

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – DECEMBER 11, 2023

Minutes of the Council meeting held on December 11, 2023 at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Vezina
Councillors: Crane, Sobolta, Torkkeli
Clerk-Treasurer Buob

Visitors: Road Superintendent Kelly Johnson
Fire Chief Henry Mattas
Brendan Rea

Absent: Councillor Racicot

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

1. Moved by A. Crane
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 A. Crane

THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2023 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.

Carried

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

Kelly Johnson, Road Superintendent, was welcomed to the table. A Road Department update and roadwork in general was discussed. To date there has been no snow to plow, they have dealt with a little bit of ice and dust as a result of no snow. They have not had to use much sand to date. They have finished up their road jobs, burnt the brush piles at the Disposal Site, the plow trucks are ready to go, four new tires have been put on Truck #9 and new tires will be put on the Chevy truck and the backhoe. Eight surplus tires from the 2020 plow truck were discussed. Kevin's Tire Repair would be willing to purchase them from the Township if Council want to get rid of them. Council agreed to sell them to him. Mr. Johnson will be reviewing his budget variances to confirm what still needs to be purchased before year end. The HVAC system in the garage is ready for the electrician to come in to hook it up. He has been doing a little bit of maintenance in the Community Centre washrooms and getting the rink ready for the cold. They have painted the hockey nets and have purchased new nettings for them.

The Township Building Report was reviewed. It was noted that the work proposed for the Annex Building did not get completed this year. The addition on the back of the building needs to be removed and replaced for storage. This will be looked at in the spring. The option of using a sea can was discussed, however it was agreed that this would not be the best option.

Fire Chief Mattas was welcomed to the table. Christmas wishes were exchanged. Fire Chief Mattas provided a verbal report. There were no new calls since the last meeting. The weather has been good and there have been no chimney fires in the district. He reported that the Rescue vehicle has recently been safetied and some repairs were required and were completed today. The Pumper and Tanker safeties will be completed this month.

Council asked both Mr. Johnson and Fire Chief Mattas to stay to discuss the budget variances under Item 9 on the agenda.

The Administration and Roads Voucher was reviewed and it was

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – DECEMBER 11, 2023

3. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2023-21 DATED DECEMBER 11, 2023 TOTTALLING \$74,637.27 BE APPROVED AND PAID.

Carried

The Statement of Revenue and Expenditures to November 30, 2023, was reviewed. The Clerk-Treasurer explained some of the variances, some posting errors will be corrected and some accounts reviewed to confirm amounts. Mr. Johnson and Fire Chief Mattas also explained their department variances.

Mr. Johnson and Fire Chief Mattas then left the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

A Resolution for Endorsement was read from the Municipality of Grey Highlands regarding the Ontario Energy Board's Leave to Construct process and was filed.

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) Canada Community Building Fund – 2024 – 2028 Allocations. The Township's 2024 allocation will be \$558.74 less than in 2023. 2025 to 2028 will increase.
- b) Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund – correspondence regarding the 2024 OCIF allocation was reviewed. A funding announcement will be made this week.
- c) NorthWestern Ontario Recreational Trails Association regarding the approval to apply for support funding to offset new trail infrastructure, as the result of NWORTA recently being granted affiliation with Trans Canada Trails. The funding will offset new trail infrastructure and/or upgrades to the Phase I Shabaqua Trail and proposed Phase II Kakabeka Falls Trail. They anticipate beginning construction by mid-2024 with completion anticipated by late 2024 or early 2025. Information regarding the planned changes that impact the Township of O'Connor were reviewed. Council has no concerns with the proposed new trail, as shown on the map provided.
- d) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) regarding the Board Meeting Summary Report for November 22, 2023.
- e) The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board endorsing the National Housing Accord. A copy of the letter submitted to Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier of Ontario Doug Ford was read. Mayor Vezina also informed Council that Mayor Boshcoff, the current Chair of the Board, will be stepping down as Chair in the new year and he may put his name forward for the position.
- f) Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) regarding the Notice of Board Approval of the 2024 Budget on November 29, 2023. The summary of the budget, including Member Municipality apportionments, were reviewed.
- g) Good Roads Association – Heads-Up Alert regarding the Supreme Court Decision Expands Municipal Liability. Council expressed their concern regarding the decision as it places more liability on the municipality when hiring contractors to perform any work within our Township. Council would like to see this be brought forward to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA).
- h) Chatham-Kent regarding Ontario Works Rates. A copy of the letter submitted to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services was read. Council agreed with these concerns and noted that Ontario has the lowest rates in the Country.
- i) Thunder Bay District Health Unit regarding the Notice of Public Health Levy for 2024. The budget was passed with a 3.0% increase, which results in the Township of O'Connor's 2024 increase being \$531.00. The province changed its proposed transitional funding formula which originally would have resulted in a 34% increase.

The balance of the correspondence was passed around the table.

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) Canada Summer Jobs Application for a summer student for the Township Office. Council previously agreed to apply for two students for the Roads Department and asked Administration to consider whether they felt they could use a summer student in the office. The Clerk-Treasurer confirmed that a summer student would be a great assistance in the office to help recover electronic information lost because of

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – DECEMBER 11, 2023

the lighting strike in August, as well as to help provide relief during summer holidays taken by full-time administrative staff. If approved, a desk setting could be setup in the Council Chambers, if needed.

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

THAT THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR APPLY FOR 3 STUDENTS UNDER THE CANADA SUMMER JOBS 2024 PROGRAM, FOR A PERIOD OF 8 WEEKS. TWO FOR THE ROAD DEPARTMENT AND ONE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION. START DATE FOR THE PROGRAM WOULD BE JULY 8, 2023 RUNNING UNTIL AUGUST 30, 2023.

Carried

- b) Stantec Consulting quote for an asbestos audit was presented to Council, as per 2023 Financial Audit requirements for Asset Management. Council will not proceed with an asbestos audit at this time and will bring the estimate back for further discussion during 2024 budget discussions as the cost is significant. Mayor Vezina will follow up regarding the cost estimates for the wells and septic fields.

Under Further Old Business, Mayor Vezina informed Council that he has attended two Northern Energy Advocacy Roundtable (NEAR) meetings this year, as he sits on the Board as a representative from the Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC). He informed Council that the Waasigan project will be starting next year. The design plans for the second half of the project will be started so that as the contractors reach the end of the line, they will be able to continue with the second phase of the construction.

Under New Business, Council discussed

- a) Jamie Ball – By-law Enforcement Officer's resignation. Due to commitments and scheduling of his full-time employer, he is unable to provide a level of service expected and has provided his resignation. The Township of O'Connor was sharing Mr. Ball in this position with the Townships of Conmee and Gillies and the Municipality of Neebing. Council agreed to move forward together once again to find a replacement.
- b) Erin Laforest – Administrative Assistant requested to possibly use her 2023 unused holidays in 2024. Council did not have any concerns and it was

5. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT BE ALLOWED TO CARRY OVER HER UNUSED HOLIDAYS INTO 2024.

Carried

- c) Good Roads Association regarding the Deadline Approaching for Awards Submissions. Council agreed to have the Clerk-Treasurer look further into the submission details and bring back to Council for further discussion.

Under Further New Business, Councillor Crane informed Council that there is a Thunder Bay District Municipal League meeting on Saturday, December 16 in Nipigon. He is hoping to attend but may not be able to. If not, he will contact Councillor Torkkeli as the alternate, to attend.

Councillor Sobolta provided information from MP Powlowski's office regarding the Rural Transit Solutions Fund. The fund provides support for the development of locally driven transit solutions which could help people living in rural communities get to work, school, appointments, and to visit loved ones. Eligible communities can seek support through two program streams depending on the nature of their project: Planning and Design Projects, and Capital Projects. Mayor Vezina will bring this information to the Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) to see if anyone would be interested in submitting a joint application.

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – DECEMBER 11, 2023

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

- a) MPP Kevin Holland – Invitation to the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) Funding Announcement December 14, 2023. No one will be able to attend.
 - b) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) regarding NOMA 2024 Conference and AGM. The conference will be held in Thunder Bay on April 24 – 26, 2024. Early bird registration will be available until March 11, 2024.
 - c) The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) – Update from the Board – December 11, 2023. Mayor Vezina noted that the 2024 budget has been passed.
 - d) Ronnie Therriault, Geological Consultant regarding potential revenue for the Township regarding geological history. Council was not clear on what Mr. Therriault was proposing and want to ask him if he would like to attend an upcoming meeting to discuss his suggestion further. The Clerk-Treasurer will reach out to him.
 - e) Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry regarding a decision notice to the Environmental Registry of Ontario finalizing the new technical bulletin – Flooding hazards: data survey and mapping specifications.
 - f) Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) regarding the value of the AMO Membership and MEPCO Support in 2024.
 - g) Clerk-Treasurer report regarding the Disposal Site Caretaker's gas allowance paid out to them during the winter months. This was previously paid to the Caretaker to use their own vehicle to warm up on cold days. The shed at the site is now heated and the employees can use it to warm up, so Council was asked if this allowance should be discontinued. Council agreed to honour the current practice of providing the allowance for 2023 and they will look into this further in 2024, during the wage reviews in January. The Clerk-Treasurer was also asked to speak with the Caretaker for her opinion on the allowance.
6. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by J. Sobolta

THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE EMERGENCY TABLETOP EXERCISE TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE O'CONNOR COMMUNITY CENTRE.

TIME BEING: 8:36 P.M.

Carried

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer