



**MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF WEST HANTS  
Committee of the Whole Minutes – Special Budget  
April 4, 2018, 9:00 a.m.  
Sanford Council Chambers**

Present:	P. Morton	Deputy Warden
	A. Zebian	Warden
	R. Jannasch	Councillor District 1
	K. Monroe	Councillor District 2
	D. Keith	Councillor District 3
	T. Leopold	Councillor District 4
	D. Francis	Councillor District 5
	J. Daniels	Councillor District 7
	R. Zwicker	Councillor District 10
	M. Laycock	Chief Administrative Officer
	M. LeMay	Director of Planning and Development
	K. Kehoe	Director of Parks and Recreation
	B. Carrigan	Director of Public Works
	J. Hanshaw	IT Consultant
	T. Leslie	Municipal Building and Fire Inspector
	C. Lowe	Accountant
	C. Remme	Acting Municipal Clerk
	J. Woodman	Administrative Assistant

Regrets: Councillor Hussey

There was 1 member of the public in attendance.

1. Call to Order  
Chair Morton called the meeting to order at 9:00 am
2. Announcements  
Chair Morton reviewed the standard fire evacuation procedure.
3. Approval of Agenda, including additions or deletions  
**MOVED and SECONDED that the agenda be approved as circulated.  
Motion Carried.**
4. General Revenue and Expenses

CAO Laycock reviewed the documents in the Draft Operating Budget. Warden Zebian asked for clarification on what is included under Transportation. CAO Laycock explained that it is primarily debt but is also area rated for specific enhanced services that are unique to Hantsport.

Councillor Leopold asked if there was a specific recreation reserve. CAO Laycock confirmed the 5% reserve is a specific recreation reserve.

Councillor Daniels suggested aligning the deed transfer rate with that of the Town of Windsor and the Municipality of the County of Kings to alleviate the competitiveness and create additional revenue. CAO Laycock offered if Council were to increase the deed transfer tax to 1.5% it would eliminate the proposed tax increase, however cautioned the flexibility within the revenue line would be gone as it is the maximum permitted in the MGA.

Councillor Jannasch asked what the default rate was on taxes. CAO Laycock indicated that the Municipality does not default as the money is generally received during the annual tax sale. He advised Council that he is currently working with the Tax Clerk about write offs and making exemptions.

Councillor Monroe asked if the equalization money from the dissolution could be spent in other areas. CAO Laycock confirmed that these funds were intended to be used to absorb the costs of the dissolution process specifically for Hantsport. He noted that a significant amount of staff time is used dealing with the Community.

Councillor Leopold stated that she would support at least a 1.25% deed transfer tax. Councillor Jannasch cautioned that Council needs to be clear what the break down would be if this were to increase. CAO Laycock confirmed it would be used to offset the general rate burden and would remain consistent on how it is currently used. Warden Zebian suggested it should be looked at as creating an even level playing field between municipalities.

Councillor Monroe expressed that she would like to see items that would cause an increase in the tax rate in summary form in future budget presentations. CAO Laycock advised that the document he had prepared offers a summary version noting he felt obligated to give Council as much information as possible for them for the budget deliberations. He indicated that he would speak to the new Director of Finance to ensure that specifics of the line items that have increased and have a sub-category of what caused them.

Councillor Daniels commented on the ask for the Community Services Officer under Police Protection. She expressed that she felt at this point this position is not necessary, noting there is currently a liaison with the school system which is targeting the youth. She suggested if there are community groups who need the RCMP to assist with presentations they can make a request. Chair Morton and Councillor Jannasch agreed that now is not the time to create that position due to the cost. Councillor Monroe suggested that the \$45,000 salary that was proposed for the position could be better used to hire an Economic Development Officer for the Municipality.

Councillor Daniels stated that she didn't agree with the \$2500 budgeted for the consultant's fee for communication tower upgrade under Fire Services. She stated she was not clear on what the issues are as it was advised that repeaters were included to alleviate any problems, adding she didn't see this as necessary spend.

Warden Zebian stated that it would be beneficial to hold a Fire Advisory Committee meeting with all the chiefs to discuss any issues. Councillor Daniels agreed and noting she felt a candid discussion is required to address some concerns Council may have such as the increase in fuel consumption and the expected level of service for departments in the Municipality. Councillor Monroe asked if the Municipality can dictate the level of service the departments respond to. CAO Laycock suggested that Council could discuss this issue with the chiefs at the Fire Advisory Committee meeting.

