

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – FEBRUARY 26, 2024

Minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday, February 26, 2024, at 7 p.m. in the O'Connor Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Vezina
Councillors: Crane, Rea, Sobolta, Torkkeli (on the phone)
Clerk-Treasurer Buob

Visitors: Fire Chief Henry Mattas,
Acting Deputy Fire Chief Greg Biloski arrived at 7:10 p.m.

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

1. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by A. Crane

THAT THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING BE APPROVED.

Carried

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: None

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

THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.

Carried

No visitors were present.

Fire Chief Mattas was welcomed to the table. Acting Deputy Fire Chief Biloski joined the table upon his arrival.

The Fire Department Report from January 1, 2024 to February 22, 2024, was read. There was one 1st Response call in January. Fire Chief Mattas attended a Zone 1 meeting and the Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) meeting regarding the new Regulations and recruitment and retention issues with the Volunteer Fire Departments, in that time period.

The O'Connor Volunteer Fire Department Monthly Incident Statistical Report showing all the calls from the calendar year 2023 were reviewed. There was a total of 40 calls, 32 were First Response, 5 fire related and 3 motor vehicle collisions. The January 2024 statistics were also reviewed.

The LRMC meeting held on February 26, 2024, regarding local Fire Departments was discussed. Three members of Council, the Fire Chief and two Administration attended the meeting. It was agreed by all that it was a good meeting and additional meetings will be scheduled. Oliver Paipoonge Fire Chief, Sean Horan, chaired the meeting and provided a lot of good information regarding Council and the Volunteer Fire Department responsibilities. All Departments have the same issue of membership going down, as the training is more onerous and time-consuming. It was agreed that the Departments have to work together and share information and possibly personnel to meet all the regulations. Each municipality must set their own level of service and ensure that the volunteers are trained to that level. The Mutual Aid Agreement was discussed, and concerns were expressed in regard to the level of training the members in different departments may have, as they may not be trained to the level required to assist. The Oliver Paipoonge Fire Department is being called for Mutual Aid on a regular basis and are having to leave their own community due to the lack of equipment or volunteers in other communities. The opportunities to share resources and the possibility of entering into more Agreements for service, such as water rescue or auto extrication was suggested. Additional meetings will be scheduled for further discussion.

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The Ontario Regulation 343/22 made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 – Firefighter Certification was reviewed. The mandatory certification for Fire Protection Services and the compliance deadlines were reviewed. The courses offered at the Oliver Paipoonge training centre were discussed. The courses are only held a couple of times per year and are limited to a minimum and maximum number of volunteers and members may not get into the courses as needed, due to their availability, in the required timeline. The basic Firefighter Exterior Attack course deadline is July 1, 2026. Train the Trainer options were discussed, but the trainer would have to first complete all courses required themselves. It was suggested that the training packages from the College should be provided to all Departments so that they could use the required curriculum in the weekly training. If all Departments were doing the training the same and a member could not attend their own Departments training night, they could join in with another Department on an alternate night.

The Township of O'Connor's By-law Number 2023-08 which includes the level of service the O'Connor Volunteer Fire Department offers and provides authority to leave municipal limits was reviewed. It was noted that the By-law Number was incorrect on scheduled "B" and "C" and it was agreed to remove the word "efficient" in the primary goals listed on Schedule "C". An amending by-law will be brought to the next meeting for approval.

The Joint Health and Safety training for the Fire Department was discussed. The current member's certification is due to expire, and it has been noted that they may not be interested in recertifying. The Acting Deputy Fire Chief will look further into this matter.

A date for a Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) meeting and training was discussed. It was

3. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by Brendan Rea

THAT THE FOLLOWING DATE AND TIME BE SET FOR A MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY CONTROL GROUP (MECG) PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING AND TRAINING.

MONDAY, JUNE 17, 2024 AT 7 P.M.

THE MEETING WILL BE IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

Carried

A date for an Emergency Management Program Committee (EMPC) meeting was discussed and it was

4. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by Brendan Rea

THAT THE FOLLOWING DATE AND TIME BE SET FOR AN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING.

MONDAY, JULY 8, 2024 AT 6 P.M.

THE MEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

Carried

The Minutes of the O'Connor Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary meetings for January 13, 2023, March 14, 2023, April 11, 2023, June 13, 2023, and October 10, 2023 were read with no comment.

As budget meeting dates will be discussed further on the agenda, the Acting Deputy Fire Chief availability to attend the Fire Department budget meeting was discussed.

Fire Chief Mattas and Acting Deputy Fire Chief Biloski left the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

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The Administration and Roads Voucher #2023-04 for February 26, 2024, was reviewed and it was

5. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by J. Sobolta

THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2024-04 DATED FEBRUARY 26, 2024 TOTTALLING \$73,019.43 BE APPROVED AND PAID.

Carried

The draft Statement of Revenue and Expenditure to December 31, 2023, was reviewed. The Clerk-Treasurer provided a report regarding the variances, and transfers to Reserves were discussed. It was

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

FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2023 THE FOLLOWING AMOUNTS BE TRANSFERRED INTO THE FOLLOWING RESERVES:

**DISPOSAL SITE RESERVE - \$5,100.00
MUNICIPAL BUILDING RESERVE - \$6,000.00
FIRE DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT RESERVE - \$3,200.00
TURNOUT GEAR RESERVE - \$4,000.00
LEVY STABILIZATION RESERVE - \$38,300.00
OFFICE EQUIPMENT RESERVE - \$10,000.00
ROAD EQUIPMENT RESERVE - \$10,000.00**

Carried

By-laws and Policies were discussed as follows:

- a) Draft By-law Number 2024-05 - Being a By-law to Regulate the Running at Large and Controlling of Dogs and to repeal previous By-law's for the same purpose was reviewed. As Council previously discussed concerns with By-law Number 2023-31 at the February 12, 2024, Administration made additional changes to the By-law. As there were several changes, By-law Number 2023-31 will be repealed and the new By-law approved. It was

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

THAT BY-LAW NUMBER 2024-05 BEING A BY-LAW FOR REGULATING THE RUNNING AT LARGE AND CONTROLLING OF DOGS WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR AND TO REPEAL BY-LAW NUMBER 2023-31 AND ALL BY-LAWS AMENDING BY-LAW NUMBER 2006-04 BE PASSED AND ENTERED IN THE BY-LAW BOOK.

Carried

- b) Policy for Dog Control was rewritten to support the By-law Number 2024-05 and it was

8. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by A. Crane

THAT THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR'S POLICY FOR DOG CONTROL BE APPROVED.

Carried

- c) Draft By-law Number 2024-06 – Being a By-law to amend the miscellaneous fees and charges for the Corporation of the Township of O'Connor was reviewed, as per previous discussion of Council and it was

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9. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by Brendan Rea

THAT BY-LAW NUMBER 2024-06 BEING A BY-LAW TO AMEND BY-LAW NUMBER 2012-25, TO ESTABLISH MISCELLANEOUS FEES AND CHARGES FOR THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR BE PASSED AND ENTERED IN THE BY-LAW BOOK.

Carried

Resolutions for endorsement were read as follows:

- a) City of Hamilton regarding Support for the decision of the Ontario Energy Board to end the Gas Pipeline subsidy was filed.
- b) Town of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands regarding rural and small urban water and wastewater systems was filed.
- c) Township of Perry regarding the request to the province to amend Blue Box Regulations for "Ineligible" Sources was filed.

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) – O'Connor 2022 Financial Information Return. It was noted that the level of risk indicator for Total Reserves and Discretionary Reserve Funds as a % of Municipal Expenses was high. This is because of the Township's recent purchase of the truck and the garage Shop B replacement as funds were used to support the expenses.
- b) Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) regarding the 2024 Levy Request. The levy increase for the Township of O'Connor is \$215 over 2023.
- c) The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board – Update from the Board February 13, 2024.
- d) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) regarding International Student Cap and the Terrace Bay Mill closure impacts on economic growth in Northwestern Ontario. Documents included:
 - i) Resolution 2024-01 endorsing the appeals of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Confederation College, and Lakehead University regarding Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada reforms to the International Student Program.
 - ii) Copy of letter to Premier Ford and Minister Graydon Smith, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry seeking government assistance to find a new operator for the Terrace Bay mill to reopen the facility.
 - iii) Copy of letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Minister Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship regarding the International Student Cap to Impact Economic Growth in Northern Ontario.
 - iv) Copy of letter from the Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC) regarding International Student Cap will impact economic growth in Thunder Bay and Northern Ontario.
- e) Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) – i) Policy update February 21, 2024, regarding Advancing Energy, Environmental, Social and Economic Prosperity Advocacy.
- f) Ministry of Transportation (MTO) regarding Licence Plate Renewal. The Ontario government announced on February 15, 2024 that licence plates will now be automatically renewed if there are no outstanding fines, tolls, or insurance issues.
- g) Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) regarding Regulation of Development for the Protection of People and Property from Natural Hazards in Ontario.
- h) City of Timmins and Township of Hornepayne regarding the Northern Ontario Women's Caucus.

The balance of the correspondence was passed around the table.

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) Tbaytel's reply regarding Council's concerns to the ground fault protect of the Township building following the lightning strike on August 25, 2023. As per Council's request, Tbaytel has conducted an internal investigation to assess the condition and integrity of their electrical hazard mitigation system at the premises jointly occupied. The outcome and report shows that there was no evidence to suggest that Tbaytel's tower site was exposed to high voltage strike. Tbaytel also determined that its electrical hazard mitigation systems were present. Tbaytel's recommendation was for

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the Township to engage the services of a certified power and grounding specialist to inspect the electrical hazard mitigation system.

Council would like a reply letter sent thanking Tbaytel for doing the investigation and informing them that the Township's building was built in 2010 and the building has met all electrical codes. Council is still of the opinion that the situation was caused by Tbaytel equipment and Council will take this situation into consideration upon the renewal of the cell tower lease agreement.

- b) Lakehead Police Services Board (LPSB) update regarding Insurance coverage for Board Members. Council received comment in this regard from the Township's Insurance Broker, as requested. Mr. Romaniuk provided municipal liability wording in relation to a Councillor sitting on this board, as a representative of the Township. He is recommending that a separate policy be considered to cover all members of the LPSB. He also discussed this matter with the Secretary of the LPSB, Ms. Kromm, and Councillor Sobolta noted that this was discussed at the Board's last meeting. Council agreed that the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) should be self-insuring all the Police Service Boards on one blanket policy. Councillor Sobolta will bring this suggestion back to the next meeting of the LPSB.
- c) Shannon Dodd-Smith – Superior Consulting Team planning opinion regarding Official Plan Amendment Application #2023-01, to assist Council in their decision was reviewed. Council had no further questions of Ms. Dodd-Smith at this time. The decision on the application will be made at the March 25, 2024, Council meeting.
- d) Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) regarding Councillor Training attendance. Councillor Rea confirmed his availability for the training, and it was

- 10. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by A. Crane

THAT COUNCILLOR REA ATTEND THE AMO COUNCILLOR TRAINING TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY MAY 14, 2024.

REGISTRATION: \$575.00 + HST

Carried

- 11. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by Brendan Rea

THAT COUNCILLOR REA ATTEND THE AMO MUNICIPAL CODES OF CONDUCT ESSENTIAL TO GOOD GOVERNANCE TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY APRIL 25, 2024.

REGISTRATION: \$575.00 + HST

Carried

Under Further Old Business, Council confirmed their availability to attend the upcoming Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) Conference. The Clerk-Treasurer will register Council, as approved at the last meeting, prior to the early bird deadline.

Councillor Crane noted that the entrance to Loghrin Road off of Highway 590 has been repaired by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), as requested.

The upcoming employee retirements were briefly discussed. Administration will be looking further into the internship program.

The Clerk-Treasurer noted that a reply email has been received from Mr. Therriault regarding the 2023 budget and he is requesting detailed accounting sheets for the Township from 2020-2023. Council agreed that due to time restraints in the office that administration would not be required to supply this information to him, however, if he would like to attend a Council meeting to discuss the matters further, he would be welcome and his questions could be answered there.

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Under New Business, Council discussed

a) Setting dates for budget meetings and it was

12. Moved by Brendan Rea
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE FOLLOWING DATES BE SET FOR BUDGET MEETINGS:
ROADS DEPARTMENT – APRIL 22, 2024 AT 6 P.M.
FIRE DEPARTMENT – APRIL 8, 2024 AT 6 P.M.
THE MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS.**

Carried

- b) EA Modernization Team – Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks seeking input on proposed new environmental assessment regulation for municipal infrastructure. Two webinars will be held this week to learn more about the proposal. No one will attend.

Under Further New Business, Councillor Rea noted that the outdoor rink is finished for the season due to the warm weather. To possibly preserve the ice surface longer next season it was suggested that rather than painting the concrete, as was previously suggested, the rink boards could be painted white and a sealant be put along the bottom of the boards to prevent the water from running off when it melts. This may possibly keep the water from running away when it melts and the surface could refreeze when the temperature drops. It was also noted that several of the rink boards should be changed out this summer. This can be discussed further during budget discussions.

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

- a) Town of Mono reply to Council's supporting resolution regarding Road Safety Declaration and Initiatives Support.
b) Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery reply to Council's supporting resolution for funding for abandoned cemeteries.
c) Autism Ontario invitation to participate in Autism Ontario's Fly the Flag campaign on April 2, 2024. Council agreed to fly the Autism Flag currently on hand from previous Campaigns, for the month of April, at the Community Centre.
d) The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) – 2024-2027 Strategic Plan for Council's reference.
e) MPAC regarding organizational structure changes. The current Municipal and Stakeholder Relations department has moved to the new Public Affairs and Customer Experience department.

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

It was

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

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: 10:05 P.M.

Carried

An application for the Municipal By-law Enforcement Officer was reviewed and discussed.

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

TIME BEING: 10:13 P.M.

THAT WE NOW MOVE TO OPEN MEETING.

Carried

- 15. Moved by A. Crane
Seconded by Brendan Rea

THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2024 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE O'CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

TIME BEING: 10:14 P.M.

Carried

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer