

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – FEBRUARY 12, 2024

Minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday, February 12, 2024 at 7 p.m. in the O'Connor Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Vezina on the phone
Councillors: Crane, Rea, Sobolta, Torkkeli
Clerk-Treasurer Buob
Visitors: Kelly Johnson, Road Superintendent

Mayor Vezina was not at the meeting in person and requested that another member of Council Chair the meeting. As per the Procedural By-law Councillor Rea is the Acting Mayor for the month of February. As this was only his second meeting on Council, he declined the chair, and it was agreed that Councillor Crane Chair the meeting.

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

1. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by Brendan Rea

THAT THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING BE APPROVED.

Carried

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: None

2. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.

Carried

Mr. Johnson was asked if he wished to address Council on any personal matters and he replied, no.

Mr. Johnson, Road Superintendent, was welcomed to the table. An update on the Road Department and roadwork in general was discussed. Due to the light snowfall over the past few days, the roads were plowed today. As a result of the quiet winter and the minimal amount of snow, the Road Employees have been brushing some the roads, corners and intersections. With the threat of rain in the forecast more sand has been hauled to the Township yard.

Councillor Crane informed Mr. Johnson of the potholes at the intersection of Highway 590 and Loghrin Road and expressed his concern. Mr. Johnson will call the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to discuss the issues in the intersection, and if required a letter will be sent to the Ministry requesting a resolution to the ongoing issue with all the trucks turning at this intersection.

A report was read from the Clerk-Treasurer regarding an incident which occurred in July of 2023, in the village of Kakabeka Falls, with one of the Township Road Employees and vehicle. As a result of the damage caused, an invoice for the repairs has now been submitted to the Township. Council discussed the invoice and whether or not to go through the insurance company for payment as the expense was higher than anticipated. Council agreed to pay the invoice at this time and not involve the insurance company.

A Township Inspection was discussed. It was agreed to hold a spring inspection and it was

3. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE FOLLOWING DATE BE SET FOR A TOWNSHIP INSPECTION MONDAY, MAY 6, 2024 AT 8:30 A.M.

Carried

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The Association of Ontario Road Supervisors (AORS) requesting support for their resolution regarding Municipal Equipment Operator Course, which was deferred from the last meeting, to discuss with Mr. Johnson, was discussed. It was

4. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

WHEREAS, MUNICIPAL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENTS FROM ACROSS THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO PROVIDE INVALUABLE SERVICES TO OUR COMMUNITIES ENSURING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF ALL RESIDENTS;

AND WHEREAS, IF IT WAS NOT FOR OUR MUNICIPAL PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEES FROM ACROSS THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO MAINTAINING OUR PUBLIC ROADS SYSTEMS, OUR COMMUNITIES WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FUNCTION AS EMERGENCY PERSONNEL COULD NOT RESPOND TO CALLS, SCHOOL BUSES COULD NOT GET OUR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL, RESIDENTS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO GET TO WORK, SCHOOL OR APPOINTMENTS AND MANY MORE BASIC FUNCTIONS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO HAPPEN;

AND WHEREAS, MUNICIPAL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENTS ARE ALREADY FEELING THE IMPACTS OF A LABOUR SHORTAGE, WHICH WILL ONLY BE EXASPERATED OVER THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS, WHICH WILL CAUSE LEVELS OF SERVICE MUNICIPALITIES ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE TO ENSURE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OUR RESIDENTS TO DECREASE;

AND WHEREAS, THERE IS CURRENTLY NO PROVINCIAL-WIDE COURSE THAT PROPERLY TRAINS POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEES, SPECIFICALLY RELATING TO MUNICIPAL HEAVY EQUIPMENT;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR SUPPORTS THE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO ROAD SUPERVISORS TO DEVELOP A MUNICIPAL EQUIPMENT OPERATOR COURSE TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE;

AND THAT, TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR CALLS ON THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO'S MINISTRY OF LABOUR, TRAINING, IMMIGRATION AND SKILLED TRADES TO FULLY FUND THE MUNICIPAL EQUIPMENT OPERATOR COURSE IN 2024 THROUGH THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FUND;

AND THAT, A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION BE SENT TO THE MINISTER OF LABOUR, TRAINING, IMMIGRATION AND SKILLED TRADES DAVID PICCINI, THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR'S MEMBER OF PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT MPP KEVIN HOLLAND AND THE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO ROAD SUPERVISORS.

Carried

A letter from the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) regarding Project Notification (GWP 6117-20-00) Highway 588 from 1.8km south of Hwy 11/17 westerly for 13.4 kms was discussed. The pavement requires rehabilitation, and one structure will be rehabilitated within the project limits that is located at the Silver Creek Culvert in O'Connor Township. At this point Mr. Johnson is unaware of how this project could impact the Township's road system, as traffic could choose to use different routes throughout the Township of O'Connor.

Mr. Johnson provided an update on the Cliffmclean Road matter. He has been informed that the people have moved to another piece of property along Highway 588 and are not currently staying on the property on Cliffmclean Road beyond the area to

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which the Township performs winter maintenance. It was also noted that the property beyond where the people were residing was recently for sale.

Mr. Johnson provided Council with potential retirement dates for himself.

Mr. Johnson was thanked for attending and left the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

The Administration and Roads Voucher for February 12, 2024, was reviewed and it was

5. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2024-03 DATED
FEBRUARY 12, 2024 TOTTALLING \$86,515.93 BE APPROVED AND PAID.
Carried**

The Statement of Revenue and Expenditures to December 31, 2023, was unavailable.

By-laws and Policies were reviewed as follows:

- a) A Report from the Clerk-Treasurer regarding By-law Enforcement/POA Officer and an ongoing dog complaint was read and discussed. As the Township of O'Connor is currently without a By-law Enforcement Officer/POA Officer, the Clerk-Treasurer has reached out to the Municipality of Neebing and Mr. Pacificio, their Officer is willing to address the current issue that has arisen for the Township of O'Connor. Therefore By-law Number 2024-04 – Being a By-law to appoint a By-law Enforcement /Provincial Offences Officer for the Township of O'Connor was reviewed, and it was

6. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by Brendan Rea

**THAT BY-LAW NUMBER 2024-04 BEING A BY-LAW TO APPOINT A BY-LAW
ENFORCEMENT/PROVINCIAL OFFENCES OFFICER FOR THE TOWNSHIP
OF O'CONNOR BE PASSED AND ENTERED IN THE BY-LAW BOOK.
Carried**

- b) Draft By-law Number 2024-05 – Being a By-law to amend By-law Number 2023-31 - Regulating the Running at Large and Controlling of Dogs within the Township of O'Connor was reviewed. Council addressed a couple of concerns regarding sections of the By-law and requested clarification on them prior to passing. The draft by-law will be brought back with amendments for Council's approval at the next meeting. The current By-law Number 2023-31 – Being a By-law to Regulate the Running at Large and Controlling of Dogs within the Township of O'Connor was available for reference.

Resolutions for endorsement were reviewed as follows:

- a) Town of Orangeville regarding Social and Economic Prosperity Review was filed as a similar resolution was previous endorsed at the last meeting.
- b) City of Brantford regarding Reliable and Accessible Public Rail Transit – CN Rail – was filed.
- c) Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) requesting the Province of Ontario undertake a Comprehensive Social and Economic Prosperity review was filed, as Council has already endorsed a similar resolution at the last meeting.
- d) Municipality of Wawa regarding life span of fire apparatus and it was

7. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE RESOLUTION FROM THE MUNICIPALITY OF WAWA
REQUESTING A MEETING TO DISCUSS THE LIFE SPAN OF FIRE
APPARATUS, SPECIFICALLY PERTAINING TO THE REPLACEMENT OF
FIRE TRUCKS DUE TO INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS AND REQUESTING
THE CREATION OF A NEW COMMUNITY FIRE-PROTECTION AND FIRE
PREVENTION INSURANCE SYSTEM THAT DOES NOT PUT ALL**

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MUNICIPALITIES UNDER THE SAME UMBRELLA, WITH DISTINCT CATEGORIES FOR RURAL AND URBAN MUNICIPALITIES BE ENDORSED.

Carried

- e) Town of Petrolia regarding reestablishing the ROMA & OGRA combined annual conference was filed. It was noted that both organizations have signed five-year contractors with conference hotels and would not at this time be able to revert back to the combined conference at this time.

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) – regarding the 2024 Cost Apportionment. The Township of O'Connor's levy will increase by \$4,008 over 2023.
The 2023 Statement of Board Remuneration for Jim Vezina was reviewed.
- b) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) regarding 2024 ROMA Conference: NOMA Discussed Issues Facing Northwestern Ontario.
- c) AMCTO the Municipal Experts – Advocacy Update – AMCTO at the 2024 ROMA Conference.
- d) Good Roads – 2024 Conference, April 21 - 24, 2024 in Toronto. Mayor Vezina may be attending the Conference for his employment. If he does attend as a vendor his accommodations and flight would be covered and the Township could pay for the registration only for his attendance to the sessions. This item will be brought back for Council's approval once his attendance has been confirmed.
- e) Joe Ladouceur – Green Mantle regarding Update on Black Ash Protection Provisions under Endangered Species Act. The final decision on the proposed regulations was released on January 25, 2024, and is consistent with the approach consulted on, including the confirmation that forest management activities in accordance with Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFSA) are exempt from the ESA and will not be impacted by this proposal. There will be provisions that will apply to activities outside of the CFSA.
- f) Minister of Finance regarding the 2024 Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF). The Township will receive \$3,700.00 less than in 2023.
- g) Lakehead Rural Planning Board (LRPB) invoice for the 2024 Planning Services for the Township of O'Connor. The service remains consistent with previous years.
- h) Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) regarding the final version of Inventory of Programs. As per the requirements of Section 9 of O. Regulation 687/21 the LRCA must provide municipalities with a final copy of the Inventory of Programs confirming that no municipal levy is being used for non-mandatory programs.
- i) City of Thunder Bay regarding 2022 Financial Statements, 2022 Reconciliation and 2023 Partial Payment for the Thunder Bay Court Services. The Township of O'Connor will receive \$4,795 for 2024.
- j) Sylvia Jones, Ministry of Health – 2023 Year in Review.
- k) MADD request for Advertising in MADD message Yearbook. It was
8. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by J. Sobolta

THAT THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR PURCHASE A BUSINESS CARD ADVERTISING SPACE FOR A COST OF \$319.00 + HST IN THE MADD MESSAGE YEARBOOK IN SUPPORT OF MADD CANADA.

Carried

The balance of the Correspondence was passed around the table.

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) – i) regarding a proposed meeting with the Volunteer Fire Departments and the municipal Councils. The Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) could be invited to observe and act as an information resource only. An original date of February 20, 2023 was proposed, however there has been conflicts with the availability of that date and it is currently being reconsidered, with no final date announced as of tonight's meeting. As the date set could be prior to the next Council meeting it was agreed to pass a motion for attendance at this time, and it was

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9. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE LAKEHEAD RURAL MUNICIPAL COALITION MEETING TO DISCUSS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS, REGULATION, SHARED SERVICES, ETC.

FINAL DATE TO BE DETERMINED.

**MAYOR VEZINA
COUNCILLOR CRANE, REA, SOBOLTA, TORKKELI
CLERK-TREASURER BUOB
FIRE CHIEF MATTAS AND ACTING DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF BILOSKI**

REGISTRATION: N/C

Carried

- ii) Rural Transit Solutions Fund was included on the last LRMC meeting agenda as requested by the Township of O'Connor. Mayor Vezina reported that the item was tabled. No further discussions will be held in this regard.
- b) i) The Thunder Bay District Municipal League (TBDML) draft agenda for the upcoming Conference and Annual General meeting was reviewed. The meeting will be held on February 29 and March 1, 2024 in Nipigon.
- ii) A letter from the TBDML confirming their endorsement of the Township of O'Connor's resolution requesting the Provincial Government make the RSV Vaccine equally financially accessible to all residents over the age of 60 regardless of their living circumstances.
- c) Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) regarding Councillor training were discussed. Councillor Rea will review his availability for the training and bring back to Council for final approval if it is favourable for his work schedule.

