

## **SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE COUNCIL MEETING**

**August 25, 2015**

The meeting was called to order by the Warden at 8:30 a.m., in the Conference Room, in the Administrative Centre, in Barrington, N.S., with the following members present:

- Lindsay (Eddie) Nickerson, Chair
- Jody Crook
- Shaun Hatfield
- Donna LeBlanc-Messenger

Absent was Councillor George El-Jakl due to work commitments.

- Paul Wills, CEO, Nova Scotia Municipal Finance Corporation
- Brian Holland, Municipal Clerk
- Lesa Rossetti, Deputy Clerk

Mr. Paul Wills, the CEO of the Nova Scotia Municipal Finance Corporation, attended the meeting for the purpose of informing members of the various services provided by that corporation.

Mr. Wills reviewed the core services of his operations which are to provide low interest loans and low interest short term financing for municipal projects. These are provided in the form of short term loans as well as in the form of debentures.

The Finance Corporation also provides a debt affordability model which is used by municipal government in assessing the financial stability of municipal units. This model uses a municipality's current budget along with the last three years of actual financial results in order to develop and make assumptions about growth and taxes, assessments and other factors that will allow for the development of a ten year outlook for any given municipal unit. This model is very useful for the planning and visioning of the future of municipalities.

The Municipal Finance Corporation also provides 32 best practices which enable capacity building for individual municipal units. There are seven core practices which are generally followed by municipalities.

The corporation also sponsors attendance at the Government Financial Officers Associations Annual Conference. This is a conference to which the corporation sponsors attendance of one Municipal Financial Officer each year. This enables that Financial Officer to learn and experience the financial management developments in municipalities throughout North America. Any individual who attends this conference is required to make a presentation at the Association of Municipal Administrators Conference. The Corporation also provides conference sponsorships for the UNSM and AMANS to assist them in conducting their conferences each year.

### **MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE DISCUSSION**

Having completed his presentation and discussion of the Nova Scotia Municipal Finance Corporation, Mr. Wills then discussed the subject of municipal governance with those present. The discussion centered around the functions of Council and the use of the Chief Administrative Officer system within a municipality.

It was stated that of the 51 municipal units in Nova Scotia, there are now only five (5) who do not use the CAO system.

Members were cautioned not to hire a CAO who also does the finance function. Not only would this reduce the potential number of candidates available for the job, it also would detract from the overall function of the CAO. Council is advised to focus on the policies of the Municipality and visioning for the Municipality, and to leave the day-to-day operation of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer. Councillors could provide suggestions at committee meetings for municipal projects and municipal business, however, the CAO would make the final decisions in administrative matters.

It was suggested that councillors could discuss the CAO system with the Warden or Deputy Warden of the District of St. Marys since this municipality recently switched to the CAO system.

It was also suggested to members that they hire a professional recruiting company to advertise the CAO position to receive the applications and to short-list these applications to those that should be interviewed by Council.

It was suggested that the use of the CAO system removes the “opportunity for manipulation” by elected officials.

It was again emphasized that the Municipality should hire a Chief Administrative Officer and a Director of Finance.

The professional hiring process was then reviewed and discussed by members.

There was then some discussion of the effect on employees of changing to the CAO system. The CAO would be responsible for both the hiring and firing of employees.

It was also suggested that the CAO be hired based on a five year contract. This is a common method of hiring CAOs by municipalities.

It was suggested to members that there should be a general staff meeting held by Council with all employees at which employees would be informed of the change in governance being implemented by the municipality. Following the general meeting it was suggested that employees could then be kept up to date by use of an employee newsletter on a regular basis.

Councillor Crook then retired from the meeting at 9:40 a.m. as he had work commitments.

There then followed further discussion regarding CAO hiring employees and evaluations being reported to the CAO, not to Council.

Members then briefly discussed the Cape Sable Island Elementary School with Mr. Wills.

#### Conflict of Interest

Deputy Warden Messenger declared conflict of interest in this matter and vacated the meeting room. Deputy Warden Messenger’s husband is a local contractor who does work at times for one of the proponents wishing to purchase this property.

Members discussed the progress of the disposition of the C.S.I. Elementary School with Mr. Wills. In particular, they discussed the rescinding of the motion which had taken place at the Council meeting on Monday night. It was suggested that an email be sent to Mr. Wills which he would forward to our Municipal Advisor concerning the rescinding of the motion and the issues related to it. This will be done in the near future so our Municipal Advisor will be able to discuss it when he meets with Council next Wednesday, September 2, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

Having completed their discussion of matters with Mr. Wills, he was thanked by all members of Council and the meeting was adjourned at 10:04 a.m.

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Chair

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Secretary for the Meeting