

## TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – JANUARY 23, 2023

Minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday, January 23, 2023 at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers and virtual.

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

Visitors: Fire Chief Henry Mattas,  
Brendan Rea  
John Nagy of the Chronicle Journal (virtual)  
Len Day, President, Northwestern Ontario Recreational Trails Association (NWORTA) (virtual)

As Mayor Vezina was joining the meeting virtually, Acting Mayor Crane chaired the meeting and called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Jim Vezina

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

Carried

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: Councillor Racicot declared an interest in item 17 a) as his spouse is an employee of the Township.

2. Moved by Bishop Racicot  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2023 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.**

Carried

Brendan Rea was asked if he wished to address Council and he responded no.

Mr. Len Day, who was attending virtually, was welcomed to the meeting. Mr. Day is the President of (NWORTA) and updated Council on the progress of the final Phase I Shabaqua Trail, connection from Sovereign Road to Kakabeka Falls, and Phase II Kakabeka Falls Trail. Council has previously supported their non-motorized recreational trail route through the Township.

The original intent was to utilize the existing Thunder Bay Adventure Trail (TBAT) that currently runs along the O'Connor/Conmee Township boundary from Sovereign Road to Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park. They have run into two issues that is requiring them to look at a potential temporary reroute. The first issue is with a private land owner in the Township of Conmee, who has denied access to the property and they have been unsuccessful gaining permission from two property owners in the Township of O'Connor. The second issue that they have encountered is the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) requirement for an environmental review of the Highway 11/17 corridor from the O'Connor/Conmee Township boundary to Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park. The cost of the review is too expensive for the NWORTA at this time.

Mr. Day explained the potential temporary route that would utilize Sovereign Road, Highway 590, Smart Road and Loghrin Road and is requesting Council approve access to these roads. At the same time they are requesting access to Luckens Road as they would be using it in Phase II of the project that connects Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park to the City of Thunder Bay via Harstone Road. Mr. Day confirmed that they have already approached the Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge regarding access to Luckens Road and they have requested more information.

Acting Mayor Crane asked Council if they had any questions regarding the project. Council expressed their concern regarding the safety of individuals when using the shoulder of Highway 590 and Loghrin road which both see a large volume of heavy trucks. It was suggested that the residents living on these roadways should also be consulted. Another issue is the use of Luckens road in areas that are steep and have sharp bends. Council inquired as to how much it will cost to build the walking trails on

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the crown land that is located on Luckens Road. Mr. Day commented that pushing through the walking trail with volunteers would not take much time. He also commented that they have applied to become part of the Trans Canada Trail network which may give them access to funding for the MTO review. Council did make comment that the posted speed limit on Loghrin Road is 40km/hr.

Mr. Day was thanked for attending and was told that he will be contacted when Council makes a decision on his request and he left the meeting at 7:25 p.m. Mr. Nagy left the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Fire Chief Mattas was welcomed to the table. The Fire Department Report was read. There have been seven (7) first response calls since the last report and the department did receive a fire related call on Strom Road after he had submitted the report. Fire Chief Mattas also presented to Council the 2022 call statistics for the surrounding area fire departments including the Township of O'Connor's.

Fire Chief Mattas commented that Brendan Rea has obtained his DZ Licence through the Transport Training Centres of Canada (TTCC). Council asked if he had taken the driving test with one of our fire trucks and he replied that TTCC supplied the truck. Fire Chief Mattas also informed Council that a new member attended the last First Response training night and is interested in both Fire and First Response.

Acting Mayor Crane commented that we would like to see that a fourth Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) be purchased for the Township. He would like it brought to an O'Connor Fire Department Auxiliary for discussion and to have Leanne Coderre, our First Response Coordinator, decide where it should be placed.

Fire Chief Mattas informed Council that the Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge Fire Department will be offering a series of courses, including NFPA Firefighter I and Firefighter, Pumper Operations and a course on the operation of a drone. To date we have one member who has expressed interest in the Firefighter I & II course. Mr. Rea was asked to share his experience taking the Firefighter courses. He stated that he had to commit to weekend training and some Mondays. We currently have three members of the department that have completed the courses and are waiting on confirmation of the results of the written tests.

Fire Chief Mattas commented that one of the members would like to take the drone training that is being offered at a cost of \$205.00. The Fire Department currently does not have a drone. Council felt that Fire Chief Mattas could include this training in his 2023 budget submission for consideration.

Council discussed the implementation of a policy regarding members of the Fire and First Response team that sign up for a Township paid training course and fail to attend the course. Administration will look into what policies other municipalities may have developed and it will be brought back to Council for review.

The Standard Operational Guideline (SOG) for the Stipend Paid to Fire Department Members was reviewed. Currently the guidelines specifies that department members who attend Ontario Fire Collage Training will be reimbursed \$50.00 for a half day and \$100 for a full day of training. Council would like to know what other municipalities and fire departments have in place to compensate members who lose wages to take part in training for the fire department. Administration will research what other Municipal Fire Departments currently do.

The Policy for the Volunteer Fire Department was reviewed again. Some changes have been made, however there are items in the policy that administration wanted to clarify as to whether they are required and are they being done. Council inquired if the department could hold recruitment events maybe twice a year and possibly using social media as a means of recruitment. Council would like to see the process of on-boarding new members (the process of how they are introduced to the department), what information is required from them, for example emergency contact information and if there is a sign off document for when they have reviewed department policies. This information will be brought back to the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Minutes of the O'Connor Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary meetings held on October 11, 2022 and November 9, 2022 were reviewed.

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Fire Chief Mattas was thanked for attending and left the meeting at 8:38 p.m.

The Administration and Roads Voucher to January 23, 2023, was reviewed and it was

3. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2032-02 DATED JANUARY 23, 2023 TOTALLING \$93,344.78 BE APPROVED AND PAID.**

Carried

The Draft Statement of Revenue and Expenditure to December 31, 2022 was reviewed. It was noted by Administration that the yearend adjustments still need to be made.

By-laws were reviewed as follows:

- a) By-law Number 2023-08 being a By-law to establish and regulate a Volunteer Fire Department for the Corporation of the Township of O'Connor was read and it was

4. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

**THAT BY-LAW NUMBER 2023-08 BEING A BY-LAW TO ESTABLISH AND REGULATE A VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR AND TO REPEAL BY-LAW NUMBER 99-08 BE PASSED AND ENTERED INTO THE BY-LAW BOOK.**

Carried.

- b) The Policy for Administrative Benefits and Wage Review was read. Changes were made as per Council's review at the January 9, 2022 meeting and Administrative review and it was

5. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE POLICY ESTABLISHED FOR COVERAGE UNDER THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR'S BENEFIT PACKAGE AND WAGE REVIEW FOR FULL-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF BE AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

**PURPOSE: TO ESTABLISH A POLICY FOR COVERAGE UNDER THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR'S BENEFIT PACKAGE AND WAGE REVIEW FOR FULL-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.**

**SECTION: GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES: WAGE REVIEW BE AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

**FULL-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF WAGES SHALL BE REVIEWED BY COUNCIL IN JANUARY FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THE SALARY AND WAGE SCHEDULE ADOPTED BY COUNCIL.**

**SECTION DENTAL/MEDICAL PLAN, BULLET TWO SHALL BE AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

- **EACH JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup> THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR WILL ADD TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,000.00) CREDIT TO THE BALANCE OF THE ACCOUNT OF EACH EMPLOYEE.**

Carried.

The resolution from the City of Kitchener regarding the Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM) Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 was filed.

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) Minutes from the meeting held on October 18, 2022
- b) Association of the Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) i) Policy Update January 16, 2023 – A Call for Provincial Action of Property Assessments.  
ii) Municipal Waste Update: Information on Non-Hazardous Waste Transportation

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Systems on the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry.

- c) AMCTO – Advocacy Update – Calling for the Return to the Assessment Cycle.
- d) Thunder Bay District Municipal League (TBDML) – Board Meeting Minutes – December 21, 2022.

The Balance of the correspondence was passed around the table.

Under Old Business Council discussed

- a) Promotion of Erin Laforest, Administrative Assistant to full-time position and it was

- 6. Moved by Bishop Racicot  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT ERIN LAFOREST'S POSITION AS PART-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR BE CHANGED TO A FULL-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT POSITION EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2023. BENEFITS AND HOLIDAYS WILL BE OFFERED EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2023.**

Carried.

- b) Appointment of the Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) Representative to the Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy Executive Committee was discussed. Mayor Vezina updated Council on the decision made at the LRMC meeting. Councillor Torkkeli and Councillor Sobolta and Reeve Wendy Wright have expressed interest in serving on the Committee. It was decided that Reeve Wright would serve on the Committee for the first two years of this Council term a Councillor from O'Connor would serve for the last two years of this term and it was

- 7. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF COUNCILLOR TORKKELI TO SIT ON THE THUNDER BAY AND AREA FOOD STRATEGY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AS THE LAKEHEAD RURAL MUNICIPAL COALITION (LRMC) REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS OF THE CURRENT FOUR YEAR TERM OF COUNCIL.**

Carried.

- c) Council Training and Development – Joint Training updated proposed dates were discussed. Council agreed that they would be available for February 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> morning sessions. Administration will contact Mr. Darrell Matson with these dates.
- d) O'Connor Christmas Party dates and location was discussed. The two possible locations were the Kakabeka Legion and the Valhalla Hotel and it was

- 8. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR HOLD A 2023 CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR COUNCIL, STAFF, FIRE DEPARTMENT AND FIRST RESPONSE VOLUNTEERS ON SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 2023 AND IT WILL BE HELD AT THE KAKABEKA LEGION. SPOUSES AND GUESTS WILL PAY FOR THEIR OWN DINNER.**

Carried.

Under New Business Council discussed

- a) Appointment to the Committee of Adjustments. Only one application has been received to date. A second request for applications will be put in the next issue of the Cornerstone to fill one position on the Committee.
- b) The Township of O'Connor's Grand Opening for the rink will be held on February 19, 2023 between 1 pm and 4 pm in partnership with the O'Connor Community Club.
- c) Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) and Lakehead Conservation Foundation regarding the 2023 Dinner and Auction was discussed. In past years the Township's representative on the LRCA board would attend, however this year Mayor Vezina, who is the representative, is not able to attend so it was

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9. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

**THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE LAKEHEAD CONSERVATION FOUNDATION 2023 FUNDRAISING DINNER AND AUCTION TO BE HELD FEBRUARY 10, 2023 IN THUNDER BAY.**

**JOHN SOBOLTA**

**TICKETS: \$75.00**

Carried.

Under Further New Business Council discussed the By-law Enforcement Officer position. Ian Robson, who was the By-law Enforcement Officer for four municipalities, including the Township of O'Connor, has resigned. Councillor Sobolta indicated that he has spoken to someone who may be interested in the position. The position will be posted by the four municipalities, that Mr. Robson represented, to try and attract a qualified candidate.

Mayor Vezina informed Council that he has been invited to participate in the 2023 Ontario Budget Consultations being held at the Whitewater Golf Club in Thunder Bay on January 27<sup>th</sup>. The Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance will be in attendance and it was

10. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded By Carly Torkkeli

**THAT MAYOR JIM VEZINA ATTEND THE DISCUSSION FOR INPUT ON THE 2023 ONTARIO BUDGET TO BE HELD AT WHITEWATER GOLF COURSE ON JANUARY 27, 2023.**

Carried.

Acting Mayor Crane made comment on the condition of Highway 595 and on a number of complaints he has received. Administration has also received a call this week regarding the maintenance of the Highway. Council would like Administration to send a letter to the Regional Director for the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) regarding the maintenance of the highway and to invite him to a Council meeting to discuss the issue. It was noted that Kevin Holland, MPP for Thunder Bay – Atikokan will be in attendance at the February 13, 2023 meeting and that this issue should also be discussed with him.

Acting Mayor Crane also made comment on the level of internet service provided by Tbaytel. This issue will be discussed with MPP Holland at the next meeting.

Councillor Racicot left the room at 9:31 p.m.

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

- a) AMCTO Zone 9 2023 Spring Meeting attendance was discussed. This will be brought back to the February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting for discussion with Clerk-Treasurer Buob.

Council Racicot returned to the meeting 9:32 p.m.

- b) Hymers Agricultural Society Fall Fair Prize Book Advertisement was discussed and it was

11. Moved by Bishop Racicot  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT A HALF PAGE ADVERTISEMENT IN THE HYMERS AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY PRIZE LIST BOOK BE PURCHASED AT A COST OF \$100.00 AND AN O'CONNOR TOWNSHIP HISTORY BOOK BE DONATED.**

Carried.

- c) Ontario Public Service (OPS) requesting applications for the Ontario Internship Program was discussed. No application will be submitted this year.

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No Building Permits were approved since the last meeting.  
Mr. Brendan Rea left the meeting at 9:38 p.m.

12. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE NEXT PORTION OF THE MEETING BE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC IN ORDER TO DISCUSS LABOUR RELATIONS OR EMPLOYEE NEGOTIATIONS; PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION 239(2)(D) OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT, 2001.**

**TIME BEING: 9:39 P.M.**

The position of the Disposal Site Caretaker was discussed. Council received one application which was reviewed and it was

13. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**TIME BEING: 9:52 P.M.**

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

Carried.

Council has received one application for the position of the Disposal Site Caretaker from Ms. Stacey Tyance. Ms. Tyance is the current Casual Disposal Site Attendant, therefore she will receive the current rate of pay for the position and it was

14. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by Bishop Racicot

**THAT STACEY TYANCE BE HIRED FOR THE DISPOSAL SITE CARETAKER POSITION. RATE OF PAY WILL BE AT THE CURRENT RATE FOR THE POSITION.**

Carried.

15. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 13, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M. IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIRTUAL.**

**TIME BEING: 9:53 P.M.**

Carried

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Mayor

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Deputy Clerk-Treasurer