The AMO Conference, held August 18 to 21, 2024 in Ottawa, was discussed. Mayor Vezina may be attending as a District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) member, but this has not yet been confirmed. Councillor Torkkeli may also be interested in attending.

- d) A review of Township Fees was discussed as follows:
 - i) Cornerstone Newsletter. Administration prepared a report breaking down the current estimated cost to prepare the newsletter each month, including wages, paper, copying costs and postage. The report also provided advertising revenue to offset some of these costs. Council discussed the options, including providing the document digitally and allowing the residents to request a paper copy that could be mailed to their home address, rather than sending it out as flyer mail. It was agreed that at this time the Township will continue to send a paper copy to all residents. The option of only sending out a newsletter every second month was also discussed, and it was agreed to continue to distribute it each month. The cost of advertising in the newsletter was discussed and it was agreed to increase the prices of advertising in all sizes. The revised fees will be brought back to the next Council meeting for Council's final approval.
 - ii) The O'Connor Community Centre rental rates. Administration prepared a report which provided a breakdown of all the expenses for the building, including utilities, cleaning supplies and wages. A comparison of a couple of the area community hall rentals were reviewed. With the increase in expenses to keep the Community Centre running and wages to setup and cleanup for the rentals, it was agreed that the rentals rates should be increased. New rates were discussed and will be brought back to the next meeting for final approval. It was agreed that the O'Connor Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary and O'Connor Community Club events will continue to be provided at no charge, and TOPS can continue to use the basement for their weigh in program at no charge.
 - iii) Building Permit fees. As the Chief Building Official (CBO), Martin Tempelman holds the position for the Township of O'Connor, the Municipality of Neebing and the Township of Conmee, he has recommended that all fees should be same for the same services. Currently, both the Township of Conmee and O'Connor are the same but have not been increased since 2016. Council reviewed the Municipality of

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Neebing's fees and agreed that they are slightly higher and still reasonable. As required by the Ontario Building Code Act if the fees and charges are changing a mandatory public meeting must be held. Council agreed that the fees be increased and it was

10. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by J. Sobolta

THAT THE FOLLOWING DATE BE SET FOR A PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS THE BUILDING PERMIT FEES FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR.

MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024 AT 6:30 P.M.

THE MEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE O'CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

Carried

- e) The Official Plan Amendment Application #2023-01. The Clerk-Treasurer's Report regarding an invitation to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs staff to attend a Council meeting was read. The Ministry is not allowing staff to attend a Council meeting and address Council as a whole. Ms. Kosny and Ms. Oulton are willing to meet with staff and one member of Council to discuss the process and options regarding Council's decision. They have also recommended that the Township of O'Connor hire a Planner to ensure that a sound decision is made regarding the application. Council have asked the Clerk-Treasurer to contact the Lakehead Rural Planning Board to enquire as to whether Ms. Reid would be willing to work with the Township on this application.
- f) Ronnie Therriault's email regarding potential revenue sources for the Township was read. Mr. Therriault had provided correspondence at the December 11, 2023, Council meeting regarding potential revenue sources from the mining history in the Township of O'Connor and Council had requested that he attend a Council meeting to explain his suggestion further as Council was unclear as to what he was suggesting. In response he has sent another email stating that he has spoken with the Ministry of Natural Resources regarding Beaver and Rabbit mine sites and noted that his ideas would require time, red tape, and effort. In this same email he has provided another suggestion and has included online videos demonstrating his ideas for beer can solar heaters. At this time Council are not interested in moving forward with this suggestion.

Under Further Old Business, Council was informed that Ms. Racicot has provided the Clerk-Treasurer with her retirement date.

Councillor Torkkeli informed Council that she did attend the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority and Foundation Dinner Auction and it was a very good event.

Under New Business, Council discussed

- a) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) regarding the 2024 NOMA Conference & AGM, April 24 – 26, 2024 and the draft agenda. Early bird registration deadline is March 11, 2024. Council discussed attendance. Councillor Rea will confirm his availability prior to the registration being submitted. It was

11. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE 2024 NOMA ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE TO BE HELD ON APRIL 24 TO 26, 2024 IN THUNDER BAY.

**MAYOR VEZINA
COUNCILLOR CRANE, SOBOLTA, TORKKELI, REA**

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION: \$475.00 + PROCESSING FEES

Carried

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- b) Lakehead Police Services Board (LPSB) regarding the new OPP Detachment Board and recommendations to Council, and request for feedback on the enclosed recommendations were discussed. Documents included an Administrative Report regarding the Formation of the New OPP Detachment Police Services Board and the Overview of Upcoming Changes, prepared by Erika Kromm, LPSB Secretary, slide decks from the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards (OAPSB) regarding preparing budget for the Board and getting ready for the CSPA. Councillor Sobolta provided Council with an update on the recent meetings held in January and noted that the Board will be meeting again on February 22, 2024, to discuss each Council's response to the recommendation as requested in these documents. Council discussed the recommendations as presented and provided Councillor Sobolta with their comments to bring back to the Board. The insurance coverage for the LPSB was also discussed. It was suggested that each municipality reach out to their own insurance company to determine if their insurance policies would cover the new Police Services Board. The Clerk-Treasurer will reach out to the Township's current insurer. Councillor Sobolta also noted that the OPP will be billing the Township's directly for their services rather than billing the Board and then the Board sending out the invoices for their members municipalities as it is currently being done.
- c) Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) letter regarding the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA) being proclaimed April 1, 2024, repealing, and replacing the current Police Services Act, 1990 (PSA). Also confirming that the Annual Billing Statement and allocation method will remain the same, however each municipality will be invoiced directly.
- d) Earth Day Canada regarding Charged for Change, the application deadline for the installation of charging stations is February 22, 2024. Council was not interested in applying at this time.
- e) Hydro One Networks Inc. – Transmission System Planning regarding Enhanced Coordination between Municipalities and the Electricity Sector.

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

- a) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) – Invitation to an online workshop for Municipalities regarding call for proposals for non-emitting generation facilities across the province. Mayor Vezina noted that he is on the Board, however, will be unable to attend this workshop. He did recommend that administration sit in on the Workshop. It was

- 12. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by J. Sobolta

THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP WITH NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION AND COMMON VOICE NORTHWEST ENERGY TASK FORCE IN REGARD TO A CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR NON-EMITTING GENERATION FACILITIES ACROSS THE PROVINCE TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024.

ERIN LAFOREST, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

REGISTRATION: N/C

Carried

- b) Community Emergency Preparedness Grant (CEPG) requesting a resolution authorizing for the Clerk-Treasurer to sign the submitted grant application. It was

- 13. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE CLERK-TREASURER IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO SIGN THE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GRANT APPLICATION WHICH BINDS THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR.

Carried

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c) Purchase of a new office computer was discussed. The Clerk-Treasurer reported that a new office computer is required this year, and as Administration attempt to reestablish the shared backup system for the Township Office staff, Administration would like to purchase this new computer prior to budget approval. It was noted that the Procurement By-law does allow the Clerk-Treasurer to purchase items using a competitive market. If required, during budget discussions, the monies in the Office Equipment Reserve could be considered. Council had no concerns with the Purchase being made in the near future.

For information purposes, two building permits were approved since the last meeting. One for a new home at 124 highway 590 and one for a barn at 818 Highway 595.

It was

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

THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2024 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE O’CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

TIME BEING: 10:23 P.M.

Carried

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer