

February 4, 2016

A special meeting of the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou was held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Administration Building on Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Dist.	1	Clr. Sally Fraser
	2	Clr. Deborah Wadden
	4	Warden Ronnie Baillie
	5	Clr. Robert Parker
	6	Clr. Jim Turple
	7	Clr. David Parker
	8	Clr. Leonard Fraser
	9	Clr. Larry Turner
	10	Clr. Jamie Davidson
	11	Deputy Warden Andy Thompson
	12	Clr. Chester Dewar
	13	Clr. Randy Palmer
	14	Clr. Scott Johnston

ABSENT

	3	Clr. Edward MacMaster
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IN ATTENDANCE

Donn Fraser, Solicitor, MacIntosh, MacDonnell & MacDonald
Brian Cullen, CAO/Municipal Clerk-Treasurer
Karen E. Cornish, Deputy Municipal Treasurer
Carolyn MacIntosh, Deputy Municipal Clerk
Jane Johnson, Recording Secretary

WELCOME

Warden Baillie welcome Ms. Emily Pond, Municipal Affairs Advisor for Pictou County, Ms. Shannon Bennett and Ron Dauphine who also work for the Department Municipal Affairs.

CLOSED SESSION

Council met in closed session at 7:00 p.m. to discuss matters relating to contract negotiations.

OPEN SESSION

Council resumed in open session at 7:55 p.m.

WELCOME

Warden Baillie welcomed former Clr. Rose MacKenzie to the Council Chambers.

RESOLUTION - STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Clr. Wadden presented a resolution to Council as follows:

RESOLUTION
PRECONDITIONS/STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

WHEREAS the Municipality of the County of Pictou together with the Towns of Pictou, New Glasgow and Stellarton (the "Applicants") executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on municipal reform dated November 10, 2014 and subsequently amended on July 27, 2015, and on September 23, 2015;

AND WHEREAS the Applicants conditionally and voluntarily applied to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) on August 27, 2015 to amalgamate pursuant to Section 358 of the *Municipal Government Act*;

AND WHEREAS the Applicants agree that there are preconditions to the amalgamation (the "Preconditions") and that such Preconditions for each of the Applicants are fully contained within the MOU;

AND WHEREAS the MOU calls for the development of fact-based analysis to determine if Preconditions contained in the MOU can be met;

AND WHEREAS the conditional part of the application includes the ability of any of the Applicants to withdraw from the application by June 20, 2016 in the event that either the Preconditions have not been met, or in the opinion of the Applicant(s) their electorate have expressed a desire not to amalgamate;

AND WHEREAS the Steering Committee of the Applicants has concluded that the Preconditions have been met;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Council of the Municipality of the County of Pictou accept that the Preconditions have been met and approve the recommendations of the Steering Committee to proceed with the uncontested application subject to the outcome of public consultation.

DATED at Pictou, NS this 4th day of February, 2016.

(Sgd.) Deborah Wadden
Sally Fraser

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. S. Fraser that the preceding resolution be adopted as presented.

Clr. R. Parker informed Council that he was highly disappointed that Council cannot have a debate in open session like they did in closed session so people can be aware of what they are doing. He explained that it is not permitted by the Province because it is their document and it is not signed yet. He felt that this seems like a very secretive way to do business but it will be public when the document is signed tomorrow.

Warden Baillie pointed out that it is a contract between the municipal units and the Province.

Clr. R. Parker reported the resolution has to do with the MOU and it shows the pre-condition that the tax rates will not increase. According to the figures and the data, it shows the rates will not rise but in fact there will be a savings on rates. He has a problem with believing it because the figures are based on modelling and that has not worked well for us in the past, especially with the Wellness Center. He wants this to go to a plebiscite because the people have to decide. Clr. R. Parker quoted from the document, "at a minimum a status quo tax rating method can be continued" so it does not say we can continue to keep the tax rates the same. "In time as the new Municipality is able to realize the benefit of economies of scale and service level harmonization, it is anticipated there will be a growing number of opportunities to harmonize the tax rates between the former units." Clr. R. Parker pointed out if our rate is 81¢ plus a fire rate of 10 or 12¢ with the towns' rates a lot higher than that and you are going to harmonize them he did

not believe it could be done on economies of scale. This means the rates will be moved closer together and in order for that to happen he felt the County tax rates will increase. He admitted that there is a lot of good information in the document but he would be surprised if the pre-condition of the tax rate staying the same could be achieved.

Clr. D. Parker reported that it is very critical that people vote at the plebiscite and for him the threshold is 55% with at least a 40% turnout. If that does not happen in his district then he will be voting no because ultimately the people have to decide. He is looking forward to the day very soon when as much information as possible is out there to the public. Council has only received this information Monday evening and we were asked to make critical decisions in a very short timeframe. He is also concerned that the tax rates in the rural Municipality will go up significantly.

Clr. Dewar reported that he is not voting for this resolution because there are too many black and dark grey areas and if the residents in his area do not want it then he is not voting for it.

Clr. Turple reported that he is going to vote for these resolutions so that we see what transpires with the Letter of Intent. He stressed that it is very important that everyone get out to vote at the plebiscite on May 28th and he will vote as his residents ask him to vote depending on the percentage of yes or no votes in District #6.

Clr. L. Fraser pointed out that he hopes the discussion that takes place over the next few months, whether it is in the towns or the County, brings an understanding of how critical this vote is and what it means to everyone. We need to have a ballot that people understand so they know what they are voting for when it comes time to vote.

Deputy Warden Thompson thanked Warden Baillie and Clr. Wadden for all the hard work they put in on the Steering Committee as well as the staff. This is a "Made-in-Pictou County Solution" and we have a changing municipal landscape in Nova Scotia. In the next 5 years we know that some of these small towns are not going to survive and once that happens they are going to come to us.

Motion carried. (Nay Vote: Clr. Dewar)

RESOLUTION – LETTER OF INTENT

Clr. Wadden presented a resolution to Council as follows:

RESOLUTION LETTER OF INTENT

WHEREAS the Municipality of the County of Pictou together with the Towns of Pictou, New Glasgow and Stellarton (the "Applicants") conditionally and voluntarily applied to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) on August 27, 2015 to amalgamate per Section 358 of the *Municipal Government Act*,

AND WHEREAS the Applicants have since worked cooperatively with the Province of Nova Scotia to ensure a successful transition in the best interests of area residents and businesses of the Applicants and the Province;

AND WHEREAS the Applicants and the Province wish to present to the NSUARB an uncontested application at the Hearing on the Merits scheduled to begin on March 7, 2016;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Council of the Municipality of the County of Pictou approve the execution of the Letter of Intent between the Applicants and the Province of Nova Scotia.

DATED at Pictou, NS this 4th day of February, 2015.

(Sgd.) Deborah Wadden
Sally Fraser

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. Fraser that the preceding resolution be adopted as presented.

Clr. R. Parker reported the Letter of Intent involves numbers that are highly confidential so with that in mind all that we are left with is this carrot. There will be a fair amount of provincial dollars pumped into this County if we agree to move forward with the amalgamation of the 4 units. Sometimes we have to look closely at the carrots and determine if they are worth going for but we have to be very careful.

Clr. D. Parker stated that fear is a most powerful motivator and there is the fear that our taxes are going up. This is going to be a tough decision for a lot of people but at least 80% of the silent majority have no clue what is going on. He too wanted to thank the Warden Baillie, Clr. Wadden and staff for all the work they have done on this process. He informed Council that we have a declining population and commercial base as well as an aging population so there are some big challenges regardless of how this goes. Clr. D. Parker stated that he trusts the wisdom of the people and he is here to reflect their values and wishes.

Clr. L. Fraser reported that a lot of work went into this process but what scares him is 2 of the municipal units that should be in it are not in it. There is a lot of work to be done in the Municipality whatever happens here and hopefully the people who are sitting around the table when this happens are willing to step up to the plate and look after what is best for all the residents of Pictou County.

Clr. Wadden stated that as a member of the Steering Committee she is not going to go out and sell this package but will show the residents the fact-based information. It will be the residents who will make the decision and we will respect that but it is important the residents get out to vote on May 28th.

Clr. R. Parker expressed his opinion that it should not be our role to sell this but to present the information to the residents.

Clr. Dewar stated that he will not be out there selling this because he did not believe in fixing something that is not broken.

Motion carried. (Nay vote: Clr. Dewar)

Warden Baillie informed Council that the Letter of Intent will be signed tomorrow and filed with the UARB and will available on the Board's website for viewing. Starting next week we will be advertising our public meetings that will be held throughout the County. It is important to get the message out and information to the residents so on May 28th they can make a decision on the facts and not on assumptions.

ADJOURN

It was moved by Clr. Turple and seconded by Deputy Warden Thompson that the meeting adjourn.
Motion carried. (8:25 p.m.)

Ronald Baillie
Warden

Carolyn MacIntosh
Deputy Municipal Clerk