



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2021034

DATE: 18 May 2021

RE: Committee recommends amendments to policy

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – Amherst town council's committee of the whole is recommending the town approve amendments its Proceedings of Council policy when the council meets on May 25, 2021.

The recommendation was made during the committee's May 17, 2021, meeting.

The proposed amendments to the Proceedings of Council Policy will enable the council to continue holding virtual meetings, under certain conditions, following the lifting of provincially mandated COVID-19 protocols that currently require the holding of virtual meetings.

The town intends on reverting to in-person meeting following the lifting of those protocols, but the amendments would allow one or more participants to attend via video conferencing should circumstances prevent their attendance in person.

Council members would have to seek permission in advance if they wished to participate in a meeting via electronic conferencing.

Several other municipalities are making similar amendments to their policies and the Nova Scotia government recently amended the Municipal Government Act in order to allow electronic meetings.

New Amherst subdivision policy

A new subdivision policy was also referred to the May 25, 2021, council session for approval.

The new policy would allow a developer to turn ownership of streets within a new subdivision over to the town prior to those streets being paved, provided the developer enters into an agreement to pave the streets by a certain date and provides a surety.





The current policy requires the paving of streets before the final approval of subdivision plan is given. Developers say this is causing delays in their projects because they cannot subdivide the land or begin building construction until after the streets are paved.

It was noted the new policy is common in many other municipal units and require all streets and underground infrastructure such as water, sanitary sewers and storm sewers to meet town standards.

Sidewalk-Curb Construction Policy

The committee referred a proposal to amend the town's Sidewalk-Curb Construction Policy back to staff for more work.

The proposed amendments to the Sidewalk-Curb Construction Policy would have resulted in concrete being used for all future sidewalk reconstruction projects, no matter what material was used in a sidewalk's original construction.

Committee members indicated they wanted more details, particularly around aesthetics should concrete be used to replace the brick sidewalks currently in place in the downtown.

A Fresh Start Initiative

The committee also approved a staff recommendation to refer the Top 5 applicants for the 'A' Fresh Start Initiative Community Support Grant to the council's May 25, 2021, council meeting for approval.

Once approved by council as a finalist, each of the Top 5 presenters will have to prepare a five-minute video presentation explaining why they should receive a grant. These videos will be placed on the town's social media platforms and people will have the opportunity to vote on their ranking.

Council will announce the final rankings of the projects and the amounts given to the grant recipients at its June 28, 2021, council meeting.





Development Agreement Discharge

The committee referred a staff recommendation to discharge a development agreement affecting 8 Croft St. to the May 25, 2021, council session for its approval.

Staff noted the development agreement was established in 1991 to enable the Bridge Adult Service Centre to expand the size of the centre it operated on the property.

Since the centre's move to Spring Street, the Croft Street site has been used for a mix of commercial and residential uses, which comply with the town's Land-Use Bylaw. As a result, the development agreement is no longer necessary, nor does it reflect the current use of the property.

Diversity and Inclusiveness Committee

The committee created an ad hoc committee, consisting of two staff members and four council members, to explore and develop the terms of reference for the addition of a Town of Amherst Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

The ad hoc committee is to present a proposal for the establishment of the new committee at the June committee of the whole meeting.

Municipal Affairs Notice

The committee received a notice from the provincial Municipal Affairs Department that indicated upcoming changes to the Biological Casework Analysis Agreement could result in increased costs to the town.

The agreement provides municipalities with DNA analysis arising from criminal investigations. The changes in the act will result in an increased annual cost to the town's police force of about \$600.





Nova Scotia Power

The committee was informed that Nova Scotia Power, in response to a letter from council that sought information on what the company will be doing to improve service in the area, is willing to make a presentation to council.

Staff is working to have this presentation take place during the June committee of the whole meeting.

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