

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – APRIL 27, 2020

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, April 27, 2020 at 7 p.m. held virtually using GoToMeeting video conferencing for participants. Present in the Municipal office: the Clerk-Treasurer and Deputy Clerk-Treasurer.

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

Visitors: BDO - Kristen Spithoff, CPA,CA and Candace Phillips, CPA,CA,
Erin Laforest, Administrative Assistant

Mayor Vezina called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: none

1. Moved by Bishop Racicot
Seconded by Alex Crane

**THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY,
APRIL 14, 2020 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.**

Carried

Mayor Vezina noted that at this time no visitors will be allowed to speak to Council during the meeting unless they have previously asked to be on the agenda.

Kristen Spithoff and Candace Phillips from BDO were welcomed to the virtual meeting from their homes. Mayor Vezina then turned the meeting over to them to present the Township of O'Connor's 2019 Financial Statements. Ms. Spithoff provided a breakdown of the process of what BDO does during an audit. Their staff attend the Township office for two visits throughout the year. During these visits they ensure that controls are in place with regard to the Township's finances. They do testing of these finances, including confirming grant money is spent appropriately, review engineering studies, review bank reconciliations, confirm payroll and purchases are appropriately accounted for. Ms. Spithoff then turned the meeting over to Ms. Phillips to present the statements.

Ms. Phillips noted that the financial statements have been prepared by management in accordance with the Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards and include certain amounts based on estimates and judgements. When alternative accounting methods exist, management has chosen those it deems most appropriate in the circumstances, in order to ensure that the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects. She also noted that Mayor and Council are responsible for reviewing and approving the financial statements and must feel comfortable with the statements before approving.

The Independent Auditor's report was read. In their opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material aspects the financial position of the Township of O'Connor as at December 31, 2019.

Ms. Phillips then went on to explain the Statement of Financial Position, the balances and the differences between 2019 and 2018. It was noted that the deferred revenue had increased significantly due to the funding from Federal Gas Tax and OCIF for bridge repairs cancelled last year. The landfill liability also increased as a result of the new estimates indicated in the Disposal Site report completed in 2019. The debt number is lower as both loans are almost fully paid back. Overall, the Net Assets amount is a good number.

Council asked for confirmation of the taxes receivable amount. Ms. Phillips confirmed that this number is the amount of outstanding taxes at the end of 2019. Overall, it is okay and average compared to other clients they have.

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The Statement of Operations and Accumulated Surplus was reviewed. This page compares 2019 actual to budget, as well as actual for 2018. It was noted that revenue from the Provincial government's Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) was lower by \$20,000, however it does not show in the statements as the Province also provided a one-time Municipal Stabilization Fund in the amount of \$208,000, also included in this line. It was noted that the Provincial Offences Act fund was also much lower than anticipated, and will most likely continue to remain low due to the new formula to release funding.

The Expenses in the report were explained with regard to what accounts are included in each of the lines. General Government includes council and administration; Protection to Persons and Property includes the Chief Building Official, Fire Department, Ontario Provincial Police, etc.; Transportation includes mostly road department wages and other smaller budgeted items; Environment Services includes the landfill liability; Health Services includes the Superior North Emergency Medical Services and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit levies and the cemetery; Social and Family Services includes the Thunder Bay District Social Assistance Administration Board levy; Recreation and Culture is the library grant; and the Planning and Development is the Lakehead Rural Planning Board levy. These numbers resulted in an annual surplus as a result of the Provincial funding noted above.

Ms. Phillips noted that the auditors were happy to see the Disposal Site report completed in 2019. The report confirms that there is a potential for several more years of use at the site and this is now accurately accounted for in the statements.

Ms. Spithoff then brought to Council's attention the Notes to Financial Statements, Section 2., which notes that the World Health Organization's (WHO) global health emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that the full impact of this pandemic continues to evolve. As such, it is uncertain as to the full magnitude that the pandemic will have on the Township's financial condition, liquidity and the future results of operations. It was noted that there could be addition risks as residents may not be able to pay their taxes. While there is also risk with regard to the markets, it was noted that the Township of O'Connor currently has their surplus funds in a Money Market and High Interest Savings Account with minimal risk. Ms. Spithoff noted that there is usually a Management letter provided by the Auditors, however this year they have no concerns. She continued to congratulate Council and staff on the work that was completed in 2019 which addressed all the previous concerns they had.

The Township of O'Connor Trust Funds Statements for the Cemetery Perpetual Care were also provided with no concerns.

Ms. Spithoff stated that the Township of O'Connor books are in great shape.

Council asked the auditors whether or not Council could lower the amount of money that is put into the Disposal site reserve if the life expectancy is now longer. It was noted that that would be a Council decision.

Ms. Spithoff and Ms. Phillips were thanked for presenting the Financial Statements and then left the meeting.

The Fire Department report for March 26 to April 23, 2020 was read. There were two First Response calls in this timeframe.

Council asked if additional masks have been purchased for the First Response Team. It was noted that 4 hard face shields have been purchased. Ms. Coderre is responsible for the inventory of the First Response supplies, which she receives from the Superior North Emergency Medical Services (SNEMS). It was noted that the Township has purchased masks for the road employees and office staff and some have been placed in the vehicles and between the doors at the office as requested by Council at the last meeting.

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The Administration and Roads Voucher summary was reviewed. No questions with regard to the summary arose and it was

2. Moved by B. J. Loan
Seconded by A. Crane

THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2020-08 DATED APRIL 27, 2020 TOTTALLING \$29,122.64 BE APPROVED AND PAID.

Carried

The Statement of Revenue and Expenditures were unavailable. The 2019 Financial Statements have now been presented and final numbers for 2019 yearend will be brought forward and statements will be available at the next meeting.

A resolution for endorsement was read from the Town of Gravenhurst and the District Municipality of Muskoka requesting that the Province of Ontario add community gardens, garden centres and nurseries as essential services. It was noted that since this resolution was sent out the Provincial government has added these services as essential services and this resolution was filed.

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) Superior North Emergency Medical Services (SNEMS) First Quarter Levy for 2020. The Township of O'Connor's percentage of the total levy was discussed and compared to surrounding municipalities. The Township of O'Connor pays 0.43% of the total levy based on Weighted Assessment.
- b) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing i) regarding providing municipalities with the flexibility to deploy staff to where they are needed most during this pandemic. Due to the size of our municipalities this does not affect the Township employees.
ii) regarding the introduction of legislation to allow for the suspension of specified timelines associated with land use planning matters.
- c) District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) media releases regarding funding. The Board will be receiving \$584,150 from the Social Services Relief Fund to assist vulnerable populations in the District of Thunder Bay, and will be eligible for up to \$1,168,300 in 2020-21. The Board also announced the successful applicants for the Community Homeless Prevention Initiative (CHPI) Food Security Fund. The Rural Cupboard Food Bank is one of the successful applicants and they will receive \$40,000 to provide emergency food assistance to those in need for the communities of Conmee, Gillies, Gorham, Kaministiquia, Neebing, Nolalu, O'Connor, Oliver Paipooonge, Upsala, Jacques and the Territories without Municipal Organization.
- d) Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) Municipal Update. MPAC is providing a one-time deferral option for municipalities quarterly payments. The province-wide reassessment has been post-poned. As of now they do not know when the next assessment update will take place or what the future valuation date will be. They do know that the 2021 property tax year will continue to be based on the January 1, 2016 valuation date, meaning the assessments will be the same as in 2020. While the property inspectors will not be out in the communities, they are exploring options on how to assess new construction activity.
- e) Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) i) April 14, 2020 COVID-19 update regarding Bill 189, Coronavirus Support and Protection Act, 2020 received Royal Assent. The Province extended the Declaration of Emergency to May 12, 2020.
ii) AMO COVID Update – Staff Reassignment Flexibility Provided.
iii) AMO – Member Update for April 20, 2020.
iv) AMO COVID-19 Update April 23, 2020: Municipal Fiscal Issues and other items of Municipal interest.

An additional AMO Communications was received after agenda was sent out which was added to the agenda at this time. The document is a COVID-19 Update dated April 27th – What You Need to Know Today: Provincial Re-Opening Approach, PPE Access, LTC Orders, Increased COVID Pay, Community Gardens.

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- f) Town of Oakville providing a copy of their letter sent to Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Ford in support of the foodservice industry.
- g) Northern Policy Institute regarding COVID-19 and the International Students. There is concern for Northern Ontario post-secondary institutions possibly seeing fewer international students in 2020-21 academic year. This will have an economical impact on Northern Ontario.

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) Township of O'Connor draft Influenza Pandemic Plan, Appendix to the Township's Emergency Plan. Council agreed that the document is well done and covers the public health related issues in order to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic. It was noted that background information included in the draft plan does not include any of the current COVID-19 data. This plan will be reviewed each year and can be updated when this new information is summarized. There are minor amendments to still be made to the document and it will be brought back to Council for final approval.

Under New Business, Council discussed

- a) Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks regarding the 2020 Day of Action on Litter Update. May 12, 2020 will continue to be the first official Day, however all public and corporate cleanups are postponed until Waste Reduction Week in October. The Ministry is asking if municipalities will organize municipal-led cleanup Events in the fall. Council agreed that at this time the Township of O'Connor will not.
- b) A-1 Sewage Services (1989) Ltd. letter to Council with regard to possibly relocating their business to the Township of O'Connor. They are currently looking for a new home and came across the property located at 63 Loghrin Road. This property is currently zoned Industrial, however the Township's current Zoning By-law does not refer to sewage waste as a permitted use in this zone. Prior to even considering purchasing the property there are steps that would have to be taken. The first being to ask Council if they would consider rezoning that piece of property as waste disposal, which they are doing in this letter. Ms. Ward provided a full detailed report with regard to the business, how it works, how big they are, and the additional environmental requirements associated with this business, for Council's information. Council each provided their opinion with regard to the possibility of this business relocating to Loghrin Road. Council unanimously agreed that the location proposed would not be appropriate for sewage waste. The most densely populated area, with private wells, in the Township is located adjacent to and Southeast of the proposed property. The prominent winds come from the Northwest, as well the water table from this property flows in this same directly. The property itself also has an area of wetlands. A letter will be sent to Ms. Ward at A-1 Sewage informing her of Council's decision to not amend the permitted use to allow for waste disposal on this property.

Issues brought forward or letters received after the agenda was mailed were discussed as follows:

- a) News from the Office of the Premier – Ontario Unveils Guiding Principles to Reopen the Province. The Premier and Ministers Commit to New Phased Approach for a safe restart and recovery. The government is planning a stage-by-stage approach to reopening the economy to ensure there are appropriate measures in place so workplaces can open safely. No dates for these stages has yet been determined.
- b) FireSmart Canada regarding Wildfire Community Preparedness Day 2020 Update. Recipients of the \$500 award, including the Township of O'Connor, are now restricted from carrying out plans or activities in May due to the global public-health emergency. If the public health authorities determine that it is safe to do so, and a municipality wishes to hold an event later in the year, they are asked to contact FireSmart. Council agreed that they will cancel any event for 2020 and no funding will be received.

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

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

THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE BUDGET MEETING TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY ON MAY 4, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M. FROM THE O'CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

TIME BEING: 8:34 P.M.

Carried

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer