

# **Municipality of the District of Lunenburg**

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee**

Held via Teams

**Tuesday, February 1, 2022 – 9:00 a.m.**

### **Attendance**

Councillor Michelle Greek, District 7, Chair  
Mayor Carolyn Bolivar-Getson  
Councillor Leitha Haysom, District 1  
Councillor Martin Bell, District 2  
Councillor Wendy Oickle, District 3, Vice Chair  
Councillor Pam Hubley, District 4  
Councillor Cathy Moore, District 5  
Councillor Sandra Statton, District 6  
Councillor Kacy DeLong, District 8  
Councillor Reid Whynot, District 9 (arrived at 9:40 a.m.)  
Councillor Chasidy Veinotte, District 10

### **Staff**

Tom MacEwan, Chief Administrative Officer  
Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO  
April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk  
Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance  
Angela Veinot, Accounting Manager  
Sarah Kucharski, Communications Officer  
Byung Jun Kang, Planner  
Darren Shupe, Senior Planner  
Stephen Pace, Director of Engineering & Public Works  
Dave Waters, Director of Economic Development  
Bill Schurman, Director of Recreation, Parks & Tourism  
Tissy Bolivar, Program Coordinator  
Rachel Hiltz, Recording Secretary

### **1. Call to Order**

#### **1.1 Mi'kma'ki Territorial Acknowledgement**

Councillor Greek called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and acknowledged that the meeting was held in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

### **3. Approval of Agenda**

It was requested that Item 11.1 Proposed Nova Scotia Power Rate Hikes be added to the Agenda.

**Moved by Councillor Oickle, seconded by Councillor DeLong that the Agenda be approved as amended by adding Item 11.1 Proposed Nova Scotia Power Rate Hikes. Carried unanimously.**

#### **4. Approval of Minutes – December 7, 2021**

**Moved by Councillor Hubley, seconded by Councillor Haysom that the Minutes of the December 7, 2021 Finance Committee meeting be approved as circulated. Carried unanimously.**

#### **5. Business Arising from Minutes (Nil)**

#### **6. Presentations/Scheduled Times**

##### **6.1 Region 6 Solid Waste Management – 2022/2023 Budget**

Christine McClare, Regional Coordinator, Region 6 Solid Waste Management, was in attendance. Ms. McClare gave a presentation titled “Region 6 Solid Waste Management Budget 2022/23” (circulated with Agenda). She noted the following:

- Revenues
  - There is a reduction in dairy stewardship likely due to COVID and the closure of schools and restaurants.
  - Divert NS provided a top up last year due to COVID. This year it is expected that units will receive at least the same amount of a top up.
- Expenses
  - Salary increases upcoming
  - Inter-municipal program expenses for sorting bins, education, etc. These are funds remaining from the money budgeted in the previous year.
- Municipal Billing Estimate
  - MODL share being \$35,779.08 for 2022/2023. MODL will receive \$233,000, resulting in a return of \$9.40 per person for a cost of \$1.44 per person.

A discussion was held and it was noted that a Printed Paper and Packaging (PPP) Extended Producer Responsibility program is in progress.

There needs to be a change in public perception and purchasing regarding plastic recycling. Plastics have an expensive and limited post-consumer life and don't often end up being disposed of properly.

There will be an upcoming need for lithium battery recycling. There may be interest in having a local recycling facility for this. Ms. McClare will follow up with Councillors regarding how this could be implemented.

**Moved by Councillor Veinotte, seconded by Councillor Bell that the Finance Committee recommends to Council that Municipal Council approve the Region 6 2022/2023 Budget with the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg's share of the budget being \$35,779.08. Carried unanimously.**

Ms. McClare left the meeting at this time.

#### **2. Announcements, Acknowledgements, Recognitions**

##### **2.1 African Heritage Month Proclamation**

Mayor Bolivar-Getson acknowledged that February is African Heritage Month.

**7. Consideration of Correspondence (Nil)**

**8. Recommendations from Committees & Boards (Nil)**

**9. Staff Reports**

**9.1 Finance Department**

**9.1.1 Operating and Capital Variance Reports**

Ms. Wentzell reviewed the report titled “Operating Variance, Capital Status & Gas Tax Investment Reports 3rd Quarter (April 1 – December 31, 2021)” (circulated with Agenda). Staff are projecting an Operating surplus of \$1.4M which represents a 4.4% budget variance. \$3.6 million in capital projects have been completed to date.

- Reserves
  - Reserves are either operating or capital. Capital reserves are restricted and set aside for specific purposes, such as open space and the LCLC.
  - There is currently no climate reserve, however, there is a general surplus fund that can be used. Staff will also search for other government grants to offset climate costs. Councillors requested that the Sustainability Committee complete a review and determine if a reserve fund should be created. This will be done through the capital budget deliberations.

**9.1.2 Policy MDL-58 User Fees – 3 Year Review**

Ms. Wentzell reviewed the report titled “3 Year Review MODL Policy 058 Fees” (circulated with Agenda). She noted that based on a previous Council decision, a review of the User Fees should be completed every 3 years and increased based on cumulative Consumer Price Index (CPI). This was to ensure fees do not become outdated, limiting a potential higher increase at one time. This year’s proposed increase is 6%.

Staff are recommending removing the fees for: MARC residence, as this is no longer used; and, photocopying and sending faxes for residents. The Electric Vehicle charging fee will also remain the same as it was just approved by Council.

If Council chose to increase the proposed rates noted in the report, this would result in a total of \$4,500 in increased revenue.

Councillors felt that with residents seeing increased costs for many other services and MODL’s strong financial position that there is no need to increase these costs. Not increasing the rates will not negatively impact the budget.

Councillors recommended the Policy should be brought back in one year to review the fees again, rather than waiting three more years. Also, this decision should be included in the budget presentation documentation to notify residents that there were no fee increases.

**Moved by Councillor Hubley, seconded by Councillor DeLong that the Finance Committee recommends to Council that Municipal Council approve the amendments to MODL Policy 058**

**Fees by deleting the MARC residence fees, fax, and photocopying fees shown in tables 2 and 3 with an effective date of April 1, 2022 and hereby gives seven (7) days notice of its intention to approve the proposed amendments at the February 8, 2022 Council Meeting. Carried unanimously.**

### **9.1.3 2022/2023 Proposed Area Rates (Street Lights, Hydrants, Sewers)**

Ms. Wentzell reviewed the report titled “2022-23 Proposed Area Rates: Streetlights, Hydrants, Sewers” (circulated with Agenda). She noted the Street Light, Hydrant and Sewer rates are reviewed and approved annually. Rates are calculated based on the prior years’ revenues collected against actual costs, taking into consideration the current year’s property assessment and any estimated cumulative overage and shortages in accounts.

Councillors requested a workshop for hydrant rates in Northfield and with the new developments in Osprey Village there will need to be increased fire protection in the area. It was noted that discussions should include the Fire Department.

**Moved by Councillor Statton, seconded by Deputy Mayor Moore that the Finance Committee recommends to Council that Municipal Council approve:**

- **The 2022/23 Fire Hydrant Rate at \$0.1459 per \$100 of Assessment**
- **The 2022/23 Street Light Rates as presented**
- **The 2022/23 Sewer Rates at \$0.43/\$100 assessment Global Rate and \$0.25/\$100 assessment Hebbville Rate**

**Carried Unanimously.**

## **9.2 Recreation Department**

### **9.2.1 Sponsorship Ad Grant: HB Studios Sports Centre**

Ms. Bolivar reviewed the report titled “Sponsorship Ad Grant: HB Studios Sports Centre” (circulated with Agenda).

**Moved by Councillor Whynot seconded by Councillor Hubley that the Finance Committee recommends to Council that Municipal Council approve the Sponsorship Ad request of the HB Studios Sports Centre for \$250 + HST, as a bronze level sponsor.**

Councillors inquired about the track passes that are provided with the sponsorship. Ms. Bolivar noted these passes were made available for staff but could be given to the public. Councillors agreed to have the track passes as giveaways to the public.

**The motion on the floor was voted on and carried unanimously.**

## **9.3 Administration Department**

### **9.3.1 Emergency Assistance Fund – Round 4**

Mr. Dumaresq noted that Council has requested another round of emergency assistance funding for organizations that can’t fundraise through normal channels due to COVID restrictions. This item was brought forward to this Agenda to ensure this round of funding is included in this fiscal year.

Councillors requested that the funding be provided based on the parameters from the previous round and ensure the applicants from the last three rounds be notified that another round of funding is available.

**Moved by Deputy Mayor Moore, seconded by Mayor Bolivar-Getson that the Finance Committee recommends to Council that Municipal Council organize a fourth round of Emergency Assistance Funding with previous organizations having the opportunity to receive same. Carried unanimously.**

## **10. Mayor's/Deputy Mayor's/Councillors' Matters (Nil)**

## **11. Added Items**

### **11.1 Nova Scotia Power Proposed Rate Hikes**

Councillor Haysom advised that Nova Scotia Power has made an application to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) to raise power rates by 10% over three years and changes the net metering program for solar generation.

- The rate hike will significantly impact residents of MODL, especially during this time of COVID with income instability, increased inflation and housing crisis.
- The changes to the net metering program will impact the rate of return on the investment of solar panels by 50%.
  - Many agencies, including MODL have encouraged solar power as a green option. MODL is planning to install solar panels to help meet greenhouse gas reduction targets.
  - Residents who may have gotten solar panels will now be getting penalized for having them.
  - This change was announced on January 27 and the cut off is February 1 to be grandfathered for the current net metering program.
  - This will negatively impact the solar industry and discourage people from getting solar power to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Province of Nova Scotia is applying for intervener status for the NSUARB hearing. MODL can also opt to apply for this status.
- Councillors have received numerous complaints about both the rate increases and the changes to the net metering program.
- It was suggested a letter be written to the Province to support their intervener status and copy the local MLAs.
- Councillors requested a workshop to gain a better understanding of what the rate increase is for and what applying for intervener status would mean.
  - Mr. MacEwan noted that a notice of intervention for intervener status has been filed by several companies in the solar industry. MODL can choose to join the industry application or another joint application. If MODL joins an application, it would be eligible to hear evidence and make submissions. This does come with a cost as the hearing will be lengthy. The NSUARB hearing is scheduled for fall and a deadline for applications for intervener status will be set.
  - Councillors prefer to file with other municipal units rather than industry if that is an option. There is a Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM)

meeting Wednesday evening and the possibility of having a joint municipal application will be discussed.

**Moved by Councillor Haysom, seconded by Councillor Bell that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that the Municipality investigate applying to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board for intervener status regarding Nova Scotia Power's proposed rate hike and changes to the net metering program. Carried unanimously.**

**12. In Camera (Nil)**

**13. Adjournment**

**There being no further business at 10:47 a.m., it was moved by Mayor Bolivar-Getson, seconded by Councillor Hubley that the meeting adjourn. Carried.**