

**JANUARY 23, 2023**  
**STELLARTON, NOVA SCOTIA**

**MEETING**

A meeting of the Stellarton Committee of the Whole was held on Monday, January 23, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. in the Large Committee Room, Stellarton Town Hall.

**PRESENT**

Mayor D. MacGillivray, Coun. S. Campbell, Coun. S. Lawand, Coun. G. Pentz and Coun. B. Knight (via Zoom). Also present was CAO Susan Higdon

1. Coun. G. Pentz called meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

The Agenda was approved as amended to include 9. Electoral Boundary Changes (Federal); 10. Correspondence from Warren Stinson RCAF; and 11. Information from Wayne Mason re Bill 225, on motion by Mayor. D. MacGillivray, seconded by Coun. S. Campbell. **Motion Carried.**

**3. Approval of Previous Minutes**

The Minutes of November 28, 2022 were approved on motion by Coun. S. Lawand, seconded by Coun. S. Campbell. **Motion Carried.**

**4. Business Arising from the Minutes**

There was no business arising from the Minutes.

**5. Correspondence**

- a. **United Way of Pictou County** Re: request for donation – CAO S. Higdon received request for donation. Mayor D. MacGillivray made motion to donate \$200 to the United Way of Pictou County, seconded by Coun. B. Knight. **Motion Carried.**

**6. Code of Conduct Consultation** – CAO S. Higdon reported that the Code of Conduct email was sent January 9, 2023 to Council; they are announcing a second round of consultations on the Code of Conduct; an opportunity to share thoughts and provide feedback. Coun. S. Campbell re costs. Coun. B. Knight voiced concerns; free speech rights; may deter public involvement. Coun. S. Lawand re situational actions. CAO S. Higdon informed Council of the consultation schedule if anyone would like to attend; February 9, virtual.

**7. “Stellartonian” Award** – Coun. S. Lawand comments re “Stellartonian” Award; for non-residents called “Honorary Stellartonian” to recognize their contributions to the Town; Steve Goodwin could be the first recipient. Coun. B. Knight made motion to give “Honorary Stellartonian” Award to Steve Goodwin, seconded by Coun. S. Lawand. **Motion Carried.**

**8. Bylaw Amendment #57** Add Stellar Curling Club; Remove Riverview Home Corp – CAO S. Higdon stated that Bylaw #57 is a full tax exemption, currently the only two properties are Riverview Home Corporation 43 Birch Hill Drive and 31 St. Bernard Street; there have been discussions at their end through Coun. S. Campbell; also, the Town of Westville just reneged their tax exemption. S. Higdon asked Council if they wish to amend Bylaw 57 and remove Riverview Home Corp. Mayor D. MacGillivray made motion to amend Bylaw #57, seconded by Coun. S. Lawand. **Motion Carried.**

CAO S. Higdon continued with the Stellar Curling Club; they were previously being taxed partially – residentially not commercial; they ask Council to be fully tax-exempt. Coun. S. Lawand made motion to add the Stellar Curling Club to Bylaw #57, seconded Coun. B. Knight. **Motion Carried.**

**9. Electoral Boundary Changes** – CAO S. Higdon reported that Mayor MacGillivray received email from Sean Fraser’s office (read for the record); regarding electoral boundary changes; the report is available; it goes on to say that Sean Fraser is drastically opposed to this change - the difficulty it would be to represent the interest of all constituents given the challenges related to rural and urban concerns; he is looking for community support; asking each of the Mayors of the municipalities of Pictou County for support; one municipality has passed a resolution that the Boundaries Commission register the Town Council disagreement with the creation of Pictou Eastern Shore and Elections Canada; another Mayor has agreed to use his name in support of Sean Fraser’s opposition. Coun. S. Lawand made motion to support Sean Fraser’s opposition, seconded by Coun. B. Knight. **Motion Carried.**

**10. Warren Stinson, RCAF** – CAO S. Higdon reported that the Mayor received an email from Warren Stinson of the RCAF who is reaching out to the Town for assistance towards their new building; specifically water and sewer work; Council did not approve their request to cover the costs associated with this work since it would create a precedent for future requests. They are also looking for a letter of support for a grant application. Coun. B. Knight made motion to write a letter of support, seconded by Coun. S. Lawand. **Motion Carried.**

**11. Information from Wayne Mason re Bill 225** – Coun. S. Lawand spoke re Bill 225; he does not agree with this Bill; discussion commenced; Halifax is governed by a Charter, not the MGA. No further discussion.

**12. Water Rate Presentation** – G. A. Isenor Consulting Ltd.

Gerry Isenor and Blaine Rooney addressed Council. Highlights of presentation:

- Process of setting water rates in Nova Scotia; administered by the NS Utility and Review Board
- Work with staff creating a three-year budget; business plan for the Town’s Utility
- Public Hearing process
- Last rate study in Stellarton was 2006; last rate increase was April 2008
- Installation of residential water meters
- Budgeting information; surplus, capital work, depreciation, etc.
- Projections; annual deficits
- Recommended low increases over the next three years; 13%, 13% and 15%
- Consumption-based billing with water meters
- Waiting until 2025, the increase would be substantial
- Rates across the province are between \$130 - \$140 per quarter

Discussion:

Town Accountant B. MacKay provided some budgetary information.

Coun. S. Lawand comments; not in favour of increasing water rates for the next three years.

- Presenters stated that increase would be approximately \$5.00 per month
- Residents will be informed of these increases
- Another rate study when all meters are installed
- Long-term benefits
- Water loss identification
- Fire protection costs; formula; capacity ratio
- Average consumptions; able to detect leaks with meters

- Other service fees update; base charges; suspension of services
- Water conservation directives

CAO S. Higdon stated that if Council decides, this will have to go to the Council meeting on February 13; the motion would read, "that the Town of Stellarton applied to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board for changes in its rates for water and water service, fire protection to the Town and changes to its rules and regulations for customers served by the Town of Stellarton Water Utility as set out in the Water Rate Study prepared by G. A. Isenor Consulting Ltd. in association with Blaine Rooney Consulting Ltd." She asks for a recommendation of this motion go to Council on February 13.

Comments/Questions:

Town Account B. MacKay re increases prior to installation of water meters and communication with residents.

CAO S. Higdon re process of increases; needs NS Utility and Review Board approval; then advertising; public hearing.

Mayor D. MacGillivray made motion to recommend to Council the above motion, seconded by Coun. B. Knight. **Motion Carried.** Coun. S. Lawand voted nay.

Coun. B. Knight asked what are the resulting savings. Blaine stated that the Town saves money in electricity and chemicals.

**13. Next Meeting Date: Monday, February 27, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.**

**14. Adjournment** on motion by Coun. S. Campbell.