

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – APRIL 14, 2020

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, April 14, 2020 at 7 p.m. held virtually with GoToMeeting video conference. Present in the Township of O'Connor office: Clerk-Treasurer and Deputy Clerk-Treasurer.

Present: Mayor Vezina
Councillors: Crane, Handy, Racicot
Clerk-Treasurer Buob
Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Racicot

Visitors: none
Absent: Councillor Loan

Mayor Vezina called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: Councillor Racicot declared an interest in item 13 a) as his spouse is an employee of the Township.

1. Moved by A. Crane
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2020 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.

Carried

The Road Department written report for April 14, 2020 was presented. It was noted that due to the COVID-19 Pandemic the Beaver Dam Creek Culvert replacement project, originally planned for this summer, may not be moving forward this year. The Clerk-Treasurer has confirmed with Infrastructure Renewal, Rural Programs Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs that the timing of the project can be changed from the original application's proposed dates. The project must be completed by October 31, 2026. Council suggested that perhaps the culverts could be tendered for now, so if there is time to do the project they will be on order. As far as the construction itself goes, we can wait and see. The project itself should only take approximately one month and if we can do a site visit in May the project may still be able to be completed this year within the window of time allowed to work in the creek.

The Administration and Roads Voucher for April 14, 2020 was reviewed and it was

2. Moved by Bishop Racicot
Seconded by W. Handy

THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2020-07 DATED APRIL 14, 2020 TOTTALLING \$51,190.17 BE APPROVED AND PAID.

Carried

The Statement of Revenue and Expenditures are unavailable until the 2019 audit has been presented and approved by Council and the final numbers for the year are rolled forward.

Property Tax payments and the possible deferral of penalty and interest due to the COVID-19 Provincial Emergency were discussed. The Clerk-Treasurer's report and recommendations were read. Council discussed the options.

A draft By-law to waive penalty and interest on all unpaid taxes for May 1, June 1, and July 1, 2020 was read. It was

3. Moved by W. Handy
Seconded by A. Crane

THAT BY-LAW NUMBER 2020-12 BEING A BY-LAW TO AMEND BY-LAW NUMBER 2020-01, TO IMPOSE LATE PAYMENT CHARGES FOR NON-PAYMENT OF TAXES BE PASSED AND ENTERED IN THE BY-LAW BOOK.

Carried

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Resolutions for endorsement were read as follows:

- a) Town of Midland urging the Prime Minister of Canada to direct payment of the Federal funds to municipalities to waive property taxes for the year 2020 was filed.
- b) Town of Kingsville requesting hydro bill relief during the quarantine period as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the government's recent suspension of time-of-use rates was filed.

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry regarding the Restricted Fire Zone Declaration for the entire Province of Ontario due to COVID-19.
- b) Lakehead Police Services Board – January to March 2020 Report. It was noted that the total number of calls for the Board are consistent with last year.
- c) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) - i) regarding the 2020 Conference. It is the Boards intention to postpone the conference until the second week of September if the limiting of gatherings is suspended by then.
ii) copy of letter to the Honourable Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs and the Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of the Solicitor General regarding the COVID-19 and evacuation of First Nation communities.
- d) Ministry of Finance regarding Ontario's Action Plan - Responding to COVID-19.
- e) Office of the Solicitor General regarding the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA) and the ability to enforce orders.
- f) Ministry of Health regarding the Use of Masks for COVID-19. Council would like staff to have masks available for when they are dealing with the general public. The Road Employees should have masks in their vehicles incase they are in contact with the public while on the roads. Council would also like to have masks available between the doors for those entering the office to wear. Administration are encouraging people to pay their taxes online, if they have a question to call and we will answer over the phone, or if they need to pick up a document, to they let us know ahead of time so we have it ready for them and we can meet them outside. Traffic into the office has dramatical decreased.
- g) Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) regarding the postponing of the 2020 Assessment Update. The Provincial Government has indicated that property assessments for the 2021 taxation year will continue to be based on the fully phased-in January 1, 2016 current values.
- h) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding Operation of Seasonal Trailer Parks and Recreational Campgrounds – Amended Essential Business Order. Council would like this information included in the May Cornerstone.
- i) Association of Municipalities of Ontario i) March 25, 2020 – March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update.
ii) March 30, 2020 – COVID-19 Update: New Covid-19 Related Items You Need to Know Today.
iii) March 31, 2020 - AMO COVID-19 Update: Ontario Extends COVID-19 Emergency and Closes Outdoor Recreational Amenities.
iv) April 3, 2020 – AMO COVID-19 Update Week Three.
v) April 3, 2020 – Ontario Releases COVID-19 Projections and New Emergency Orders.
vi) April 6, 2020 – AMO COVID-19 Update.
vii) April 8, 2020 – COVID-19 Update: New COVID-19 Related Items You Need to Know.
viii) AMO COVID-19 Update: Recovery.
ix) AMO COVID-19 Update – New Emergency Orders.

It was noted that the Province today extended the Provincial Emergency to May 12, 2020, however no official document has been received in the office as of 5 p.m. Council asked that any changes in this regard be sent out to them as it comes in so they are up to date.

- j) Ontario Energy Board regarding Update on Electricity Bills and Time-of-Use pricing
- k) Northern Policy Institute regarding The Future of Jobs – Labour Market Shortages in Thunder Bay.

Under Old Business, Council discussed:

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Councillor Racicot was muted and blocked from the meeting.

- a) Discussion with regard to the Township of O'Connor full-time employees, and their options, if they are required to self-isolated or self-quarantine for 14 days, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Clerk-Treasurer presented a report with information and options for Government funding and what is available for the employees, including information with regard to Employment Insurance and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit program. The Township of O'Connor does not qualify for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, a program to cover up to 75 percent wage subsidy for eligible employers for up to 12 weeks.

Council agreed that an employee should not be required to use their sick leave days or their holidays for this mandatory time off. It was

4. Moved by A. Crane
Seconded by W. Handy

THAT SHOULD AN EMPLOYEE BE REQUIRED TO SELF-ISOLATE OR SELF-QUARANTINE DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, INITIALLY THE EMPLOYEE WILL APPLY FOR EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE WITH A WAGE TOP UP FROM THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR EQUAL TO THEIR BI-WEEKLY WAGE.

Carried

Councillor Racicot was unblocked and returned to the meeting.

- b) The Township of O'Connor Budget meeting for the Roads Department and the Fire Department scheduled for April 20, 2020 was discussed. Due to the COVID-19 the Clerk-Treasurer would like to request an extension in time from the originally scheduled meeting to allow for more time to prepare. Council discussed possible later dates and it was

5. Moved by W. Handy
Seconded by A. Crane

THAT THE BUDGET MEETING SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 20, 2020 FOR THE ROADS DEPARTMENT AND FIRE DEPARTMENT BE RESCHEDULED TO MONDAY, MAY 4, 2020 AT 7 P.M.

THE MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY.

Carried

- c) At the last meeting the issuance of fire permits was discussed. As it is recommended that residents do not come into the office due to the COVID-19 and with the fire permit season arriving, it was recommended that staff look into what can be done to issue permits on line. Upon further investigation the Township of O'Connor's current By-law Number 2004-09 does not specifically say in what form the permit will be issued. Administration has prepared an on-line application for a permit which is then emailed to the Township office. Staff will then issue a permit and email it back to the applicant. With the current Provincial Fire Ban in place no permits may be issued at this time, however when the Ban is lifted the link will be put on the Township's website.
- d) NOSH Magazine update – The 2020 issue of the Magazine has been put on hold due to the COVID-19 as the majority of the advertiser are small businesses owner. They will reach out to the Township again when they are ready to move forward with the publication.
- e) Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) requesting a reason as to why the Township of O'Connor is not a member of their organization. Council would like the response to be that it is a budget decision made by Council not to be a member.
- f) The Township of O'Connor's draft Pandemic Influenza Plan, an Appendix to the Emergency Management Plan was brought back for further discussion and was once again deferred.

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Mayor Vezina commended Council and staff on a great job on the transition of the changes made to deal with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Under New Business, Council discussed

- a) Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) regarding the OPP Section 10 Contract and the Township of Gillies' intention to leave the Lakehead Police Services Board. They are requesting written confirmation from the Township that we are aware of them leaving the Board, that Council agree with their decision and are asking if there will be a financial impact on the Township of O'Connor as a result. Council did receive a resolution from the Township of Gillies within the required timeframe to give notice. The Township will have to assume a portion of the Township of Gillies levy which was 11% of the total expense. The Clerk-Treasurer will provide a written response to the Municipal Policing Bureau as requested.
- b) Nuclear Waste Management Organization regarding the NWMO 2017-19 Triennial Report and 2020-24 Implementation Plan. They are requesting comments on their Plan by June 10, 2020. It was noted that a representative from the Organization was scheduled to attend this Council meeting, however due to the COVID-19 Pandemic was unable at this time.
- c) Discuss requesting quotes for insurance and auditor in 2020. Council agreed to have the Clerk-Treasurer contact our current insurance carrier to get a price for the next term. The current Policy comes due June 1st, and if the amount is extremely higher than last year, administration will request quotes from other carriers, with quotes to be submitted prior to the renewal.

The current Agreement with the Township of O'Connor Auditor, BDO expired following the audit for 2019. It was agreed to once again request quotes for a four-year term and it was

6. Moved by A. Crane
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

THAT ADMINISTRATION REQUEST QUOTES FOR AUDITING SERVICES FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR, FOR THE UPCOMING YEARS: 2020, 2021, 2022 AND 2023.

Carried

- d) Virtual meeting delivery options. Administration provided a summary of options for Council to consider. Tonight's meeting was held using a free trial of GoToMeeting. Council agreed that it did work well tonight and we would continue to use the format. It was noted that the GoToMeeting may also be offering a free three-month service for Municipalities which administration will look into further.

Under further New Business Council would like to ensure that the employees are properly protected from the COVID-19 when dealing with the public.

For information purposes no building permits were approved since the last meeting.

7. Moved by Bishop Racicot
Seconded by A. Crane

THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY ON APRIL 27, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M. FROM THE O'CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

TIME BEING: 9:02 P.M.

Carried

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer