

## TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – FEBRUARY 27, 2023

Minutes of the Council meeting held on February 27, 2023 at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers and virtual.

Present: Mayor Vezina  
Councillors: Crane (virtual), Sobolta, Torkkeli  
Clerk-Treasurer Buob  
Administrative Assistant Laforest

Visitors: Fire Chief Henry Mattas  
Deputy Fire Chief Greg Biloski  
Brendan Rea, Fire Fighter  
John Nagy – Chronicle Journal (virtual)

Absent: Councillor Racicot

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

1. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING BE APPROVED.**

Carried

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: none

2. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2023 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.**

Carried

The visitors were asked if they wished to address Council and they replied no.

Fire Chief Mattas was welcomed to the table. The Fire Department report from January 20 to February 24, 2023 was read. There were two First Response calls and one CO alarm call in that period.

Under Fire Department issues, Fire Chief Mattas once again mentioned that only the same few members are showing up for meetings and training. The names of those attending are included on the report. Council suggested that we call a meeting with the members and Council to express the importance of their commitment to the team and the Township. Fire Chief Mattas would like the new By-law recently passed by Council, and the Policies regarding the Fire Department responsibilities presented to the members and explain to them their responsibilities as a member. Possible dates will be discussed at a later meeting as the revised policies are still being drafted.

Fire Chief Mattas reported that more training will be coming available at the Oliver Paipoonge training centre in Kakabeka Falls. He has sent the course information to all members. One member is signed up for Firefighter 1 course. There is pre-work that has to be completed prior to the course. As there is a cost to the course, it was suggested that if a member signs up and does not complete the work or attend the training that the member be responsible for paying back the Township for the cost of the course. This will be included in the Volunteer Fire Department Policy to ensure accountability.

Fire Chief Mattas informed Council that he is purchasing a new computer software program for the Fire Department. The program will track the personnel, training and call records. Fire Chief Mattas has chosen the required modules for the Township needs. The previous program was very old and there was no longer support as the Program Designer has passed away. The new program can be shared with the Township Office as well.

Fire Chief Mattas would like to recognize Mr. Johnson, Leadhand, for all the hard work he and the volunteers did to bring the rink surface back to skateable condition after the recent warm weather in time for the Grand Opening of the Township outdoor rink.

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Two new members have joined the Volunteer Fire Department and one has confirmed that they can no longer commit to the Department. Resolutions to identify these changes were discussed and it was

3. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE COUNCIL APPROVE THE FOLLOWING PERSONS AS MEMBERS OF THE O'CONNOR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT AND/OR FIRST RESPONSE TEAM:**

- 1. MICHAEL DAVEY  
2. TERI TREFTLIN**

Carried

4. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by John Sobolta

**THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE REMOVAL OF THE FOLLOWING NAME FROM THE ACTIVE ROSTER OF THE O'CONNOR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT AND/OR FIRST RESPONSE TEAM:**

- 1. STACEY TYANCE**

Carried

The Ontario Power Generation (OPG) proposed redevelopment of the Kakabeka Generating Station Project was discussed. During the construction of the project, the Volunteer Fire Departments who currently use the aqua ducts to fill their trucks will not have access to the water supply. OPG has scheduled a kickoff meeting for March 28<sup>th</sup> and the Township of O'Connor has been invited to participate. It was agreed that as the project does affect the Township that the meeting should be attended, and it was

5. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S PARTICIPATE IN THE ONTARIO POWER GENERATION STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATIVE KICK OFF MEETING FOR THE PROPOSED KAKABEKA GENERATING STATION REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT TO BE HELD ON MARCH 28, 2023.**

**REGISTRATION: N/C**

**FIRE CHIEF MATTAS  
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF BILOSKI  
CLERK-TREASURER BUOB**

Carried

The Essentials of Municipal Fire Protection – A Decision Makers' Guide previously discussed with regard to Council's attendance was brought back to see if the Fire Chief or Deputy Chief would be interested in attending. It was

6. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by A. Crane

**THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE ESSENTIALS OF MUNICIPAL FIRE PROTECTION – A DECISION MAKERS' GUIDE TO BE HELD AT CONMEE MUNICIPAL COMPLEX ON MARCH 16, 2023.**

**FIRE CHIEF MATTAS  
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF BILOSKI**

Carried

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The surveys, previously completed by the current and past Volunteer Fire Department members, were briefly discussed. It was agreed to bring them back to the meeting with the draft Volunteer Fire Department Policy for further review. It was agreed that once the policies are approved, a meeting will be called with the Volunteer members and Council to review and discuss further, along with the By-law.

