



**Minutes
Town of Westville
Committee of the Whole Meeting
Council Chambers
April 19, 2021- 6:00 pm**

1. Call To Order

Mayor White called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Territory and African Nova Scotian Acknowledgement

Mayor White read the Territory and African Nova Scotian Acknowledgement.

We were moved by yesterday's service and continue to offer condolence and support to those that have been effected by last years events.

3. Roll Call

Mayor Lennie White, Deputy Mayor Meghan Bragg, Councillor Mitchell MacGregor, Councillor Clarrie MacKinnon, Councillor Betty Jean Sutherland, Chief Administrative Officer Linda Brown, Recording Secretary Kristen Reed, Rae Gunn Regional Manager of Community Heritage and Culture, Cassie Manuel Inclusion and Accessibility Consultant, Paul Wills Chief Executive Officer of Municipal Finance Corporation, Ross MacDonald Municipal Advisor of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None

5. Presentations

a. Community Heritage and Culture Inclusion and Accessibility

Ms. Gunn explained that there are two grants available for Inclusion and Accessibility, which are relatively new and they are trying to increase the awareness of these grants. She then introduced Ms. Manuel to provide more details.

Ms. Manuel explained: Nova Scotia has the highest rate of people with disabilities in Canada. One in three people self identify as having at least one disability. The Province has released their multiyear Accessibility Plan, with the current focus being on Awareness and capacity, information and communication, buildings and infrastructure, employment and delivery of goods and services.

The two grants available are the Business ACCESS-Ability Program and Community ACCESS-Ability Program. They are intended to improve overall accessibility and create welcoming environments that persons with disabilities can access. The Business Program is for Businesses in Nova Scotia and the Community Program is for non-profit charities, municipalities, and Nova Scotian Mi'Kmaq Councils. They cover 2/3 of the cost up to a maximum amount.

The Categories for both Grants are:

- a.i.1. Built environment-* Construction/ renovation (Capped \$50,000)
Accessibility Certificate- Rick Hansen facility audit and certification from CSA (Capped \$20,000)
Examples-automatic door, ramp, accessible washroom
- a.i.2. Accessible Communication & Info*
Accessible website, signs, conversion of documents to Braille or other formats (Capped \$30,000)
- a.i.3. Accessible devices*
Moveable equipment such as adaptive switches, door levers and training on the devices (Capped \$30,000)
- a.i.4. Accessible transportation*
Improve transportation- convert vehicle, must be less than 2 years old. (Cap \$20,000)
- a.i.5. Universal Design, Capacity Building Courses*
Covers Training, tuition, hosting costs, promotion.
Examples are RHAC(provincial) Course 3 &4 or Reachability.

Links for more info:

<https://cch.novascotia.ca/business-access-ability-grant-program>
<https://cch.novascotia.ca/investing-our-future/community-funding-and-awards/community-access-ability-program>

Ms. Gunn explained they can also help people and support them with the applications.

b. Municipal Finance Corporation

Mr. Wills presented a debt service model for the Town in preparation for the Town's annual operating and capital budgets.

The model was developed in 2004 but has transferred into more of a sustainability test. It examines three years of actual data and the current year budgeted amounts. Election expenses are considered only in the year of an election. The estimates further out are not as accurate as they have more factors that can impact numbers.

Interest rate used is not connected to prime, it is the MFC rate. Debt repayment is based on the units history with them. Debt Service ratio over 30% is bad, and between 15% to 30% is a warning zone.

The model is able to show the impact of changes to costs and rates.

Other communities in Nova Scotia have been using this model for 3 to 5 years.

Councillor MacKinnon thanked Mr. Wills for his presentation. It was interesting to see that the tax rate has gone down over the past 13 years, and remained steady for the past few years. Westville has been at risk for a long time, being in the bottom third, acknowledging we need more in reserves and we don't get brownie points for keeping rates steady.

Mr. Wills agreed with needing more in reserves and that an incremental approach with year to year progress is the best way to achieve progress. There are 7 core best practices that can help, including maintaining an operating reserve of 20% of the Operating budget, and a capital reserve of 20% of the Capital budget.

Mayor White thanked Mr. Wills for his presentation. It is something the Council takes seriously and want facts before taking action. The model gives them a useful tool and helps with transparency. The Town will also take you up on your offer of assistance with this.

6. New/Unfinished Business

7. Next Meetings

- a. Regular Council Meeting**
Westville Council Chambers
April 26, 2021 – 6:00 pm

- b. Committee of the Whole**
Westville Council Chambers
May 17, 2021 – 6:00pm

8. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm.

Mayor: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Date Approved: _____