

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

Minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday, September 11, 2023 at 7 p.m. in the O'Connor Council Chambers.

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

Visitors: Kelly Johnson, Road Superintendent

Absent: Councillor Racicot

Mayor Vezina called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
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 Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2023 AND THE NOTES FROM THE PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 16, 2023 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.

Carried

It was noted that due to the lightning strike at the Township Office on August 25, 2023, the minutes of the Council meeting held on August 14, 2023, were unavailable at this time.

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. A Road Department update and roadwork in general was discussed. The roads are being graded as needed and employees have been cleaning up from rainstorms. The resurfacing of the road projects for this year are complete and calcium will be applied to these roads this week. The employees have been putting equipment and supplies back into Shop B, following the completion of the painting. They are also installing the new auger system on Truck #10 and cleaning up the other equipment. The surplus tin has been put up for sale.

The Loghrin Road traffic and speed count reports were reviewed. The readings were taken during the period of July 14 to 20, 2023. The speed limit is 40km on Loghrin Road and the report did indicate that there are speeders on the road. On three occasions the speed would be considered stunt driving. It was suggested that letters be sent to the businesses on Loghrin Road requesting that they speak with their employees and ask them to abide by the posted speed limit. It was also suggested that the Ontario Provincial Police be asked to setup speed enforcement on Loghrin Road, possibly during the busier time of the day as indicated in the reports.

Mr. Johnson provided an update on the Whitefish riverbank stabilization project. At the last meeting, he had informed Council that he planned to start the following week, however had not heard back from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry as to whether a permit was required from them. The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority had approved the Township's application and a permit was issued but noted that we may also require one from the Ministry. Upon further follow-up, it was determined that the project could not start that week as planned. Due to the emergency of the situation, the Ministry has since come back allowing the project to move forward this fall if the work is complete by the end of September. Arrangements are currently

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being made to get started and the project will be completed before the end of September.

A reply was read from the Ministry of Transportation regarding a Boundary Road Agreement between Marks Township and the Township of O'Connor. The Ministry has received legal advice and been advised to not enter into formal agreements with municipalities for the maintenance of boundary roads. This is because of the difference in legal liability carried by municipalities versus the liability exemption for Local Roads Boards, and the Crown, have for Local Roads Boards with respect to defects in road maintenance. The most they will consider is informal arrangements. Mr. Johnson does have an informal arrangement currently in place and will continue in this manner.

Mr. Johnson informed Council that the 93 Ford snowplow truck has been sold to a local contractor.

Mr. Johnson was thanked for attending and left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

The Administration and Roads Voucher for September 11, 2023, was reviewed and it was

3. Moved by J. Sobolta
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2021-15 DATED
SEPTEMBER 11, 2023 TOTTALLING \$87,214.60 BE APPROVED AND PAID.**
Carried

The Statement of Revenue and Expenditures for August 31, 2023 was unavailable.

By-laws and Policies were reviewed as follows:

- a) Policy 5.5 – A Policy for Volunteer Firefighter Training. Council reviewed the Policy and did not have any concerns or changes and it was

4. Moved by A. Crane
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR'S POLICY
FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER TRAINING BE APPROVED.**
Carried

- b) By-law Number 2003-08 – A By-law to Provide Relief of Financial Hardship by Allowing the Cancellations of Increases in Residential Taxes for Low-Income Seniors and Low-Income Person with Disabilities was reviewed. Due to the 2023 Tax increase, an application has been received. Upon review of the application, it was determined that there is no formula for how the cancellation will be applied. The Clerk-Treasurer will be attending the upcoming AMCTO conference and will discuss this with the group to see what other municipalities offer through this program. The Clerk-Treasurer will bring back the results for further discussion at the next meeting.

Resolutions for endorsement were read as follows:

- a) Township of Emo regarding the Black Ash Tree Classification as "endangered species: under the Endangered Species Act. It was

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

**THAT THE RESOLUTION FROM THE TOWNSHIP OF EMO URGING THE
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO RESCIND THE ONTARIO BLACK ASH
RECOVERY STRATEGY AT LEAST AS IT CONCERNS THE RAINY RIVER
DISTRICT AND NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO; SEEK FURTHER
UNDERSTANDING OF THE HEALTH OF THE BLACK ASH IN THE RAINY
RIVER DISTRICT AND NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO; COMPLETE A
PROVINCIAL STUDY REGARDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ON THIS**

**PART OF NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO IN CONSULTATION WITH
STAKEHOLDERS BEFORE POLICIES ARE PASSED AND ENACTED BE
ENDORSED.**

Carried

- b) Town of Grimsby regarding establishing a Guaranteed Livable Income was filed.

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) – i) regarding the response to an article about MPAC in the Toronto Star, entitled “Is Your Property Tax Fair”.
ii) Extension of the current assessment cycle through to the end of 2024 taxation year.

Council had in the past discussed hosting a public meeting with MPAC to discuss the reassessment process and how it would affect property taxes, however, as it has been confirmed that the reassessment will not be done in 2024, it was agreed not to host a public meeting at this time.

- b) AMCTO the Municipal Experts regarding Advocacy Update – August 29, 2023 – Update on our Assessment Cycle Advocacy.
c) Ministry of Infrastructure – i) Red Tape Reduction for Designated Broadband Projects
ii) AMP it Up 3.0 – additional investments in Asset Management support tools and programs. The Township did participate in AMP it UP 2.0 and it was agreed that administration apply to the program for additional support for the new changes required for our Asset Management Plan.
d) Ontario Provincial Police – Municipal Policing Bureau regarding Distribution of Police Record Check Revenue to Municipalities.
e) Ministry of Municipal Affairs regarding Building Faster Fund.
f) Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The Governments of Canada and Ontario are investing to help improve the removal, handling, and disposal of deadstock across the province.
g) Continuous Improvement Fund (CIF) regarding the Second Community Disbursement of CIF Surplus Funds. The Township of O'Connor received \$111.23.
The balance of the correspondence was passed around the table.

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) A report was read providing an update regarding the meeting between LRMC members and the Norwest Community Health Centre's Juanita Lawson and Elaine Peters. The meeting discussion revolved around the services offered at the Kakabeka Clinic. It was confirmed that the Walk-in clinics are open to everyone, not just current patients. It was also stated that there is a staffing challenge and health care is in crisis mode. Unfortunately, they cannot accommodate the unmet needs within all our communities. They have agreed to meet quarterly with the LRMC to ensure a collaborative relationship with the members.
b) A discussion was held regarding what Council would like to present at the meeting with the Fire Department members to be held September 12, 2023. The Clerk-Treasurer will prepare an agenda and Mayor Vezina will chair the meeting.
c) The Public meeting held on August 16, 2023, regarding the tax levy increase was discussed. Overall Council felt that it went well.
d) Discussion regarding having MPP Holland attend a Council meeting was held. He would be available to attend the Tuesday, October 10, 2023 Council meeting, and would like to know Council's concerns prior to the meeting so he may prepare. Council would like to speak to him regarding the OMPF funding, as it relates to the outside agencies, including Emergency Medical Services, District Social Services Administration Board and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit; funding for Fire Departments including equipment and trucks; Provincial funding for Enbridge gas to extend the line into the Township of O'Connor; and the safety of Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Kenora.

Under New Business, Council discussed

- a) The Clerk-Treasurer provided the status of the lightning strike at the Township Office on August 25, 2023. The strike also hit Tbaytel's exchange building and tower and the local landline phones were out of service for almost a week while Tbaytel worked

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on the repairs. This included the Township's fax line and the garage telephone. The Township Office phone lines were only affected for a short period, as they are powered by the Voice over Internet Protocol system (VoIP). The telephone line box in the Township Office was blown off the wall. The entire security alarm, which is connected to Tbaytel, was also hit. The computer's shared backup system, also located in the same area as the telephone lines, was hit and must be replaced. At this point, the data has not been recovered and the discs have been brought into a computer repair store to see if they can retrieve the Township's data. The tax and accounting program was not affected. The ground fault breaker for the water system in the Community Centre was also tripped. The Township's insurance company has been contacted, however the expenses to date have not reached the deductible amount. Council would like the Clerk-Treasurer to contact Tbaytel to see if we would be covered under their insurance, as the cause of the lightning strike on our building was due to the cell tower, located beside the office. Also, Council would like to question Tbaytel as to why the ground to our building failed.

- b) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing MSO-North – 2023 Northern Treasurers' Forum to be held on October 18 and 19, 2023 and it was

6. Moved by A. Crane
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

THAT THE FOLLOWING PERSON/S ATTEND THE MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS 2023 NORTHERN TREASURER'S FORUM TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY ON OCTOBER 18 AND 19, 2023.

**CLERK-TREASURER BUOB
ADMIN ASSISTANT LAFOREST**

REGISTRATION: NO CHARGE

Carried

- c) Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) – NOMA Strategic Plan requesting feedback via survey. Each member will complete their own survey if they are interested.
- d) Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) regarding the draft 2024 Budget Consultation. The LRCA is proposing a 3.01% levy increase over 2023. The Board will consider approving the final budget at their November 29, 2023 Board Meeting.
- e) Township of Gillies invitation to participate in a potential "4 Seasons of Reconciliation" training session next year. Council were not interested in participating at this time.
- f) The Clerk-Treasurer informed Council that she has received an Official Plan Amendment application and has reached out to Fotenn for comment on moving forward with the application. Their reply will be brought back to the next meeting.
- g) Canada Community Building Fund (formerly Federal Gas Tax). The current Municipal Funding Agreement ends in 2023. Council was asked if they have heard if the program is being extended beyond 2023. Mayor Vezina will contact Mayor Landry who is on the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Board to find out, as AMO distributed the funds.

Under Further new business, Councillor Sobolta informed Council that he has been approached by a resident asking if the Township would allow him to do some Community research with the Township of O'Connor residents and include stories in the Cornerstone newsletter, possibly about a ½ page long. He would like to feature individuals or businesses, include some background information on where they came from, etc. He would possibly go door to door to see who might be interested. Council suggested that perhaps he include a notice in the Cornerstone asking people to reach out to him if they would be interested, rather than him going door to door. Council had no issues with including the stories in the newsletter at no cost if people are interested in telling their story.

Councillor Crane informed Council that he will be attending the Thunder Bay District Municipal League meeting on September 16, 2023 in Dorion.

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For information purposes, Building Permits were approved for a new modular home at 313 Blaikie Road and a new home at 526 Highway 595.

It was

- 7. Moved by Carly Torkkeli
Seconded by John Sobolta

THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE SPECIAL MEETING WITH THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AND FIRST RESPONSE TEAM TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE O'CONNOR COMMUNITY CENTRE.

TIME BEING: 9:34 P.M.

Carried

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer