

**Minutes of a Regular Meeting of Amherst Town Council  
Held in Council Chambers  
Monday, December 19 , 2005 at 7:00 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Jerry Hallee  
Deputy Mayor David March  
Councillor Robert Angel  
Councillor George Baker  
Councillor Ed Chitty  
Councillor Dale Fawthrop  
Councillor Terry Rhindress  
Greg Herrett, Chief Administrative Officer  
Rebecca Purdy, Executive Assistant

**1. O'CANADA**

**2. PRESENTATIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**1) Public Hearing on Proposed By-Law to Amend the Land Use By-Law**

On November 28, 2005, Council approved First Reading of By-Law P-2-1, a By-Law to Amend the Land Use By-Law by re-zoning 35 Poplar Street from "Institutional" to "General Residential." There were no presentations, and there were no written submissions. This concluded the Public Hearing.

**3. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Hallee called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**4. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**1. Additions to the Agenda**

**2. Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by Councillor George Baker, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that the Agenda be adopted as circulated.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**3. Approval of Minutes**

Moved by Councillor George Baker, seconded by Councillor Terry Rhindress that the Minutes of the November 28, 2005 Regular Meeting be approved as circulated.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**4. Second Reading, By-Law to Amend the Land Use By-Law, P-2-1**

Moved by Deputy Mayor David March, seconded by Councillor George Baker that Council approve Second Reading of By-Law P-2-1, which amends the Land Use By-Law (P-2) by changing the zone on property located at 35 Poplar Street from the Industrial Zone to the General Residential Zone, the purpose of such re-zoning being to permit a three-unit apartment building within the existing structure on the property.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**TOWN OF AMHERST  
BY-LAW TO AMEND THE LAND USE BY-LAW, P-2-1**

**1. *The purpose of this by-law is to amend the Land Use By-Law of the Town of Amherst with respect to the matter of the application of the General Residential Zone to the property identified by PID 25027617 on Poplar Street.***

**2. *The Land Use By-Law, Schedule A (the Zoning Map) is hereby amended by applying the General Residential Zone to the property identified by PID 25027616 on Poplar Street.***

## 5. Policies

### i) Repeal Policy 21-08, Donations to Charitable Organizations

Moved by Deputy Mayor David March, seconded by Councillor George Baker that, whereas in March 2005, Council adopted a new policy, 211-34, entitled Grants to Organizations, and whereas the existing policy 210-08 entitled Donations to Charitable Organizations should have been repealed at that time, that Council accept the recommendation from Administration to repeal the old policy 210-08 dated August 19, 1991.

MOTION CARRIED

### ii) Amendments to Policies 110-01 and 110-02

Moved by Councillor Terry Rhindress, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that Council approve the recommendation from Administration to amend Policy 110-01 entitled Tax Collection Policy by deleting Section 11, "Reduction or Rebate of Taxes Payable When building Destroyed," and to rescind the existing Policy 110-02 entitled Low Income Tax Exemption Policy dated May 10, 1999 and replace it with the new Policy 110-02 entitled Tax Reduction Policy.

MOTION CARRIED

## TOWN OF AMHERST POLICY 110-01 TAX COLLECTION POLICY

### PURPOSE:

To set out policy and guidelines for the collection of all outstanding taxes due to the Town of Amherst in accordance with the provisions of the *Municipal Government Act, S.N.S., 1998, c.18, Part VI, "Tax Collection"*.

### 1. BILLINGS, NOTICES AND REMINDERS

1. Under the adoption of a resolution by Council each year, interim tax bills may be issued. They are to be calculated using the current year's assessment, multiplied by half of the previous year's tax rate.
2. Following the setting of the tax rate, final tax bills shall be issued, due no earlier than 30 days from the date of issue.
3. At Council's discretion and following the setting of the tax rate, tax bills may be issued once during the year.
4. Statements of account shall be issued periodically throughout the year for all amounts due, and shall contain either of the following headings:
  - (a) Reminder – Overdue Account
  - (b) Tax Sale Warning
5. Discretion is exercised by the person fulfilling the duties of Tax Collector, who may suppress the dispatch of notice on certain accounts because of special circumstances or smallness of balance. As a general rule, however, all procedures will be followed right up to an actual Tax Sale if the arrears are \$100 or more. (With this first notice of intended sale, there is some benefit in mailing notices to property owners owing less than \$100 in an endeavour to induce payment to clear accounts.)

### 2. INTEREST ON OVERDUE ACCOUNTS

Simple interest at the rate of one percent per month shall be added to each account for which taxes have not been paid in full by the due date.

### 3. INTEREST ON OVERPAYMENTS/APPEALS

Where an overpayment of taxes has been made, or where an assessment appeal is pending, the Town shall pay interest on the excess taxes paid at the rate of 0% per annum from the date of overpayment.

(For greater clarity, Section 114(1) of the *Municipal Government Act* states: “**Taxes on property may be collected or recovered even if the assessment of the property is under appeal.**”)

### 4. FEE FOR EXECUTION OF WARRANT

The person executing a warrant is entitled to be reimbursed in the amount of 30% of the total collected.

### 5. COLLECTION LIMIT

If the amount of taxes, including interest, is below one hundred dollars (\$100.00), then, in accordance with Section 134(4)(b) of the *Municipal Government Act*, the property shall not be put up for tax sale.

### 6. PRELIMINARY NOTICE

The time period for payment of overdue taxes to be set forth in the preliminary notice described in Section 138 of the *Municipal Government Act* shall be extended from 14 days to 21 days.

### 7. TAX CERTIFICATES

The fee for a Tax Certificate shall be the sum of Fifty Dollars (\$50.00) for each certificate. There shall be only one certificate for each property.

### 8. FEE FOR ISSUING OF TAX DEEDS

Deeds for property purchased at tax sales shall be prepared and registered by the Town Solicitor and it shall be the responsibility of the purchaser to refund the Town for the full cost of having the deed prepared and registered, in accordance with Section 155 of the *Municipal Government Act*.

### 9. PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Town of Amherst hereby delegates to the Treasurer the power to enter into tax arrears payment agreement with the taxpayer, pursuant to Section 134(4)(3) of the *Municipal Government Act*. Such payments shall be made in accordance with the Tax Collection Procedures adopted by Council.

### 10. SURVEYS FOR PROPERTIES TO BE SOLD AT TAX SALE

Included in the documentation of the tax sale file shall be the PID number and map showing the location of the property and its boundaries, and any buildings that appear on the property. This policy shall permit the Treasurer, if he or she deems it necessary, to engage a survey firm to perform work on a property which may include a survey of the property which has been sold or will be sold at tax sale. In exercising this discretion, the Treasurer shall take into account the work to be performed by a survey firm in relation to the overall benefit to the Town and all of the circumstances of the particular case.

### 11. OTHER

All other tax collection activities shall be performed in accordance with the ***Guide to Part VI of the Municipal Government Act – Tax collection***, prepared by Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, as amended from time to time.

### 12. REPEAL

All existing tax collection and tax sale policies and procedures and amendments thereto are hereby repealed and this policy substituted therefore.

**TOWN OF AMHERST POLICY 110-02**  
**TAX REDUCTION POLICY**

**PURPOSE:**

To establish a policy to determine the reduction in taxes for a person(s) whose income from all sources for the calendar year preceding the fiscal year of the Town of Amherst is below the amount set out in this policy, AND to determine the reduction in taxes for the owner(s) of a building which has been completely or partially destroyed.

**1. POLICY STATEMENT ONE: LOW INCOME**

It shall be the policy of the Town of Amherst that an exemption from taxes will be granted, pursuant to Section 69(2) of the *Municipal Government Act*, up to an amount of one hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$125.00) as per the following conditions:

- a) That the exemption be granted to every person assessed with respect to taxable property in the Town of Amherst, who is resident of the Town of Amherst, and whose total household income from all sources for the calendar year preceding the fiscal year of the Town of Amherst was less than thirteen thousand five hundred dollars (\$13,500.00). Allowances paid pursuant to the *War Veterans Allowance Act (Canada)* or military pension paid pursuant to the *Pension Act (Canada)* are not to be included in a person's total income.
- b) That the exemption be granted only in respect of property occupied by the applicant ratepayer at his/her home.
- c) That, where two or more persons, one or more of whom are entitled to an exemption, are by an interest the owners of taxable property together, the person(s) is entitled to that portion of the amount of the exemption that the amount of his/her assessment bears to the whole property.
- d) That the person applying for the exemption make an affidavit regarding his/her income for that period and return such affidavit to the Town Office not later than July 31 of the year in which the taxes are payable.

**2. POLICY STATEMENT TWO: BUILDING DESTROYED**

In accordance with Section 69(A) of the *Municipal Government Act*, that where a building(s) situate on a property has become permanently unliveable or unusable due to fire and the current assessment of the property does not reflect that the building(s) has been destroyed, it shall be the policy of the Town of Amherst to permit the reduction or rebate of property taxes on the building(s) alone for the balance of the taxation year under the following conditions:

- a) The taxpayer shall apply in writing to the Clerk asking for a reduction or rebate of property taxes.
- b) The Clerk shall as the Building Inspector to confirm the complete destruction of the building(s).
- c) The Clerk shall ask the Regional Assessment Office to determine the following year's assessment value before any subsequent rebuilding or construction.
- d) Upon receipt of the Building Inspector's and Provincial Assessment's report, the Clerk shall authorize the Treasurer to reduce the amount of the taxes on the building(s) by pro-rating the same over the balance of the taxation year from the date of destruction.
- e) This policy section shall be made retroactive to April 1, 2005; Provided that if, as a result of this policy being made retroactive, it results in property taxes being rebated such sums shall be paid without interest.
- f) If the owner of the property in question is found guilty of arson, either civilly or criminally, the Clerk shall not rebate any taxes. In the event that taxes have already been rebated, then that rebate shall be void ab initio, and the taxes with interest

accrued thereon will become immediately due and payable, it being the overriding policy of the Town of Amherst that a person shall not benefit from his or her own wrongdoing.

**6. Water Utility Rates**

**i) Recommendation to Accept the Report from W. H. Gates**

Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Deputy Mayor David March that Council accept the proposed new rate structure and regulations prepared for the Amherst Water Utility by W. H. Gates Consulting.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**ii) Recommendation to Apply to the Utility and Review Board**

Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Councillor Dale Fawthrop that the Town of Amherst Water Utility apply to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board for an increase in water rates and amendments to our regulations as set out in the water rate study prepared by W. H. Gates Utility Consultants Ltd., and as accepted by Council on December 18, 2005.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**7. Potable Water Hauler Application**

Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Councillor Terry Rhindress that the Town of Amherst give approval for Greg Smith of 140 West Victoria Street to purchase water from our fire station at the rates as approved by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board from time to time.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**8. Aboiteau Relocation**

Moved by Councillor Dale Fawthrop, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that Council authorize the Mayor to write to the Minister of the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to inform him of our concern about their plan to relocate the aboiteau on the LaPlanche River, and the negative impact this will have on our sewage treatment plant construction and operating costs.

**MOTION CARRIED**

*Dear Minister d'Entremont:*

**RE: PROPOSED ABOITEAU RELOCATION – LAPLANCHE RIVER**

*I am writing to you to express Amherst Town Council's concern over your Department's plans to move an aboiteau on the LaPlanche River.*

*As you may be aware, for some years now, the Town of Amherst has been working toward the construction of a waste water treatment plant in that area.*

*Our proposed waste water treatment plant site was selected in 1993 and submitted to Nova Scotia Department of Environment as part of our pollution abatement strategy. One of the main reasons this site was chosen was its proximity to a salt water discharge along its westerly boundary. The relocation of the aboiteau will force us to build a lift station and forcemain to move our effluent over 1km to a new outfall downstream of your new aboiteau location.*

*The more immediate problem, however, is that the Town's current sewage outfall is into the salt water side of the present aboiteau on the river. The Department of Agriculture's plan would see the relocation of the aboiteau such that the outfall would be, once again, into the fresh water. A few years ago the Town spent over \$1 million to relocate the outfall so that it would be into the salt water. In order to simply be in that same position, if this plan was to go ahead, the Town would be forced to spend significant capital and operating dollars.*

*It is Council's strongly held view that the Town of Amherst should not be forced to incur these additional operating and capital costs resulting from a decision of the provincial government.*

*I would be pleased to discuss this with you further, at your convenience.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Jerry Hallee  
Mayor*

*Cc: Ernie Fage, MLA, Cumberland North  
Hon. Kerry Morash, Minister of Environment and Labour  
Brad Skinner, Department of Environment and Labour  
Ron Patterson, P.Eng., Director of Operational Services, Town of*

## **5. INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **1. Sewage Treatment Plant Conceptual Costing**

Deputy Mayor David March presented the following Revised Conceptual Cost Estimates on the Wastewater Treatment Facility:

*In June 2005, Dillon Consulting was retained to complete detailed design activities for our Wastewater Treatment Facility consisting of an aerated lagoon followed by a treatment wetland.*

*Shortly after the initiation of detailed design activities, several items impacting the project assumptions and requirements emerged:*

- *NS Department of Agriculture contacted the Town to confirm its intent to move the existing LaPlanche River aboiteau;*
- *Ongoing shared servicing discussions between the Town and Cumberland County led to new uncertainties;*
- *Composite one-day grab samples of effluent at the LaPlanche Lift Station presented wastewater of unanticipated strength and variability which led to a requirement for a more extensive confirmatory sampling program, which discovered that discharges exceeding allowable limits stipulated in the Town's Sewer Use By-Law were entering the system from select commercial/industrial sources;*
- *Preliminary results from the Gemtec geotechnical program concluded that soil conditions on the proposed site were less attractive than indicated in the previous 1994 evaluation, indicating that soil materials for the construction of lagoon berms must be imported from off-site and that the lagoons incorporate a synthetic membrane liner;*

*The current estimates have increased significantly to \$8.84 million from \$6.86 million.*

*Next steps to complete our Pollution Abatement Strategy include:*

- *Final confirmation of design flow requirements through review of latest Town flow data and discussions with the County of Cumberland;*
- *Completion of Preliminary Design Report and submission of applications for Federal/Provincial funding;*
- *Completion of Lift Station / Underdrain design;*
- *Award of Lift Station / Underdrain construction contract;*
- *Completion of Lift Station / Underdrain construction;*
- *Completion of detailed WWTF design and application for NSEL approval;*
- *Award of WWTF construction contract and completion of WWTF construction;*
- *Complete design construction of North Town Collector.*

## 2. PANS Arbitration

Councillor Robert Angel presented the following report on PANS Arbitration:

*It is appropriate at this time to provide a brief update of the arbitration meetings recently held between the Town of Amherst and Local 104 of the Police Association of Nova Scotia.*

*The collective agreement between the Town and the local police association expired on March 31, 2002. Initial meetings were held between the parties in an attempt to negotiate a new collective agreement, however the parties did not meet with any success. As a result, an application was made by the police association to have the matter proceed to arbitration. Arbitration hearings were held at the Wandlyn Inn on December 5, 6, 7 and 9.*

*Mr. David Fisher represented the Amherst Police Local for the arbitration process. Mr. Matt MacPherson represented the Town of Amherst.*

*The proposal presented by Mr. Fisher contained a request for an increase in wages and benefits consistent with that of the recent Truro police settlement.*

*There were additional union proposals related to sick leave, vacation, overtime, workers compensation, etc., which would as well have a financial impact on policing costs, should the arbitrator accept the union's proposal related to those issues.*

*The Truro agreement on which PANS based their Amherst proposal was a six year contract covering a period from April of 2002 through to April 2008. The percentage increase contained in that agreement was six percent each year for the first four years, two percent for the fifth year with yearly wage increases on a go-forward basis of no less than 87.2% of the Halifax police increases. Any future Truro police salary increases from the year 2007 onward would be tied to the Halifax police salaries.*

*To put the above percentages into perspective in regards to an Amherst settlement, the following wage rate schedule identifies the salary range for the years covered by the Truro collective agreement. The yearly salary for a first class constable in Amherst under the collective agreement which expired on March 31, 2002 is \$45,872. The proposal put forward by the union based on the Truro rates would place Amherst first class constables on a salary range as follows: 2002 - \$49,517; 2003 - \$52,488; 2004 - \$55,637; 2005 - \$58,975; 2006 - \$60,155 and the 2007 increase would be based on 87.2% of the Halifax rate.*

*A monetary value has yet to be determined for the additional benefits being sought by the local association. It is recognized, however, that, if granted, there will be some fiscal impact on the police budget.*

*The proposal put forward on behalf of the Town of Amherst presented the Town's position on salary increases as well as shift flexibility, etc., as it relates to operational requirements.*

*During the arbitration process, the termination date of the new collective agreement was determined to be March 31, 2008. The Town proposed salary increases consistent with consumer price index rates for the years 2002, 2003, and 2004, which were 3%, 3.4% and 1.8% respectively. For the years 2005 to 2008, the Town proposed a yearly increase of 4.91%, which appeared to be an average of the PANS increases in the various municipalities represented by the association for those years. This would place first class constables in Amherst on a salary level as follows: 2002 - \$47,248; 2003 - \$48,855; 2004 - \$49,734; 2005 - \$52,176; 2006 - \$54,738; 2007 - \$57,425.*

*The Amherst position was that on any arbitration finding, there should be no tie in to Halifax rates for future salary increases.*

*The shift flexibility requests proposed by the Town were seen as a measure to assist in meeting the operational requirements of the department while reducing costs related to training and special event policing. If granted, the shift latitude would help minimize the financial impact of the increased wage package anticipated in the new collective agreement.*

*On the completion of the arbitration meetings, Mr. Venoit was unable to set a time line on when he would file his report of his finding on the Town's and Association's proposals. He did advise that he would be starting the process shortly, and the general sense was that it might be completed around mid-February.*

*In anticipation that Mr. Venoit will file his report within the next couple of months, it was felt prudent that an overview be provided to give Council an opportunity to assess the financial impact the arbitrator's decision will have on future policing costs. Should any additional information be required, a more detailed report can be provided upon request.*

## 6. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

### 1) Planning and Development Department

**Moved by Councillor George Baker, seconded by Councillor Terry Rhindress that Council accept the following Planning and Development Department Report:**

#### Building Activity

As of November 30, 2005 the total value of building permits issued in the Town was \$4,815,630 compared to \$8,537,510 last year. During the last month one new dwelling and one new commercial building were constructed in the Town. This brings our total new residential units so far this year to 33.

#### Unsightly Premises

So far this year we have had 68 complaints, 66 of which have been resolved. There have been 10 orders issued on properties. Only one order remains outstanding, however work is currently progressing on that property.

#### Staff Training

Tim LeFurgey has recently attended two building inspection courses in Halifax: Acts and Regulations and Plumbing, and passed both courses with very good marks. Tim requires one more course and to write a technical paper in order to become a qualified building inspector. Both Tim and Monty will be attending a National Construction Codes seminar in January which will explain the technical changes to the new National Building Code.

#### School Divestiture

Our lawyer is currently working on migrating the R. B. Dickey Elementary School property into the new land registry system as well as writing the deed for the property. We are still on schedule to meet our December 21, 2005 closing date.

We continue to work with the potential purchaser of St. Charles Elementary School with the expectation of selling the school in the new year. The building has been winterized in order to limit damage to the structure from the cold weather. We recently had some problems with the alarm system, however they are now resolved and the alarm is working fine.

#### Crows

As Council is aware, we have recently acquired a Phoenix Wailer on loan from the Town of Kentville in order to scare off an influx of crows within the Town. As we were preparing to set up the machine, it was recognized that the crows in the Rupert Street/Curry Park area seem to have moved on. We have had no complaints from other areas of the Town, therefore the machine was never set up. We will keep the machine for a while longer in the event that the crows return.

#### Geographic Information System

Andrew Milton has been testing a trial version of an internet based GIS. This software will allow users both inside and outside the organization to view and query our geographic data such as property lines, streets, sewer lines, water lines, fire hydrants and building footprints. The purchase price of the software is very reasonable, and has been budgeted for, and can be accommodated within the existing budget.

**MOTION CARRIED**

### 2) Corporate Services Department

**Moved by Deputy Mayor March, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that Council accept the following Corporate Services Department report:**

#### MONTHLY EXPENDITURES

Expenditures during the month of November 2005 totaled \$1,443,867 compared to \$1,334,250 for the same month last year.

#### YEARLY OPERATING STATEMENT

As of November 30, 2005 we are 8 months into our fiscal year. Our total revenue to date is \$11,560,028 compared to the budgeted amount of \$11,604,492. Our total expenditures to date are \$8,066,634 compared to the budgeted amount of \$8,451,029.



**COLLECTIONS**

Total amount owing to the Town at the end of November 2005 was \$1,534,967. During the month of November 2005 we collected \$653,988.

**DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE**

Dorritt Amos, Executive Assistant has been attending meetings and training sessions on Docushare to help establish a procedure module for new Docushare users in the future.

Kathy Bates, Personnel Officer attended a Year End Payroll Training seminar and has started the year end payroll adjustments.

Vince Arbing, Treasurer attended a FOIPOP Workshop dealing with Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy for Municipal Governments. Vince has been appointed to the Executive Committee of the Association of Municipal Administrators as the Cumberland Regional Representative.

**MOTION CARRIED****3) Operational Services Department**

**Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Councillor Dale Fawthrop that Council accept the following Operational Services Department report:**

Winter officially arrived last week with over 30 cm of snow on December 14. This was our first snowfall and our crews worked around the clock for two days and had all streets and sidewalks open for school December 15. Hauling snow from priority streets and parking lots has been ongoing since the storm.

Work on improvements to our traffic control lights is pretty well completed. The Albion/Pleasant Street intersection by the subway has seen the installation of traffic activation wiring in the pavement to automate the activations of the traffic control lights. The lights will stay green on Albion and South Albion until traffic approaches from East or West Pleasant, at which time the lights will change to accommodate that demand. An advance left turn green signal has been installed at the Robert Angus/South Albion Street intersection to permit north bound traffic better access to Industrial Park Drive. New crosswalk lights have been installed on South Albion at the A&W intersection, but will not be activated until spring when the new crosswalk will be painted and concrete ramps installed.

Our Recreation Facility operations in parks and playgrounds are completed for the year and summer staff are now laid off. Remaining staff are now working in the Stadium maintaining ice and the building. Our major tenants include Minor Hockey, the Junior Ramblers and the Skating Club. The Junior Ramblers have had a very good fall and continue their battle for first place in the Eastern division of the Maritime Junior Hockey League. Our Provincial teams continue to be very competitive and we encourage our citizens to drop in at the Stadium to see our youth in action.

The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Bluenose Tournament was another success with representation from across the Maritimes with 38 teams competing over the two weekends. Congratulations to the organizers and volunteers.

**MOTION CARRIED****4) Police Department**

**Moved by Councillor Robert Angel, seconded by Councillor Terry Rhindress that Council accept the following Police Department report:**

**Personnel**

A competition was held during the week of November 21<sup>st</sup> to fill positions left vacant in recent months. Eight candidates were interviewed by a board consisting of Commissioner Jack Kline, D/Chief Dave MacNeil of the Truro Police Department, and D/Chief Naylor. They also completed a written examination. Results are as follows:

Cst. Troy Keirstead - promoted to full time from part time (Home town - St. John, N.B.)

Cst. Ray Aikens -hired full time (Home town - Sydney, NS)

Cst. Kevin Girouard - promoted to full time from part time (Home town - Amherst, NS)

Cst. Tasha Estabrooks -promoted to full time from part time (3 year term) - (Home town Sackville, NB)

Cst. Joshua Lynds -hired part time (Home town - Port Howe, NS)

Cst. Jim Sloan - hired part time (Home town - Sackville, NB)

**Training**

Sgt. Gairns and Cst. Hunter, firearms trainers for our department, attended a Containment Team demonstration on November 23<sup>rd</sup> hosted by the RCMP ERT Team. Team members presented a practical demonstration and answered questions on containment and the use of the Emergency Response Team in general.

**PROS Release 1.2**

The Police Reporting and Occurrence System (PROS) which our department began using in March of this year, underwent a substantial upgrade during the week of December 5<sup>th</sup>. A considerable amount of "down time" was experienced by users nationwide. We are hoping to see improvement in this system in the near future.

**Building Renovation - Criminal Intelligence Service of Nova Scotia Infrastructure**

Renovations have been underway at the police department to convert certain offices into a suitable location to house the new CISNS Team, consisting of Sgt. Dave Lepper of our department and Cst. Kevin Fenton of the RCMP who have been seconded from their respective police agencies for a three year term.

**Operation Christmas**

The Amherst Police Department again this year is participating in the national Operation Christmas. The local "kick-off" took place on December 8<sup>th</sup>, with a checkpoint attended by members of our department, the RCMP, EHS, Amherst Fire Department, Vehicle Compliance and Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). The Provincial "kick-off" took place November 30<sup>th</sup> - December 1<sup>st</sup> in Sydney. Calling cards have been produced for police to distribute, sponsored by Aliant and the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission, with a view of encouraging the public not to drink and drive. Their theme is "Whatever you need to do, do it. Plan ahead to get home safely."

**MOTION CARRIED****5) Fire Department**

**Moved by Councillor Terry Rhindress, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that Council accept the following Fire Department report:**

**Alarm Responses**

From November 16 to December 7, 2005 the members of our Fire Department responded to eight calls in the Town of Amherst and seven calls to the County coverage area.

**Training and Fire Department Activities**

The winter training schedule for our fire fighters has been developed and will cover all areas of firefighting, important to keep our members trained to the current standards. Our recruits are now into their third weekend of training and are all doing well.

**Fire Prevention and Emergency Preparedness**

With the upcoming Christmas holiday season, we would like to remind our residents to be extra careful at this time of year with their decorations, their use of candles and heating equipment. They should make every effort to prepare themselves, their homes and their vehicles for winter emergencies.

**MOTION CARRIED****6) Community and Economic Development Department**

**Moved by Councillor Dale Fawthrop, seconded by Councillor George Baker that Council accept the following Community and Economic Development Department report:**

**Winter Fest 2006**

Preparations for Winter Fest 2006 being held from February 8 – 12, 2006 are currently underway. Information on this event has been forwarded to clubs and organizations encouraging their participation in this annual event and a listing of activities will be in place in mid-January. We look forward to the participation of a number of organizations again this year including the Tantramar Theatre, Cumberland Regional Library, Cumberland YMCA, Amherst Skating Club and the Amherst Rotary Club. Any organizations interested in participating in the 2006 Winter Fest are asked to contact Program Director Dwight Jones at 667-6503.

**Multi Cultural Fair**

A meeting has been planned for Wednesday, January 18 at the Amherst Fire Hall from 6:30 to 8:00 pm to determine the level of interest in holding a Multi-Cultural Fair, possibly as a part of the 2007 Winter Fest program. Such an event was hosted on two previous

occasions and deemed to be highly successful. If there appears to be a significant level of interest from the community, this department will assist in coordinating the event. Letters of invitation have been sent to various individuals and groups who were involved in past years, and we would encourage anyone interested in participating to attend the meeting in January.

**Athletic Achievement Awards (February 8, 2006)**

Community and Economic Development department seeks assistance from the general public in obtaining information about individuals and/or teams from the Town of Amherst who have accomplished a recognized provincial or higher championship or honour during 2005. All individuals and teams achieving gold medal performances will be formally recognized by the Mayor and Council on February 8, 2006.

**Town of Amherst/YMCA Christmas Recreational Swim**

As part of our partnership with the YMCA, we are pleased to be hosting a Christmas Recreational Swim at the YMCA for four days over Christmas week. These swims will take place from Tuesday, December 27 to Friday, December 30 from 2:30 to 4:00 pm for Amherst residents. Space is limited to 110 swimmers so access is on a first-come basis.

**General Information**

The past year has once again been a positive one with new construction projects such as the Stenek Corporation building in the Industrial Park and Napa Auto Parts on South Albion Street. It was disappointing to have Venture Lighting close its doors this summer, however staff are positive that a new enterprise for this facility will be found. There have been new employment opportunities in Amherst with the opening of TeleTech and the continued growth of companies such as CVision. In addition, we are very proud to be the only Nova Scotia community outside of HRM to have natural gas as an energy choice for its residents.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**7) Mayor**

Mayor Hallee reported that he had participated in an information session at the Wandlyn Inn on the proposed Wind Farm, and the exciting potential this presents for Amherst. He extended appreciation to the billets who participated in the Canada World Youth Exchange program. He congratulated graduates of the Adult High School, and also extended his apologies to the LA Animal Shelter, for having not attended their telethon. He encouraged Amherst citizens to shop at home, and extended best wishes for a safe and happy Christmas season. He announced that Deputy Mayor David March will be chairing the January and February regular sessions of Council.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

On motion by Councillor Rhindress, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

**APPROVED:**

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Gregory D. Herrett, Clerk & CAO

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Jerry Hallee, Mayor

**AGENDA**

1. O'Canada
2. Public Hearing – By-Law to Amend the Land Use By-Law, P-2-1, 35 Poplar Street
3. Call to Order
4. Business Items
  1. Additions to Agenda
  2. Approval of Agenda
  3. Approval of Minutes – November 28, 2005
  4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, By-Law to Amend the Land Use By-Law, P-2-1
  5. Policies (i) Repeal Policy 210-08 & Amend Policies 110-01 and 110-02
  6. Water Utility Rates
  7. Potable Water Hauler Application
  8. Aboiteau Relocation
5. Information Items
  1. Sewage Treatment Plant, Conceptual Costing
  2. PANS Arbitration
6. Departmental Reports
7. Adjournment