



## MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MR# 2020012**

**DATE: 2 March 2020**

**RE: Development agreement given go ahead by Amherst town council**

**AMHERST, Nova Scotia** – The owner of 2 Abbott St. will be able to put a detached dwelling on the property following council's decision on Feb. 24, 2020, to approve the second reading of a development agreement between the town and owner.

The property, bounded by Station and Abbott streets and Douglas Avenue, is situated in the Downtown Zone, a zone where detached dwellings are only permitted if a development agreement is obtained.

Prior to the second reading, the development agreement was the subject of a public participation opportunity that was held on Oct. 10, 2019. Only one member of the public other than the applicant attended the meeting and that person spoke in favour of the development agreement.

Shortly after, the town's Planning Advisory Committee recommended the development agreement proceed and council passed the first reading of the agreement on Nov. 25, 2019. This was followed by a public hearing on Jan. 27, which no member of the public attended.

### **Amendments to Land-Use Bylaw**

Council gave second reading to three minor amendments to the sign regulations contained in the town's Land-Use Bylaw.

The amendments would prohibit election signs on public lands or right-of-ways, but would allow tourism-related signs ordered by a government body to be erected in all zones.

The amendments would also increase the size of signs allowed in residential zones from two



square metres to 6.5 square metres and states that off-site signs are not permitted in residential zones.

The amendments were previously the subject of a public participation opportunity on Oct. 10, 2019, following which the Planning Advisory Committee recommended the approval of the amendments.

Council passed the first reading on Nov. 25, 2019 and a public hearing was held on Jan. 27, 2020. No member of the public attended the participation opportunity or the public meeting.

### **Returning officer appointed**

Town Clerk Kim Jones was appointed by council as the town's returning officer for the upcoming municipal election, which takes place this October. Council also appointed Deputy-Clerk Natalie LeBlanc as the assistant returning officer.

### **Volunteer of the Year**

Council approved a staff recommendation to name Michael Wilson as the Town of Amherst's Volunteer of the Year and Rajan McKenny as the town's Youth Volunteer of the Year. They will represent Amherst at the provincial recognition ceremony in April.

### **Accessibility Committee**

Council approved the terms of reference for its newly created Advisory Committee on Accessibility, which was established as a result of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act that requires towns to have such committees.

The terms of reference will direct the work of the committee. They identify the chair and outline the membership, purpose and anticipated outcomes of the committee.

In keeping with the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, at least half of the membership will be people with disabilities or people who represent people with disability organizations.

### **Copp Lane renamed**

Copp Lane will become Ernie Lane following council's granting of the name change during its February council session.

Council initially received a request in January to change Copp Lane to E.J. Mills Lane in recognition of the late Ernie Mills, a local craftsman and tradesman who contributed greatly to the town. The request was rejected in order to avoid duplication as the town already had two streets with the name Mill in it.



At the time, staff were directed to see if the Mills family found Ernie Lane acceptable. The family indicated it was.

There is only one home on the street that would be affected by the name change and it belongs to the Mills family, which initiated the initial request to change the street's name. The change will take effect on Sept. 1, 2020.

### **Temporary borrowing resolution**

Council approved a temporary borrowing resolution for slightly more than \$1.2 million.

The main purpose in passing the resolution now is to obtain ministerial approval so the town can borrow funds – if needed – for capital projects in either the spring or fall debenture issues.

The motion does not mean the town will borrow money for the capital projects, which included the Willow Street upgrades, purchase of a new backhoe and fixing the Community Credit Unit Business Innovation Centre roof. Nor does it commit the town to long-term financing.

### **Mandatory contribution area rate**

Council approved a mandatory provincial contribution area rate of 39.7 cents per \$100 of assessment.

The rate is 0.8 cents lower than the 2019-2020 rate. It will collect \$2,122,017, which is \$4,488 less than last year.

The area rate, which accounts for almost 25 per cent of the total residential tax rate, provides funding for education, assessment, corrections, housing and library services, all services that the province mandates the amount to be paid by the town.

### **Sewer Rates**

Council approved the sewer rates for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, which will remain the same as they were the last year.

Residential customers will pay 99 cents per cubic metre of metered water consumption, while the commercial-institutional rate will be 49 cents per cubic metre of metered water consumption.

Property owners with metered water service will pay a quarterly base charge (depending on meter size) of:

- 5/8" meter - \$18
- 3/4" meter - \$27
- 1" meter - \$43.75
- 1 ½" meter - \$86
- 2" meter - \$136.25
- 3" meter - \$271.25
- 4" meter - \$500.



Mobile home park owners shall pay \$178.53 per dwelling unit per annum for non-metered customers in unmetered mobile home parks.

### **Water treatment facility rate**

Council set the wastewater treatment uniform charge at \$72 for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The rate remains unchanged from last year.

The rate affects about 486 unmetered mobile homes in land-leased communities that are located within town boundaries.

The town uses the money raised by the uniform charge to help pay a portion of the debenture principal and interest payments for the town's wastewater treatment facility.

The charge will be due on Sept. 30, 2020.

### **Solid waste rates**

Council approved a solid waste management uniform charge of \$185 for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

The funds are used to cover the cost of solid waste management (\$591,795) and affect the 3,205 residential customers within town boundaries who live in residential premises that have fewer than four dwelling units.

Council also directed staff to complete an alternative fee structure in the near future that would include residential customers living in buildings with more than four dwelling units.

### **Physician retention**

Council approved a \$500 expenditure in support of the local physician retention effort.

The money will be added to \$15,700 from the province, \$1,500 from the Municipality of Cumberland and \$200 from the Town of Oxford that will be used for local physician retention.

### **Appointment of auditors**

Council approved the appointment of the accounting firm Jorgensen and Bickerton as the town's auditors for the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

### **Blanch resignation**

Coun. Jason Blanch advised council that he was resigning, effective Feb. 29, as he is moving to his family's home in Nappan.

Town Clerk Kim Jones advised council that while the Municipal Elections Act allowed council to call a special election, one was not needed because the act states a special election need not



be called if it falls within six months of a regular municipal election, which takes place this year in October

It is estimated that a special election would cost \$40,000 to 50,000. Council will make a final decision on the special election issue at its March regular meeting of council.

### **Entrance signage**

Earlier in the day, Amherst town council's committee of the whole endorsed a draft signage bylaw for the Fort Lawrence entrance into Amherst.

The town has been working with the Entrance Development Committee and the Municipality of Cumberland for several months to improve the look and feel of the Fort Lawrence area between the Nova Scotia Welcome Centre and the Amherst town boundary.

The committee is now ready to submit a draft bylaw to county council for approval. While the Town of Amherst has no official role to play its approval, the committee asked the town to give its endorsement.

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