Fire Chief Mattas was thanked for attending and he, Deputy Fire Chief Biloski and Brendan Rea left the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

The Administration and Roads Voucher to February 27, 2023 was reviewed and it was

7. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2023-04 DATED FEBRUARY 27, 2023 TOTTALLING \$67,450.09 BE APPROVED AND PAID.**

Carried

The Statement of Revenue and Expenses will not be available until after the audit is complete.

By-law Number 2023-10 being a by-law to appoint a Dog Control Officer for the Township of O'Connor was reviewed. As per the resignation of Ms. Posthumus at the February 13th meeting, the By-law had to be changed. It was

8. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT BY-LAW NUMBER 2023-10 BEING A BY-LAW TO APPOINT A DOG CONTROL OFFICER FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR BE PASSED AND ENTERED INTO THE BY-LAW BOOK.**

Carried

Resolutions for endorsement were read as follows:

- a) Ontario RETT Syndrome Association – Request for Proclamation was filed.  
b) Town of Grimsby regarding Barriers for Women in Politics was read, and it was

9. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE RESOLUTION FROM THE TOWN OF GRIMSBY EXPRESSING THEIR SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS AND THEIR RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT IS FREE FROM MISOGYNY AND HARASSMENT, AND WHERE EVERYONE FEELS EQUAL AND REQUESTING OTHER MUNICIPALITIES JOIN THEM IN SUPPORTING WOMEN IN POLITICS AND PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN ALL AREAS OF SOCIETY BE ENDORSED.**

Carried

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) – regarding the 2023 Cost Apportionment. The Township of O'Connor's levy will be increasing by \$6,373 over 2022.  
b) Housing Services Corporation (HSC) – Supporting & Strengthening Communities: Innovations in Supportive Housing. It was

10. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by A. Crane

**THAT COUNCILLOR SOBOLTA ATTEND THE HOUSING SERVICES CORPORATION (HSC) SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES: INNOVATIONS IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING TO BE HELD JUNE 20, 2023 IN THUNDER BAY.**

Carried

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- c) Tiny Town Association – regarding exploring a permanent small home community. The organization is asking Township's for surplus land to explore building a tiny town. The Township of O'Connor does not have any surplus land currently to offer.

The balance of the correspondence was passed around the table. A copy of the Township of Gillies resolution supporting the Municipality of Neebing's resolution regarding the Black Ash Recovery Strategy was discussed. As Council has expressed their support for this matter it was agreed that perhaps a resolution of support should also be endorsed, and it was

11. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE RESOLUTION FROM THE MUNICIPALITY OF NEEBING IN RESPONSE TO BLACK ASH RECOVERY BE ENDORSED.**

Carried

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) – 2023 Annual Meeting and Conference to be held April 26 to 28, 2023 in Thunder Bay. Attendance to the conference was discussed and it was

12. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION (NOMA) 2023 CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD IN THUNDER BAY, ON APRIL 26 TO 28, 2023.**

**MAYOR VEZINA  
COUNCILLORS CRANE, SOBOLTA, TORKKELI**

**REGISTRATION: \$475.00 + EVENTBRITE FEE**

Carried

- b) Northwestern Ontario Recreational Trails Association (NWORTA) reply from Len Day, President, regarding Council's concerns from the February 13, 2023 Council meeting were discussed. Mr. Day does not perceive an increase in users to be a cause for concern. Regarding Council's parking concerns, he anticipates that most will congregate and park in Kakabeka Falls. Many kilometres of the existing trail utilize similar roads in other areas, as they are deemed "low risk" due to traffic volume and have a desirable configuration. He is also offering to have a representative from Trans Canada Trail speak to Council on this matter if they wish. It was also noted that the use of the Township Road system identified is temporary, as they continue to resolve a couple other issues, which will minimize and potentially negate required access to the roads. They do intend to hold three information sessions, one being in O'Connor, sometime this spring.

Council would like to draft and send a letter to the residents immediately residing on the proposed roads, to allow Council to hear any concerns prior to the information session. The Clerk-Treasurer will draft a letter for Council's review.

- c) The Clerk-Treasurer provided Council with an update in regard to the shared Chief Building Official (CBO) position. Two possible applications have been received for this position. The Clerk-Treasurer's from the Municipality of Neebing and the Township of Conmee and O'Connor, along with Gordon Cuthbertson, former CBO for the Townships and Councillor in the Municipality of Neebing will be meeting with one of the candidates on March 1<sup>st</sup>, here in O'Connor. Council was asked if they had any specific questions they would like asked or if they had any concerns with this method of interview. Council did not have any questions or concerns at this time. As neither of the applicants have the proper qualifications and will need to take the required courses, the cost associated with the courses was briefly discussed. Council would

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be willing, if necessary, to compensate a portion of the expenses if there is a service agreement signed by the successful candidate to commit to the position for a minimum number of years.

The Clerk-Treasurer will provide an update to Council at the next Council meeting.

- d) The Clerk-Treasurer provided an update on the loan options for the Township's Shop B project. She continues to deal with Infrastructure Ontario (IO) on the matter. They are currently offering the option of a lower amount for ten years or a higher amount for thirty years, however at this time will not fund the full amount requested. Council discussed the matter and agreed that they will not move forward with more than a ten-year amortization. The Clerk-Treasurer will contact IO and request the highest amount they will provide for the ten year term and to move from the construction loan application to the debenture option as they are only offering an amount that has already been spent. Council will await further information from IO on the final amount that the Township will be eligible for and will then consider further options to fund the balance of the project.
- e) Tbaytel Broadband update. The Municipality of Neebing has received information from Industry Canada regarding making an official announcement for the Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) Broadband project. They are currently working on setting a time and place in the coming days for the media announcement. The member municipalities will be invited.

Under Further Old Business, Councillor Crane provided a brief update on the information discussed at the Thunder Bay District Municipal League meeting held on February 15, 2023. He also noted that the League has setup a "Homes for the Aged" subcommittee.

At the last meeting the status of the Township of Conmee's "Pines on Hume" rural seniors apartment complex project was unknown. Councillor Sobolta confirmed that it is currently at a standstill. They are looking into funding. Councillor Sobolta would like to look into what our community might be looking for in this regard and put a package together to look into. Councillor Torkkeli also has a background in this and will provide some information if needed.

Under the New Business, Council discussed

- a) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) – 2023 Northern CAO-Clerks Forum to be held March 1 and 2, 2023 virtually. It was

13. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE 6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL 2023 NORTHERN CAO/CLERKS FORUM TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY ON MARCH 1 AND 2, 2023.**

**CLERK-TREASURER BUOB  
DEPUTY CLERK-TREASURER RACICOT  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT LAFOREST**

**REGISTRATION: N/C**

Carried

- b) Emergency Management Ontario – Office of the Fire Marshal regarding the Spring Sector Meeting and Northwest Response Forum 2023 to be held in Dryden April 3 to 6, 2023. It was

14. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SPRING AMETHYST SECTOR MEETING TO BE HELD IN DRYDEN, ONTARIO ON APRIL 3, 2023**

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**AND THE NORTHWEST RESPONSE FORUM TO BE HELD ON APRIL 4, 5, AND 6, 2023 IN DRYDEN.****REGISTRATION FEE - \$243.36 + TAX****CEMC & ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT LAFOREST**

Carried

- c) Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) – Rural Action Plan (RAP). Council was asked if they would like to make any comments or suggestions in regard to an update of this document. Mayor Vezina provided some background information on the purpose of the document and how it is used to provide the Ministers, at the different conferences, with the LRMC concerns. At this time there were no comments or suggestions from Council.

Under Further New Business, it was suggested that the Township host an open town hall meeting with the residents to present to them the 2023 Draft Budget and inform them of the services that are being provided for their tax dollars, helping them understand better what they are paying for and where their money is going. Council have heard resident's concerns with inflation and if their taxes are also going up. Some residents are on a limited income and may not be able to afford them. There is also concern for the current market value of homes and if the updated values are used in a reassessment, their taxes will also be that much higher. The timing of such a meeting was discussed and it was agreed that it should be held prior to the final passing of the budget, possibly in late April or early May. This will be discussed further as the budget process gets started.

Also discussed was the potential for the use of social media for the Township. There is currently a Social Media Policy, which was initiated by the Volunteer Fire Department, but so far no one on the department has made the commitment to do it. It was suggested that this could potentially increase recruitment of volunteers to the Fire Department, as well as interest in the Township. Comments of the advantages and disadvantages of having a social media page for the Township were briefly discussed and it was noted that to keep the workload to a minimum, the page could be setup to only send out information and not allow comments. Councillor Torkkeli provides social media services for other businesses and was asked to look over the Social Media Policy to see if she felt any changes are necessary if a Township Facebook page was created.

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

- a) Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry regarding Amendments to Ontario Regulation 161/17. This is in regard to the use of floating accommodations and camping on water over public lands in Ontario.

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

It was

15. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON MARCH 13, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.****TIME BEING: 9:15 P.M.**

Carried

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 Mayor

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 Clerk-Treasurer