhindress

To approve the minutes of the April 27, 2020 regular meeting of Council.

Motion Carried

4.2.2 May 19, 2020 Special Council

Moved By Councillor Rhindress

Seconded By Deputy Mayor Christie

To approve the minutes of the May 19, 2020 special meeting of Council.

Motion Carried

5. REQUESTS FOR DECISION

5.1 Use of the Permanent Register of Electors

Moved By Councillor Jones

Seconded By Councillor Rhindress

That Council approve the use of the Permanent List of Electors for the upcoming Municipal Elections and authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to enter into an agreement with Elections Canada to obtain said list.

Motion Carried

At this time, the CAO gave his annual budget commentary as follows:

I am pleased to present the Town's operating and capital budgets for the 2020/21 fiscal year.

First, I'd like to congratulate our senior management team and staff, led by Shelley Rector and Sarah Wilson, for the great work they've done in getting us to this point in very unfamiliar circumstances. I want to thank Mayor Kogon and Council for your support and patience as we worked through the budget process completely virtually. In addition, this year we have had to consider the impact of COVID-19 on the budget due to lost revenue and anticipated higher outstanding accounts receivable so the budget has been structured such that the Town can be responsive as things change with COVID-19 while maintaining the current tax rates. It's important to note that while this budget represents estimates based on the best information that we have to date, if we have learned anything through the pandemic, it's that some events are simply not predictable with any degree of accuracy and we expect that there will be significant variations from budget this year.

Just a few highlights:

1. The overall combined tax rate remains the same.
2. The Tax Exemption Policy is being amended to allow for housekeeping changes and to add one new applicant, the Cumberland County Transition House property at 44 Park Street.
3. An increase to commercial assessed values and thus to commercial tax revenue which is offset by the addition of an expense for the Commercial Phased-In Assessment per By-Law P-9. It is very encouraging to see businesses taking advantage of the By-Law.
4. This fall, all municipalities in Nova Scotia will be going through an election. The budget includes costs for this election as well as for technology for the new Council once they are sworn in. These costs are funding 100% from the operating reserve and do not impact the tax rate.
5. The budget also includes monies to fund the Town's Climate Action Plan including funds for an Onsite Energy Manager (although this is on hold for the present time)and Solar for Community Projects in the Capital Budget.

In spite of the challenges the Town is facing due to COVID 19, I feel optimistic about the next year for the Town of Amherst. This budget allows the Town to complete necessary infrastructure projects while maintaining tax rates. The Town is fortunate to be able to continue to deliver the level of services provided while not increasing taxes and while dealing with the impact and uncertainty caused by COVID19. Cash flow remains a significant uncertainty and we hope that the Property Tax Financing Program and the Province's Municipal Operating Loan Program provide the necessary assistance to help both our impacted taxpayers and the Town without significant negative long term impacts.

With that, Your Worship, I'll hand it back to you.

5.2 Tax Financing Program Policy

Moved By Councillor MacKenzie

Seconded By Deputy Mayor Christie

That Council approve the proposed COVID 19 Property Tax Financing Program Policy.

Motion Carried

5.3 Setting of the General Tax Rate**Moved By Councillor Byrne****Seconded By Deputy Mayor Christie****WHEREAS total estimated expenditures to be rated for the fiscal period April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021 are \$14,045,827.****THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT for the Town of Amherst for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021:****1. The general tax rates are as follows:**

Residential / Resource	\$1.187 per \$100 of assessment
Commercial	\$3.987 per \$100 of assessment

AND THAT these taxes are due and payable on September 30, 2020 with interest to be charged on all final tax accounts outstanding on or after October 1, 2020 at the rate of 1% per month, 12% per annum.**Motion Carried****5.4 Community Support Area Rate****Moved By Deputy Mayor Christie****Seconded By Councillor Byrne****WHEREAS the estimated expenditures for the community support for the 2020-21 fiscal period are \$378,575, net of own source funding in the amount of \$93,769.****THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT for the Town of Amherst for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, the Community Support Area Rate on all property assessments within the boundary of the Town of Amherst are as follows:**

Residential / Resource	\$0.071 per \$100 of assessment
Commercial	\$0.071 per \$100 of assessment

AND THAT these area rates are due and payable on September 30, 2020 with interest to be charged on all final tax accounts outstanding on or after October 1, 2020 at the rate of 1% per month, 12% per annum.**Motion Carried****5.5 Capital Budget Carry Overs****Moved By Deputy Mayor Christie****Seconded By Councillor Jones****That Council approve the inclusion of carry forward projects to the Town of Amherst General Capital Budget and the Water Utility Capital Budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year. Adding the carry forward projects sets the overall General Capital Budget at \$3,505,883 (including \$1,354,932 for projects carried over) and the Amherst Water Utility Capital Budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year in the amount of \$753,000 (including \$40,000 for carryovers).****Motion Carried****5.6 User Fee Policy****Moved By Councillor Rhindress****Seconded By Councillor Jones****That Council approve the request to have the User Fee Policy, Policy number 3470-03, updated to reflect the changes noted above as attached.****Motion Carried****5.7 Tax Exemption Policy****Moved By Councillor Byrne****Seconded By Councillor Rhindress****That Council approve the request to have the Tax Exemption Policy, Policy number 3800-05, updated to the attached version.****Motion Carried**

6. INTERNAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 6.1 Planning Advisory Committee**
Information item; no direction given or action required.
- 6.2 Amherst Board of Police Commissioners**
Information item; no direction given or action required.
- 6.3 Audit Committee – No Report**
- 6.4 Amherst Youth Town Council – No Report**

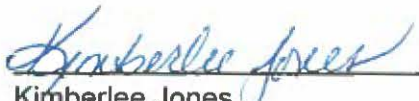
7. EXTERNAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 7.1 Cumberland Public Libraries – No Report**
- 7.2 Cumberland YMCA - No Report**
- 7.3 Cumberland Joint Services Management Authority - No Report**
- 7.4 Northern Region Solid Waste Committee - No Report**
- 7.5 L. A. Animal Shelter - No Report**
- 7.6 Senior Safety – No Report**
- 7.7 Inter Municipal Tourism – No Report**
- 7.8 Poverty Reduction – No Report**


8. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By Councillor Jones
Seconded By Councillor Rhindress
To adjourn the meeting at 4:57 p.m.

Motion Carried



Kimberlee Jones
Municipal Clerk



David Kogon
Mayor

