



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2020002

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RE: First step taken towards possible new multi-purpose community centre

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – Amherst town council has taken the first step towards a possible new multi-purpose centre for the community.

At its Jan. 27, 2020, council session, they directed staff to draft terms of reference for a consultant who would be assigned the task of developing a preliminary business case for such a centre.

Council also directed that under the terms of reference a consultant must consult with stakeholders, potential partners and funders, and the preliminary business case must include a preliminary project scope and initial cost estimates.

The motion directing staff to develop the terms of reference made it clear this is the very early stages in examining the potential of a new multi-purpose community centre for the community.

It also made it clear that a request for proposals for the consultant would not be issued until the terms of reference were approved by council. In addition, the motion indicated the cost of the consultant would be determined when the terms of reference are completed.

A staff report presented to council prior to their decision noted the town is competitive with the communities it compares itself to, such as Truro, New Glasgow and Bridgewater, when it comes to service levels, schools, transportation and quality of life. However, Amherst has not kept pace with other amenities like a multi-purpose community centre. The report also noted the town's arena and library are getting old and will need to be replaced sooner rather than later.



The report also noted Amherst is well positioned geographically in the Maritimes to host major cultural and sporting events, but lacks the facilities to do so.

Steps taken to combat climate emergency

Council took action during the meeting to combat the climate emergency it declared last June when it passed two motions it believes will lead to concrete reduction in the town's green-house-gas emissions.

In the preamble before the motions were presented, council noted it wasn't alone when it declared a climate emergency last June as many other municipalities across the country made the same declaration.

They also recognized the leadership the Amherst Youth town council has shown in expressing their opinions on this matter and noted it was at their encouragement that council first considered making the declaration.

The preamble also noted that even before the declaration, Amherst has been a leader in "green initiatives." It was the first town in Nova Scotia to convert to LED lights, developed of an Active Transportation Plan, adopted renewable energy sources when it built its sewage treatment plant by installing a wind turbine at the facility and is putting solar panels on the stadium, firehall and police station.

In addition, the town is a partner in the Nova Scotia Power Inc. smart grid energy implementation project and has implemented a property assessed clean energy bylaw.

Council then passed a resolution that will see the Town of Amherst join the Partners for Climate Protection Program.

The partnership is a network of more than 300 municipal governments that are committed to reducing green-house-gas emissions and taking action on climate change. The program is free and provides a five-milestone framework for reducing green-house-gas emissions in the community and is supported by program tools, resources and funding opportunities.

Council also passed a motion authorizing the CAO to enter into an agreement with EfficiencyOne to hire an onsite energy manager who will provide the technical expertise required to increase corporate energy efficiency.

The agreement with EfficiencyOne will be a two-year term.

During the contract, the onsite energy manager will identify and implement energy projects, update the town's 2010 emissions inventory and assist in developing a community energy



strategy.

Councillors noted that while the primary objective of the contract is to find ways to reduce the town's carbon footprint, it knows that several other municipalities in the province have had similar contracts and have experienced some savings.

The town currently spends \$800,000 to \$900,000 per year in non-renewable energy costs.

The costs of the contract with EfficiencyOne will be \$100,000 per year. It will include all employment related costs, will be funded from operating reserves and therefore won't impact tax rates. The cost of the contract will also be offset by direct energy cost savings that are not reinvested in energy retrofits.

The agreement with Energy One will be signed immediately and the onsite energy manager will begin work in April.

Mayor David Kogon noted that climate change is real and that we owe it to our future citizens to be leaders in addressing it.

"Unfortunately, it's a fact that addressing climate change can't happen without costs," Kogon said. "Council is attempting to do this work in a financially sustainable way by using reserves to seed the work of the onsite energy manager and applying for senior government assistance when the opportunity arises."

Second reading given to land-use bylaw amendment

Council approved the second reading of an amendment to the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land-Use Bylaw that rezones 13 West Pleasant St., to a commercial zone from an industrial zone.

The amendment will allow the owner of the former Scotsburn Dairy building to locate commercial uses, such as a barbershop, on the property.

The amendment was recommended by the Planning Advisory Committee and was previously the subject of a public participation meeting and a public hearing, at which no member of the public attended. It passed first reading on Dec. 16, 2019.



Capital budget shortlist

Council approved a short list of capital projects of just over \$1.5 million.

Early approval of the projects is anticipated to improve the procurement process and result in earlier completion of major capital projects. It is also anticipated that earlier procurement of these capital projects will result in financial savings for the town.

The funding from these projects comes from either long-term borrowing or gas tax revenues.

The projects include \$713,000 for the water department for the replacement of a water main on Albion St., between Croft and Queen streets, the purchase of a wellfield generator and a new service truck.

Also included is \$367,951 for the placement of solar panels on the firehall and police station, \$663,000 for the paving of several streets and \$60,000 to install a new sewer main on Willow Street Trail and to replace a storm sewer on Academy St., between Spring and Queens streets. The list also includes \$170,000 for several sidewalks.

The streets to be paved include:

- Albion Street, between Croft and Queens streets
- Academy Street, between Queen and Spring streets
- West Pleasant Street, under the subway
- Clifton and Edgewood streets
- Chamberlain Street, from the CNR tracks to Newton Street
- Tupper Boulevard, from the northern town boundary to the TIR office driveway
- Flemming Street, Senator Avenue, Smith Street, Mission Street, Centennial Court and Townsview Court
- Clifford Street, between Rupert and Clarence streets
- Agnew Street, between Rupert and Clarence streets
- Acadia Street, between Agnew and Prince Arthur streets.

The sidewalk projects include:

- Academy Street, between Spring and Queen Streets
- Dickey Brook Trail, from Donald Avenue to Charles Street (gravel trail)
- Upper Church Street, from Robert Angus Drive to the town boundary
- Willow Street Trail, east of Abbey Road (gravel trail)
- Hickman Street, between West Pleasant and Park streets

Additional items for the capital budget will be presented to council in the near future.



Forestry Committee Appointments

Council approved the appointment of Deputy-Mayor Sheila Christie to the ad hoc Future of Forestry Advisory Committee. Her alternate will be Mayor David Kogon.

Community Support Grants Policy amendment

Council approved an amendment to its Community Support Grants Policy. It will give those who receive an 'A' Fresh Start Initiative grant 12 months, after the approval date, to plan and execute the event.

Athletic Achievers Policy amendment

Council approves an amendment to its Athletic Achievers Policy. It will allow the town to recognize those who received a silver/bronze medal at a national or international competition. Previously, only gold medal winners at that level were recognized.

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Direct Inquiries to:
Tom McCoag
Corporate Communications Officer
902-694-6265
tmccoag@amherst.ca

