



**MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF WEST HANTS
Special Committee of the Whole Minutes
March 22, 2017, 10:00 a.m.
Sanford Council Chambers**

Present:	A. Zebian T. Leopold D. Keith K. Monroe J. Daniels R. Jannasch D. Francis C. Osborne M. Laycock K. Kehoe B. Carrigan M. LeMay T. Leslie R. Sherrard R. Brown J. Hanshaw J. Woodman	Chair Councillor Councillor Councillor Councillor Councillor Councillor CAO Director of Finance Director of Parks & Recreation Director of Public Works Director of Planning Building Inspector Municipal Engineer Municipal Clerk IT Consultant Administrative Assistant
Regrets:	R. Zwicker P. Morton R. Hussey	Councillor Deputy Warden Councillor
Guest:	D. Patterson	Walton Fire Department

There were 5 members of the public in attendance.

1. Call to Order

Chair Zebian called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. Announcements

Chair Zebian gave the standard fire evacuation announcement.

3. Approval of Agenda, including additions or deletions

MOVED and SECONDED that the agenda be approved.

Motion Carried.

4. Presentations

General Revenues and Expenses

The Director of Finance presented the General Revenues and Expenses. The question was asked whether taxes are collected from Paddy's Pub construction and the Director of Finance confirmed taxes are collected even though the project was not completed. Councillor Keith inquired whether there was municipal garbage collection in the Industrial Park. The Director of Public Works indicated that he would need to review the boundaries for that area. He noted typically commercial business contract individually for garbage collection but can fall under residential pickup if they have less than six bags of waste.

The Director of Parks & Recreation explained the 5% Reserve Fund is money that developers are required to pay to the Municipality either in cash or land donations when subdividing a piece of property. The Director of Finance indicated this would be an in/out and the funds are spent on various projects that are applicable to this fund at the approval of Council.

The Director of Finance highlighted that for REMO operations, West Hants contributes 2/3 of the costs, while the Town of Windsor pays for 1/3 which is billed at the end of the year based on the actual costs.

The Director of Finance indicated the Waste Diversion Program is offset by moving funds from the Diversion Credit Reserve, has a limited effect on the tax rate. He explained there is a reserve to monitor the old landfill site for twenty-five years' post closure as required by the Province. He noted the Landfill Tipping Fees have had a significant increase over the last few years, adding these are the fees the Municipality receives from hosting the Landfill. He noted the Municipal Courthouse operational costs are completely funded by the Province and has no impact on the tax rate.

Councillor Monroe asked whether there would be a penalty for the end of the Valley Waste Contract. CAO Osborne advised the Director of Finance has completed an analysis on the value of the Municipality's share of any outstanding capital loans and suggested by the end of the fiscal year it would be approximately \$18,000. She suggested it is unknown whether the Municipality will own the green carts at the conclusion of the contract. She noted that Valley Waste will provide the financial statements to see the impact it will have. She offered transitional funds may be used to offset the cost depending on the result.

The Director of Finance reported the revenue generated from the wind farms is a standardized tax that is charged per megawatt capacity. He confirmed there is Provincial legislation that regulates this process and dictates how taxes are collected.

The Director of Finance confirmed equalization is funded and received because of the Hantsport dissolution, he confirmed this will expire in 2020 and funding is being put into a smoothing reserve to help offset the costs.

There was a brief discussion on funding that is related to the Hantsport Fire Department for services provided to residents of Kings County. It was advised Kings County would be invoiced for the outstanding amount, adding the CAO has had assurances that they will continue to fulfill their obligations.

There was discussion on the sale of the former Newport Station School. CAO Osborne confirmed a minimum bidding value has been set on the property based on the commercially assessed value. She confirmed this will be new cash when sold, which has not been accounted for in this budget.

The Director of Finance reported on the Falmouth Sewage Capital Phase 1&2 debt, and clarified this is ongoing debt that users must continue to pay for. Councillor Jannasch asked if this revenue provided no net loss. The Director of Finance confirmed that was correct, it would only impact the users.

CAO Osborne reported the grants under Public Safety related to the portion of the funding that was coming through the regular grant process for certain groups relating to public safety who apply each year. These groups would no longer have to go through the grant process, she confirmed they would be required to provide updated information each year.

There was discussion regarding the closure of the Tourist Bureau in Hantsport, it was noted the money previously used for the Tourist Bureau will be used for other tourism activities including discussion with the Town of Windsor on a Tourism Strategy and enhancing or changing what both units are doing for marketing.

The Director of Finance highlighted funding for the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP) Committee, adding the committee can make a request to use the funds in the reserve through Council, he noted it would have no impact on the tax rate.

The Director of Finance reviewed the areas rates for the community of Hantsport. He stated it consisted of debts that were brought over during the dissolution process and unique costs associated with Hantsport such as the Riverbank Cemetery. He indicated they are separate from the general rate.

Office of the CAO

CAO Osborne reported staff has made the decision to separate any items relating to marketing and public relations under the Communications tab, and to define those communications that are mandatory. CAO Osborne confirmed she has included in salaries a 1.2% cost of living allowance increase which is the standard practice imbedded in the Human Resources Manual. She explained this allows the salary ranges to fair well with other units over time, noting the Municipality targets to be 50% of the market. She noted a review was completed in 2015 and only four positions were found to be under the salary range established for these positions, and three of these were new positions that were created without being previously evaluated. She indicated there is a policy that requires the Municipality to go out every four years to review the salaries and ensure they are comparable.

CAO Osborne stated that staff is proposing to include \$25,000 for Strategic Planning, and it was felt that it would be beneficial to have an external support in doing the official remuneration study in which \$10,000 was budgeted. She advised there was a change in the area rate for Hantsport, with the passing of a former CAO, however the spouse is entitled to 66% of his pension, adding this is now a fixed amount.

She noted the salary and benefits for the Municipal Engineer are included in the budget and part of the salary is covered by the transition funding.

Councillor Daniels asked if Councillor expenses would be made available to the public. CAO Osborne advised the Province is proposing to make legislative changes in the spring which require the Municipality to report quarterly and may also include restrictions on certain purchases. She noted the recently passed Council Remuneration Policy also included reporting requirements. It was agreed it would be beneficial to show Councillor line expenses separately in future budgets.

Councillor Jannasch asked for clarification on the legal costs and how it is calculated. CAO Osborne responded with the signing of the MOU, the temporary withdrawal of amalgamation and the closure of the fire mediation staff doesn't see the same level costs arising for legal expenses so have reduced the value to what should be a more operational level.

There was a brief discussion on the changes in By-law Enforcement due to safety considerations. CAO Osborne noted staff is changing the approach to providing after hours' services, with two back up officers being established to respond to only critical situations after hours. It was advised that the Dog By-law charges are not able to have a lien against them and are often difficult to collect.

Department of Finance

The Director of Finance reported the Department of Finance is responsible for the overall management and direction of financial affairs for the Municipality. He noted the Department manages \$15 million in operational revenue and \$5 million budgeted capital costs, as well as managing three water utilities. He noted they distribute over 11,000 tax and water bills and prepare all required audits. He confirmed his budget also includes IT services. He suggested the Department's goal is to be more efficient by continued training to improve their skills.

J. Hanshaw reported there is a major upgrade that is required this year to the financial system which is due to payroll. He noted the standard items required for the year included, virus protection, upgrades to workstations, record management and back up to protect the existing infrastructure.

The Director of Finance noted the budget included changes to the IT contract to allow for three days of service and one day by the IT of the Town of Windsor for Hantsport. The Municipality and Town of Windsor will work toward sharing both IT resources to the best of their abilities.

Walton Shore Fire Department

Chief Patterson presented the Walton Shore Fire Department 2017/18 budget. He indicated the Fire Department is requesting that West Hants meet 50% of the funding to repair the roof on their hall. He advised that honorariums are not provided to the members. He noted that East Hants provides coverage for dispatch and training.

Chief Patterson advised they do not have a full janitorial position as the other fire departments and equipment repairs are done offsite. He noted the Department receives a grant from East Hants that is in addition to the area rate funding. CAO commended the Fire Department for making due with what they have, noting that Chief Patterson is a qualified mechanic and often does repairs himself on equipment.

Councillor Daniels asked if the Fire Department included in the budget what they will need in the future. Chief Patterson confirmed it did not. It was suggested it would be beneficial that the Department provide the Municipality with a long-term plan. CAO Osborne confirmed there is a capital plan that relates to the facility, that shows the need for roof repairs and additional space in the building. She suggested a challenge the Department has is that East Hants is not willing to provide funding for any vehicle or funding that West Hants is not prepared to split equally.

Planning Department

The Director of Planning presented the Planning Department's budget for 2017/18, adding it includes the addition of a Planner for a six-month period to support the work for the Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Laws review. She confirmed the budget also includes an amount for casual staff, training for staff development, and training for planning licenses. She noted there is an increase in legal costs which reflects the anticipated number of applications particularly for development agreements such as Forest Lakes. She advised there is a decrease in development contingency due to the tourism being reallocated and the hiring of a consultant or casual staff to meet any extreme deadlines or any costs to major development. She confirmed there was a decrease in mileage costs due to the purchase of a company vehicle.

The Director of Planning commented on the Heritage Grant noting last years allocated funds were not used in the previous year, however it was anticipated to be used this year.

CAO Osborne advised fees generated for permits are in general revenue and she felt there is more room within the fee structure to increase the revenue stream adding that staff is working to create a fees policy.

The Building Inspector confirmed that Forest Lakes has already made application for six new homes within the last few weeks and anticipated three more in near future.

There was discussion on whether there could be an opportunity for partnership with the Town of Windsor in Planning. CAO Osborne advised it her understanding the Town currently contracts work to the Town of Wolfville, but are training in house for the future.

Parks & Recreation Department

The Director of Parks & Recreation Department presented her budget for 2017/18. She reported the Parks & Recreation Department includes three staff year-round, and additional staffing throughout the summer as well as an employee program leader in seven schools throughout the year to offer after school programming. She noted the Department is responsible for maintenance of twenty-seven municipally owned properties, and manages grant, summer, and seasonal programs.

She highlighted that the Department budgeted \$30,000 in estimated revenue for this upcoming year, adding the plan to leverage additional funds to offset their costs. She noted the figure included for the Ste Croix Recreation site will better reflect the revenue received in the upcoming year. She noted the staff salaries and benefits includes the cost of living allowance increase, however there is a decrease as last years' budget included a salary for a part time programmer position, which was reallocated to the Active Living Coordinator to take on some of the programming duties.

It was advised there is an increase for a capital funding request that includes the truck the Department purchased last year as well as a top dresser which will eliminate the need to contract this work out, and a trailer that can haul a tractor obtained through the Hantsport dissolution process.

The Director of Parks and Recreation reported the Ste. Croix Recreation site will host a significant event next year and upgrades are required to meet softball standards.

The Director of Parks and Recreation reported there is a slight increase for the Hants Aquatic Center deficit, and a contribution to a capital reserve included in the grant program line item. She reviewed the amount budgeted for Grants to Organizations and advised she and the CAO will review and present recommendations to Council for consideration.

Councillor Monroe asked for clarification where Gas Tax funds are used in Parks & Recreation. The Director of Parks and Recreation reported at the Irishman's Road site they have created a lot of new trails so Gas Tax funding was able to be used.

Councillor Leopold asked for clarification on the significant cost for phones in most of the departments. She asked if there was any way to save money in this area. The Director of Finance indicated this is cost allocation by each department. He confirmed they are in the process of reviewing a new offer and anticipates a decrease in cost.

The Director of Parks and Recreation reported the Riverbank Cemetery falls under her Department and noted the only increase is funding for a plot survey to create an area for cremation plots.

Department of Public Works

The Director of Public Works presented his 2017/18 budget, noting he has 15 full-time, and 1 part-time staff in the Department. He confirmed the budget includes an amount to hire a student. He reported there is ten municipally owned buildings that the Public Works Department maintains, 3 sewer and 3 water utilities, 53 streets, and sidewalks. He confirmed they have 8 service vehicles within the Department.

Councillor Daniels asked if the fees paid to Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal cover the costs of repaving during infrastructure leaks. The Director of Public Works stated if it is a broken line for sewer or water, the Municipality would be responsible to cover repaving costs.

Councillor Leopold asked about the variance for the sidewalk maintenance under the Hantsport Area Rate. The Director of Public Works advised the increase is due to staff knowing that additional sidewalk work is required on a regular basis in Hantsport. CAO Osborne added the Municipal Engineer has reviewed the Opus report which identified the amount of rehabilitation work that may be required in any one year. She suggested this would form part of the asset management plan which will be brought to Council for consideration and discussion.

Waste Collection and Disposal

The Director of Public Works noted that he had requested for an additional increase for safety and allowance for site cleanup to establish to new programs for illegal dumping and littering around the community.

Councillor Leopold asked if there was a different tipping fee rate for residents and businesses outside of West Hants. The Director of Public Works confirmed there is a discounted rate for West Hants residents.

Municipal Landfill Site

It was noted the cost is for the perpetual care of the old landfill site which must occur for 25 years. It was advised there is a significant increase in sampling fees this year for a survey is required. This budget has no impact to the general rate.

Waste Diversion

It was reported the Waste Diversion budget is for recycling programs in the area such as curbside enforcement.

The Municipal Engineer reported under the Provincial Regulations, the Municipality has been exempted regarding the organic ban in landfills, to allow having certain organics within the garbage based on an agreement with the Province regarding monitoring of organics and backyard composting. He noted every year the Waste Reduction Coordinator uses students to take samples in the communities and a report is sent to the Province to show due diligence in monitoring. He continued by explaining the Province conducted a survey of all landfills in Nova Scotia, which showed the West Hants Landfill receiving the least amount of organics.

The Municipal Engineer explained the diversion credits are held by the region and distributed for programs.

Councillor Monroe asked for clarification on the line item for curbside enforcement which wasn't spent the previous year. CAO Osborne clarified approval to spend the funding was received however the program only allowed for part time employees, adding at one time the by-law enforcement officers were contracted and were doing the enforcement but suggested that both employees are now full time employees and couldn't continue the work. She noted recently a contractor was hired to do this work.

Municipal Courthouse

The Director of Public Works noted the costs are associated with maintaining a very old building. It was noted the Municipal Courthouse budget has no impact on the general rate as the Province funds it 100% for operations and 50% for capital. The CAO noted when notified by the Province that they no longer have use for the building, then staff would evaluate for need and disposal for a recommendation to Council.

Falmouth Sewer

The Director of Public Works reported the Falmouth Sewer budget is attempting to maintain sewer expense costs and allow for funds to cover unexpected sewer breaks due to aging infrastructure.

Three Mile Plains Sewer

It was reported that there was no significant change to the Three Mile Plains Sewer budget amount. It was advised anything related to inflow into the sewer system is paid for by the Municipality, as it gets treated at the sewer plant, and the budget includes costs for inflow studies to limit what goes into the sewer.

CAO Osborne confirmed sewers systems are not regulated by the Utility and Review Board (UARB) and are a user-fee based service, adding if the rate is not increased it will have a cascade affect on the general rate over time. The Municipal Engineer agreed that an increase in sewer rates protects the Municipality. CAO Osborne indicated the Town of Windsor operates two sewer lagoons, adding West Hants paid the full cost to build the second lagoon and West Hants pays through the septage lagoon fees for the Towns' treatment. It was noted that the agreement is based on percent usage, and that West Hants pays for approximately half the operating cost. CAO Osborne indicated there has been discussion whether to attach sewer costs to water usage.

Hantsport & Three Mile Plains & Falmouth Water Utilities

It was noted the water utility rates are regulated by the UARB, and staff must estimate what it would cost to run the utilities. The Director of Public Works expressed concern about the frequent breaks in infrastructure that are occurring at the water utilities on a regular basis. CAO Osborne confirmed staff have been trying to determine the cause of these issues and are trying to plan for appropriately.

The Municipal Engineer suggested since the aggregate pits were opened on Panuke Road there has been a significant increase in water line breaks in the Three Mile Plains area. The Director of Public Works suggested that staff is investigating a sand base material to cushion the pipes when repairs are made to prevent future breaks.

The Director of Public Works reported that handheld water meter readers are used in Falmouth and Three Mile Plains Water Utilities and the Department has budgeted to implement the same program in the Hantsport Water Utility to achieve more efficient, accurate readings.

Councillor Leopold asked if there is a policy for commercial water haulers and referred to the water shortage last year. The Director of Public Works felt the concern wasn't that residents couldn't access water they just couldn't do it in the way they had before. CAO Osborne confirmed it was not staffs position to create a second location during the water shortage however Council instructed staff to replace it and so they used the most available location. The CAO cautioned of having a regular water station at the Municipal Office poses traffic risks in the parking lot.

The Municipal Engineer confirmed the Windsor Fire Department had a water hauling station in the past but was closed due to logistical issues and so Municipal Council at the time directed staff to provide the service and he agreed it is no longer a safe location to provide the service as the number of water station users has increased. CAO Osborne suggested that future discussion is required on the matter.

Capital and Reserves Budget

The Director of Finance reported that a 5-year projection and summary has been provided for capital projects. Councillor Jannasch asked for clarification on the purpose of the surveillance cameras. The Director of Finance clarified it was used in partnership with the Policing Services in the community of Hantsport. He noted that it has been determined that some video cameras can be repurposed to municipal properties and be better utilize, thus there would be a cost savings.

There was brief discussion on the long-term plans for the municipal building located in Hantsport. CAO Osborne confirmed all the supervisors for the Public Works Department had moved in the building to have a closer working relationship. She confirmed staff at the office is still accepting payments for water and tax bills but suggested the volume of payments is low. She commented that the Director of Finance would like to relocate the Water Utility Clerk back to the main office, noting the office will need to be restructured for the move, which is being investigated. She clarified once the Water Utility Clerk is relocated access will be limited to the Hantsport office due to security reasons.

Councillor Francis asked about groups who have submitted request for funding that are not included in the budget. The Director of Finance commented consideration needs to be first given to where the funding is coming from for projects like the Newport Rink, noting ideally staff would like to use Gas Tax, if eligible. He confirmed the projects are not included in the budget but suggested it would not be an issue for a recommendation to come to Council later on in the year as long as a source is identified that does not affect the general tax rate. CAO Osborne mentioned there are several significant requests that are being considered through the grant process which staff will present to Council.

Councillor Monroe asked if the new truck and plow purchased for Hantsport was covered under the dissolution fund. CAO Osborne indicated the equipment was a requirement to meet service levels and was paid for out of the general rate.

The Director of Finance suggested the Municipality is in the beginning stages of creating reserves which is reflected in the Financial Condition Index this year. He confirmed there are a significant number of costs that are anticipated to come up that related to a number of buildings in Hantsport. CAO Osborne added there is a potential project being led by the Province and staff is requesting to take money from the reserve to support the project if it moves forward.

The Director of Finance reported there is an addition to the operations reserve not reflected in the budget document which relates to the expenses for the future Boundary Review and Election. He advised the Municipality is beginning to build a Hantsport Water Capital Reserve. He advised he could draw from the Three Mile Plains Water Capital Depreciation Reserve for capital expenses which the Three Mile Plains Water Utility will incur this year as there is significant costs for the repairs.

CAO Osborne reported any studies done jointly with the Town of Windsor is being suggested to come out of the Operating Reserve.

The Director of Finance advised most of the Carryover Reserve relates to the funding of an RCMP officer which was budgeted for and not used. He offered this is money that can be transferred from the reserve to offset costs this year and decrease the general tax rate.

There was a brief discussion regarding the Province downloading their responsibility of medical response to the fire fighters. Many Councillors felt this was an added stress to these fire members and suggested this be investigated further.

There was concern expressed about the paid janitorial positions within the Brooklyn Fire Departments. CAO Osborne cautioned instead of focusing on one individual fire department to instead look at it with all fire departments.

In conclusion, staff requested that Council suggest a target tax rate. It was agreed to make the adjustments to the budget, as directed, and present the final version in April.

MOVED and SECONDED that staff be directed to maintain status quo on the tax rate and investigate efficiencies in the budget.

Motion Carried.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for March 28, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. There will be a Special Council meeting held on March 28, 2017 at 5:00 p.m.

6. Adjournment

MOVED and SECONDED that the meeting adjourn.

Motion Carried.

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Paul Morton, Chair

Rhonda Brown, Municipal Clerk