

## TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – FEBRUARY 14, 2022

Minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday, February 14, 2022 at 7 p.m. in the O'Connor Community Centre and virtually.

Present: Mayor Vezina  
 Councillors: Crane, Handy, Loan, Racicot  
 Clerk-Treasurer Buob  
 Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Racicot  
 Visitors: Kelly Johnson, Leadhand  
 No one attended virtually.

Mayor Vezina called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Mayor Vezina requested an addition to the Closed portion of tonight's meeting to discuss an identifiable individual and to move the closed portion forward on the agenda to discuss the matter with Mr. Johnson, Leadhand. Council agreed to these changes and it was

1. Moved by Bishop Racicot  
 Seconded by A. Crane

**THAT THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING BE APPROVED AND AMENDED.**  
 Carried

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: none

2. Moved by A. Crane  
 Seconded by Jerry Loan

**THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.**  
 Carried

Mr. Johnson was welcomed to the meeting. Roadwork in general was discussed. The road employees have been snowplowing, sanding, moving back the snowbanks and grading back the snow drifts. Current gasoline prices were also discussed.

A report on the Internship program was read. As Mr. Payette has been hired to fill the full-time Equipment Operator #1 position, he is no longer eligible to be a part of the program and the agreement has ended. The Clerk-Treasurer has spoken with the Intern Coordinator to inform them of this, as required. A request for reimbursement and a final report have been submitted. As Mr. Payette did not complete more than 9 months of the program, the Township can request a replacement, under the same conditions, for another 52 weeks. Council agreed to move forward with a request with a new start date of April 4, 2022. As only two applicants applied for the first round of applications, Council would like the Clerk-Treasurer to contact the coordinator to see if we can just approach the second applicant or if we will have to repost. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

The Health and Safety Report from January 18, 2022 was read. No questions were asked.

As amended, the Closed session of the meeting was moved forward on the agenda and it was

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

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE NEXT PORTION OF THE MEETING BE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC IN ORDER TO DISCUSS A PERSONAL MATTER ABOUT AN IDENTIFIABLE INDIVIDUAL, INCLUDING MUNICIPAL OR LOCAL BOARD EMPLOYEES PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION 239(2)(E) OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT, 2001.**  
**TIME BEING: 7:15 P.M.** Carried

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The first discussion in regards to a personal matter regarding an identifiable individual was discussed with Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson then left the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

The second identifiable individual matter was then discussed.

- 4. Moved by Jerry Loan  
Seconded by W. Handy

**TIME BEING: 9:06 P.M.**

**THAT WE NOW MOVE TO OPEN MEETING.**

Carried

The Administration and Roads Voucher for February 14, 2022 was reviewed and it was

- 5. Moved by Bishop Racicot  
Seconded by Jerry Loan

**THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2022-03 DATED FEBRUARY 14, 2022 TOTTALLING \$84,095.56 BE APPROVED AND PAID.**

Carried

A Report to Council with regard to the deferred revenue and transfer of surplus funds to reserves at the last meeting was discussed. It was explained that the COVID operating fund was overlooked in the previous report and the surplus was over estimated. Administration recommended that the previous resolutions be rescinded and new amounts be transferred.

The Draft Statement of Revenue and Expenditures to December 31, 2021 was reviewed and Council discussed Administration’s recommendations and it was

- 6. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

**THAT RESOLUTIONS #5 AND #6 OF THE JANUARY 24, 2022 COUNCIL MEETING BE RESCINDED DUE TO OVER ESTIMATION OF SURPLUS FUNDS IN THE 2021 BUDGET AND TO CORRECT THE DEFERRED BALANCES UNDERSPENT IN 2021.**

Carried

- 7. Moved by Bishop Racicot  
Seconded by A. Crane

**FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2021 THE FOLLOWING AMOUNTS BE TRANSFERRED INTO THE FOLLOWING RESERVE/S.**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT - \$10,225.00  
DISPOSAL SITE - \$4,000.00  
TURNOUT GEAR - \$1,300.00**

Carried

- 8. Moved by W. Handy  
Seconded by Jerry Loan

**FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2021 THE FOLLOWING AMOUNTS BE TRANSFERRED FROM THE DEFERRED REVENUE ACCOUNTS:**

**FEDERAL GAS TAX - \$714.88  
OCIF - \$12,644.45**

Carried

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The Disposal Site reserve was discussed. It was suggested that the interest earned each year on the value of this reserve be deposited into the Disposal Site reserve account at year end each year. Council agreed and this amount will be included in the 2022 budget as discussed.

The final Statements for December 31, 2021 will be presented once the annual audit is complete.

Policies were reviewed as follows:

- a) Hiring Policy. The policy will need to be updated with regulation number changes and wording changes, as well as updates in regard to the Union Agreement negotiations regarding reimbursement for medicals and driver abstracts. The temporary hiring will also be updated. Administration will update the by-law and bring back to Council for final approval.
- b) A report to Council was read with regard to Employee Vacation Entitlement. The question of whether an employee can take holidays in the first year of employment was discussed. Both the Union Agreement and the Administrative Benefits and Wage Review Policy state that every employee shall receive annual vacation with pay for less one year of service, an amount equal to 4% of the gross wages of the employee, accumulated to date of commencement of vacation. It was agreed to leave both documents as they are. However, it was noted that prior to the administrative policy being passed in 2019, both the Clerk-Treasurer and the Deputy Clerk-Treasurer did not receive holidays in their first year of employment and will be entitled to take vacation earned in the previous year in their year of retirement.
- c) The Policy for Administrative Benefits and Wage Review was available for reference. It was reviewed and amended in October, 2021 and no further changes were recommended at this time.

Resolutions for endorsement were read as follows:

- a) City of Brantford regarding Addressing the Revolving Door of Justice was filed.
- b) Township of Perth South regarding the "Catch and Release" Justice was filed.
- c) Township of Limerick regarding the Gypsy Moth Spraying was filed.

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) Statistics Canada – 2021 Census Profile for the Township of O'Connor. The Township's population has increased by 3.9 percent from 2016, going from 663 to 689 in 2021.
- b) Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) - 2021 Census information for LRMC Members for comparison, was reviewed. Both the Township's of Conmee and Gillies population went down slightly and the others went up slightly. Overall, there was not a lot of change.
- c) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) – i) ROMA Conference – meeting summary following discussions in regard to issues facing Northwestern Ontario.  
ii) ROMA Conference Roundtable regarding Ontario Housing Affordability request for additional information. Council did not feel that the Township of O'Connor is affected by this and no comments will be made at this time.
- d) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) – i) Letter from the Minister requesting feedback on supply and affordable housing.  
ii) Steps to Cautiously and Gradually Ease Public Health measures while protecting Hospital and Health Care capacity, dated February 3, 2022. It was noted that these changes have since be updated.
- e) The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) – i) Update from the Board – February 4, 2022.  
ii) 2022 Cost Apportionment. The Township of O'Connor's levy will increase in 2022 over 2021 by \$2,757.  
iii) Call for Nominations: Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Advisory Table. No one will be putting their name forward at this time.  
iv) Call for Nominations: TBDSSAB Child Care and Early Years' Advisory Table. No one will be putting their name forward at this time.
- f) Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) – 2022 LRCA Levy Request. The Township of O'Connor's levy will increase by \$94 over 2021.

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- g) Lakehead Rural Planning Board (LRPB) – i) Invoice for Planning Services for review.  
ii) Increased Planning Board Application Fees. The application rates for consent have been increased to \$800, plus a LRCA Service fee of \$275.
- h) Thunder Bay District Health Unit details of the remuneration, expenses, and allowances paid to Mayor Vezina as a Board member.
- i) Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) – Staffing change affecting Amethyst Sector. Sharon Bak, Field Officer, is leaving EMO as of February 11, 2022. Greg Bartlett will be the Amethyst sector permanent Field Officer.
- j) Health Canada – Licensing and Medical Access Directorate, Controlled Substances and Cannabis Branch reply to Council's endorsed resolution regarding cannabis production sites.
- k) Federal Minister of Agriculture and Ontario Minister of Agriculture regarding increase in payment made for each application for injury/kill administered by the Township. The payment amount per application will move from \$30 to \$50 to help offset the administration expenses of administering this program by Township staff.

The balance of the correspondence was passed around the table.

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge regarding a Primary Health Care Service Plan and request for a supporting resolution, asking the provincial government to fund the Norwest Community Health Centres, who are offering primary care in the new Evergreen Pharmacy in Kakabeka Falls. It was

- 9. Moved by Jerry Loan  
Seconded by W. Handy

**WHEREAS THE OVER 10,000 RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE RURAL MUNICIPALITIES AND UNINCORPORATED AREAS WEST AND SOUTH OF THE CITY OF THUNDER BAY HAVE NO ACCESS TO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE LOCALLY, BUT INSTEAD MUST TRAVEL TO THE CITY OF THUNDER BAY TO ACCESS PRIMARY HEALTH CARE;**

**AND WHEREAS MANY OF THESE RURAL RESIDENTS GO TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT THUNDER BAY REGIONAL HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE SINCE THERE HAVE NO DESIGNATED PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER;**

**AND WHEREAS A HEALTH CARE NEEDS SURVEY IN THE SPRING OF 2021 THAT GARNERED OVER 800 RESPONSES CONDUCTED BY THE NORWEST COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE (NWCHC) INDICATED TRAVEL TO THE CITY FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IS A BARRIER AND DEMONSTRATED STRONG INTEREST IN HAVING ACCESS TO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE LOCALLY;**

**AND WHEREAS SOCIETAL TRENDS INCLUDING WORK AT HOME ARE SHOWING THAT CONCENTRATION OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN CONGESTED URBAN SETTINGS SHOULD NOT BE THE ONLY FOCUS IN THE PROVISION OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES;**

**AND WHEREAS THE NORWEST COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE HAS DEVELOPED A HYBRID PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICE PLAN TO OFFER SERVICES INCLUDING NURSE PRACTITIONER CLINICS AS WELL AS DIABETES, FOOT CARE, MENTAL HEALTH AND DIETICIAN CARE FROM CLINICAL SPACE IN THE SOON TO BE OPERATIONAL NEW EVERGREEN PHARMACY BUILDING IN THE VILLAGE OF KAKABEKA FALLS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ONGOING PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE INCLUDING COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER SUPPORTS TO RURAL COMMUNITIES AND HOME VISITS TO VULNERABLE AND AT RISK CLIENTS;**

**AND WHEREAS THE PROPOSED HYBRID PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICE PLAN WILL HELP THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH GREATLY TO**

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**ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES SUCH AS IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE BY OFFERING A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY CARE APPROACH INCLUDING HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION IN ADDITION TO PRIMARY CARE, HELPING PEOPLE TO LIVE IN THEIR OWN HOMES THEREBY REDUCING PRESSURE ON LONG TERM CARE, OFFERING SERVICES IN ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO AVOID PRESSURE ON HOSPITALS, PARTICULARLY EMERGENCY ROOMS AND TO BRING SERVICES CLOSER TO HOME IN RURAL COMMUNITIES, AND TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN THE RURAL POPULATION, PARTICULARLY FOR FARMERS;**

**AND WHEREAS TO IMPLEMENT ITS PROPOSED HYBRID PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICE PLAN NWCHC NEEDS FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO COVER ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS TO BE ABLE TO SECURE CLINICAL SPACE IN THE SOON TO BE OPERATIONAL NEW EVERGREEN PHARMACY BUILDING IN THE VILLAGE OF KAKABEKA FALLS;**

**THAT COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR REQUESTS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT NWCHC TO ESTABLISH ITS PROPOSED HYBRID PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICE PLAN TO BETTER SERVICE THE SIGNIFICANT RURAL POPULATION IN THE SURROUNDING UNDERSERVED AREA BY FUNDING ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS FOR THE CLINICAL SPACE IN THE VILLAGE OF KAKABEKA FALLS.**

Carried

Council would also like to express to the Provincial Government that if a clinic is opened in Kakabeka Falls, we do not want to lose the mobile clinic which has been coming to the O'Connor Community Centre with primary health care and foot care for over ten years.

- b) Councillor Handy and Crane provided an update on the delegation they had with Hydro One in regard to Council's concerns to the lack of brush removal along Hydro One's distribution rights-of-way, during the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference. The written response from Andreea Nicoara, Community Relations, was also read. Councillor Handy and Crane stated that they had a great discussion and were able to express Council's concerns. The Hydro One representatives described their new approach to vegetation maintenance on their distribution equipment across the province and informed them of the changes. Crews will complete work roughly every 3 to 5 years, instead of 8 to 10 years, and they will stage the work required over a few phases. Contact information was also provided for both municipal representatives and for the community to contact them to express any further concerns. They also thanked them for the support that they have provided to the Township of O'Connor over the years. Including the recent funding for the backup generator for the municipal office.

Under further Old Business, Councillor Crane and Handy provided an overall opinion on the ROMA conference recently held virtually from January 23 to 25, 2022.

Under New Business, Council discussed

- a) Ministry of Northern Development Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (NDMNRF) i) regarding Ontario Investing in Inclusive and Accessible Communities – applications now open. This grant provides the successful candidates with up to \$60,000 for a local project that will help older residents and people with disabilities participate in community life.  
ii) Suggested recommendation from Administration were discussed. As there is an accessibility component to this funding, Administration would like to submit an application for a full \$60,000 for playground equipment that includes accessible features and workout equipment. It would also bring enjoyment to the seniors as they come to watch their grandchildren play.

Administration has requested quotes from two different companies, so far one

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has been returned. A cost, including installation, is approximately \$100,000.00. An application has also been submitted to Hydro One for \$25,000.00 and the O'Connor Community Club has held a fundraiser in the past and has a donation for the Township if, or when, this project moves forward and purchase is made.

Council would like administration to inquiry with our insurance company as to whether or not there are any special requirements in regard to the installation. They would also like to know whether or not the cost could be lowered if the Township did their own installation, or at least the preparation.

b) Ontario Fire Marshal, Jon Pegg – i) invitation to attend a Technical Briefing on the proposed regulation to establish minimum firefighter certification standards. It was

10. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

**THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S PARTICIPATE IN A TECHNICAL BRIEFING LED BY THE OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL ON A PROPOSED REGULATION TO ESTABLISH MINIMUM FIREFIGHTER CERTIFICATION STANDARDS TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022 OR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2022:**

**MAYOR VEZINA  
ERIN LAFOREST, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT  
CLERK-TREASURER BUOB**

Carried

- ii) Ontario's Regulation Registry summary of Proposed Regulations were reviewed.
- c) Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) regarding Slate of Candidates – Good Roads Board of Directors to fill vacancies on the Board. The Northern Zone requires two to be elected. Council did not put any names forward for the Board.
- d) Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks regarding Proposed Sub watershed Planning Guide - request for comment. Council did not have any comments in this regard. The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority will be providing comment.
- e) A discussion, in regard to a potential summer/outdoor get together for staff and volunteers, was held. A retirement party for Mr. Dennhardt could also be incorporated. The Clerk-Treasurer provided some ideas and it was agreed that Council will think more about this and bring back ideas at a future meeting for further discussion.

Under further New Business, Mayor Vezina informed Council that he is now on the Executive of the Thunder Bay District Health Unit Board, and as the NOMA representative on the Energy Task Force, he is now the representative on the AMO Energy Task Force.

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

- a) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) regarding a Leadership Conference to be held on February 24, 2022. No one was able to attend.
- b) Hymers Agricultural Society regarding the Hymers Fair – Prize Book Advertisement. As the fair is planning for an in-person fair again this year, they are hoping to have their prize book once again printed and are confirming advertising for within. As the Township did pay for an advertisement in 2020, and the book was not printed, the Township still has a credit with the Society. They are asking if Council are still willing to move forward with the same advertisement, previous submitted in 2020. Council agreed that all information is still accurate and they will have it included in the 2022 publication.
- c) Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce – Ontario Moving to Next Phase of Reopening on February 17, 2022. The Ontario Government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, is cautiously and gradually easing public health measures

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sooner than originally stated. The first phase will be effective February 17, 2022 and additional steps will be taken on March 1, 2022, which will include lifting capacity limits for all remaining indoor public settings. Ontario will also be lifting all proof of vaccination requirements for all settings at this time. Masking requirements will remain in place at this time.

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

It was

11. Moved by W. Handy  
Seconded by Jerry Loan

**THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD IN THE O'CONNOR COMMUNITY CENTRE AND VIRTUALLY ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.**

**TIME BEING: 10:30 P.M.**

Carried

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Mayor

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Clerk-Treasurer