Councillor Keith expressed that the Board of Directors for the Brooklyn Fire Department should be presenting the budget as they are responsible for the taxpayer's money as opposed to the Chiefs.

Councillor Monroe asked for a copy of the Brooklyn Fire Department's by-laws before meeting with the chiefs. Councillor Leopold agreed and looked forward to a Fire Advisory Committee meeting with all the chiefs. She advised that she is open to looking at the different levels of service and felt the chiefs could comment on the level of need the areas warrant. She reminded that Council needs to review the cost per call when reviewing the levels and what would make sense for the residents. CAO Laycock agreed to arrange a Fire Advisory Committee meeting.

Councillor Daniels inquired if a draft of the Fire Policy would be ready for the meeting. CAO Laycock stated that the policy is currently being reviewed by the department executives and members and then it would be presented to Committee of the Whole for consideration and discussion.

Councillor Jannasch asked for clarification on the cost for the disaster and mitigation funding which was approved to cover studies for the Cheverie Crossway and the Avondale Wharf. He questioned what the Municipality is receiving for the money. The Director of Planning clarified the studies must be complete to receive any other disaster mitigation funding adding the studies would give a good idea of what the mitigation efforts could be.

Councillor Monroe asked if the Avondale Wharf study would include the erosion to the museum and boathouse. The Director of Planning confirmed it is the area between the wharf and the Cheverie causeway and not just the wharf itself. CAO Laycock confirmed the request was discussed at the MCCAP meeting and went to Council with the projected outcomes.

Councillor Daniels commented on the Happy Communities Project expressing it seemed to be a substantial ask noting she did not feel comfortable giving a \$6,000 grant to one entity when there are a lot of groups doing similar projects. Councillor Monroe expressed that the Happy Community Project had resulted in a return of vitality to the downtown core and the community in general adding she felt the request was small for something creating so much potential. Councillor Leopold asked for clarification on the additional grant ask from the Happy Communities Project. CAO Laycock advised it is his understanding there are organizations related to Happy Communities that are set up as non-profits that have submitted grant requests to the Municipality in support of their programs.

He clarified the \$6,000 request was from the for-profit entity asking for a contribution for a fee for service. Councillor Leopold expressed that she could not support this ask as there are many organizations that could be supported. Warden Zebian agreed that this would only lead to many other groups making requests for support.

Councillor Daniels indicated that she is in favour of hiring a Community Economic Development Officer however expressed concern on what Council's expectations of this position and asked if the position would be shared with neighbouring municipal units. She suggested that Council take time to discuss the position and wait until the next budget year.

Councillor Monroe disagreed with delaying the Community Economic Development Officer and felt that it is necessary to bring businesses to the area. Warden Zebian agreed the time is now to fill this position and suggested that the Municipality could collaborate with the Town of Windsor. Councillor Jannasch suggested that Council first define economic development before any money is spent. Councillor Leopold reminded that economic development was identified as a top priority in the Strategic Plan and shouldn't be delayed. CAO Laycock expressed the importance of including the salary in this year's budget, so the tax rate recognizes what the cost will be if Council decides to move forward.

Councillor Leopold asked for clarification on the Falmouth Mini Park lighting request. CAO Laycock advised the request is for a project being worked on with the Town of Windsor. Warden Zebian indicated the project has the two municipal units working with the Health Authority through the Active Living Strategy to put new lighting around the entire walking trail around the causeway.

Councillor Leopold asked if the 2% being set aside for buildings, as per the Reserves Policy, was being done for fire stations. CAO Laycock indicated that he reviews the historical value of the buildings and allocates amounts to the building reserves noting he did not see why money could not be used towards a new fire station.

Councillor Daniels questioned if gas tax funding could be used to repair the Public Works building which is in need of replacement. CAO Laycock cautioned using gas tax funds for the building noting there are significant demands on the funds as outlined in the capital budget.

5. Office of the CAO

CAO Laycock provided an overview of the Office of the CAO, noting one of the significant changes is for overtime due to the policy changes.

Councillor Daniels asked for additional information on staff annual review and increase in wages. CAO Laycock explained the ten-step scale used for staff salary increases adding that, as per policy, every employee receives a cost of living increase annually.

Councillor Leopold asked for the rationale for keeping fuel costs as budgeted. CAO Laycock advised the process has changed to a cardlock system which will make determining true costs easier.

6. Department of Finance & IT  
CAO Laycock provided an overview of the Department of Finance & IT.

Councillor Daniels asked how the PlastiQ program was working to which the CAO responded the program was working well adding that the Municipality does not receive a lot of payments through that means.

IT Consultant, Jeff Hanshaw, presented the IT Overview.

Councillor Daniels asked if a long-term forecast for future needs of the Municipality. The IT Consultant indicated that this was not done this year.

Councillor Leopold asked if IT is responsible for negotiation of cell phone contracts. Jeff Hanshaw clarified that negotiation is not required as the Municipality falls under provincial government pricing, adding now there is unlimited data which reduced the costs significantly. CAO Laycock added this discount was accounted for in last year's budget.

CAO Laycock advised Council that an additional \$10,000 may be required under General Admin in order to cover the cost associated with the newsletters if Council decided to move forward with that decision.

7. Department of Planning and Development  
The Director of Planning and Development, Madelyn LeMay, provided an overview of the Department's budget.

Councillor Leopold asked if there is a fulltime workload for the request of an additional Fire Inspector position. Building and Fire Inspector, Tim Leslie, confirmed that there is enough work particularly with the addition of the community of Hantsport. He went on to say that he has had difficulty scheduling time to do the follow up inspections of many properties which is a very important aspect of the role.

8. Department of Parks and Recreation  
The Director of Parks and Recreation, Kathy Kehoe, presented the budget overview.

Councillor Leopold asked for clarification why Program and Hants Aquatic Center were on the same line. The Director of Parks & Recreation responded it was necessary because of the software.

The Director of Parks and Recreation advised Council that the Municipality cost shares with the Town of Windsor on the operating deficit for the Hants Aquatic Center Society with the Municipality's portion being \$44,312.50 of the \$88,625. She went on to say that there is an additional cost of \$6,240 which is put in a reserve fund for future items that need to be replaced.

Councillor Leopold asked if there is any opportunity to share supplies or resources with the HMCC pool to cut costs. The Director of Parks & Recreation offered that it is difficult to find staff to fill positions with the pool. She stated that the training is very expensive and extensive and offered sharing staff would be difficult based on the size of the Hants Aquatic Centre and its needs. She indicated as for cost sharing supplies that question should be directed to Dianne Levy at the Town of Windsor, as she runs the facility.

Councillor Leopold pointed out that the facility is a continued loss every year and is only open nine weeks per year. She suggested investigating cost sharing expenses for a pool in West Hants jurisdiction. The Director of Parks and Recreation expressed that she understood it is a loss noting that such facilities are often one of the residents move into communities cautioning removal of the pool.

Councillor Leopold asked about the telephone expenses under the Department. CAO Laycock advised that an analysis was completed, and a rationale was determined of the costs, adding that it is not specific to the operation of the phones.

Councillor Leopold asked why there is such a difference under recreation site maintenance costs. The Director of Parks and Recreation responded the most significant difference is there was an agreement with the former Town of Hantsport with Minas Pulp & Paper to pay the yearly taxes as part of the lease agreement, which is approximately \$8,000 per year that the Municipality is required to pay. She added that the Municipality also waters the fields in Hantsport which creates increased costs that do not occur at other recreation sites.

Councillor Leopold asked why there is a difference in the area rate for HMCC ground maintenance. CAO Laycock clarified this is a reallocation of funds given to meet HMCC's needs in certain areas.

Councillor Monroe questioned if the Hants Aquatic Centre is missing programming or if there are any ideas that will bring in additional revenue. The Director of Parks and Recreation indicated that Diane Levy has been finetuning the facility to maximize the revenue and cautioned the pool's revenue is based on weather each season.

Chair Morton suggested that pools are considered it to be a service to the communities and often generate a loss. The Director of Parks and Recreation agreed and suggested the facility is considered one of the best in the Province and encourage everyone to visit the site if they hadn't already done so. Warden Zebian expressed that there were very few ways to raise revenue that don't include raising fees. CAO Laycock advised that he had discussed the pool with CAO Coutinho and suggested they attend a Committee meeting to see if there are any opportunities for increased revenue or expense decreases.

The Director of Parks and Recreation presented the overview of the Riverbank Cemetery. Councillor Daniels asked if there has been any consideration given to purchasing a crypt in order to bring in revenue. CAO Laycock stated the option could be discussed and cautioned there would be a capital cost and then ongoing maintenance costs for any type of structure

which would have to be factored in to the consideration. Councillor Leopold suggested looking at double deep burial plots with flat headstones to minimize the maintenance costs.

Councillor Leopold inquired what was planned for the funding of general projects. The Director of Parks and Recreation indicated this was for the plot survey. Councillor Monroe asked if GPS will be accessible for finding plots. The Director of Parks and Recreation explained a GPS project was started two years ago however the technology that was used was not compatible with the program that the Planning and Development Department uses to upload the information to the server. She advised that staff are currently redoing the work which is more accurate.

#### 9. Public Works

The Director of Public Works, Brad Carrigan, presented the budget overview for Public Works.

Councillor Daniels questioned who performs the paving in cases of waterline breaks to which the Director replied public works staff.

Councillor Monroe expressed that many residents had approached her regarding storing their green carts. She went on to say that some had expressed they were going to return the carts to the Municipality and questioned if the returned carts could then be sold to other communities in the Province. CAO Laycock cautioned the green bins belong to each property not the owners suggesting the topic be discussed with the Waste Coordinator. He went on to say that Council made their decision on the green carts with the understanding that not all residents would be happy. The CAO suggested that Council move forward on their decision. Councillor Leopold noted that the option to obtain a smaller cart for those who found it difficult to get their carts roadside was presented in the community sessions given by the Waste Coordinator.

Councillor Leopold questioned why the recyclable processing amount was separate from the organic tipping fees on the Waste Collection Disposal Budget. The Director of Public Works stated it was due to new rates and contracts. Councillor Daniels cautioned that GFL could be shut down for compliance issues as it will no longer be able to accept organics and felt the Municipality would then be forced to hire a compliance officer to constantly check the garbage bags and suggested there is got to be a cost somewhere to prevent this.

Councillor Leopold asked what Other is for under Administration at a cost of \$2500. CAO Laycock responded this it is the administration fee for the Hantsport Area Rate.

Councillor Daniels asked if there is the ability for Public Works to take over snowplowing on municipally owned streets. The Director of Public Works replied that currently there is not enough resources available but suggested staff could investigate to see the level of service that could be offered. Warden Zebian cautioned that the level of service cannot be sacrificed for residents in order to cut costs.

Councillor Leopold asked for clarification between the Brooklyn Fiber extension and Connect to Innovate. CAO Laycock clarified that Connect to Innovate will give fiber and 251 kms of infrastructure which includes parts of East Hants. Councillor Keith noted that Connect to Innovate is a federal program and the money goes into areas where there is no internet. He added the provincial government is now offering money and the two can coordinate.

10. Capital and Reserves Budget  
CAO Laycock presented the Capital and Reserve Budget.

11. Discussion and Direction from Council  
The CAO was asked to make the following adjustments to the budget:

- Remove the \$6,000 request for Happy Community Project
- Remove Community Service Officer request from the RCMP
- Keep Economic Development Officer
- Raise Deed Transfer Tax to 1.25% or 1.5% (look at impact of both)
- Move Hantport Library contribution to general rate
- Remove \$2,500 for communications tower
- Add \$10,000 to communication budget for newsletter.

Councillor Daniels suggested that the Brooklyn Fire Departments fuel budget should be cut as it was significantly higher than the other departments. Councillor Leopold advised that Council does not have the expertise to know what is needed to run a fire department and suggested the chiefs should be included in any cuts that are made.

CAO Laycock expressed that the budget documents had been given to Councillors two weeks prior to the meetings to allow them time to be reviewed and prepare questions for the presenters, including the fire departments. He went on to say that a vote had taken place regarding cutting the fuel budget of the Brooklyn Volunteer Fire Department and Councillors agreed that the budget would not be cut. He went on to say that he would schedule a Fire Advisory meeting where discussions could take place with the Chiefs and representatives on the Committee.

12. Date of Next Meeting  
The next regular Committee of the Whole will be on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

13. Adjournment

**MOVED and SECONDED that the meeting adjourn.  
Motion Carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

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Paul Morton, Chair

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Rhonda Brown, Municipal Clerk