



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2021064

DATE: 21 September 2021

RE: Requests for three community support grants recommended for approval

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – Amherst town council’s committee of the whole is recommending the council consider approving three community support grants when it meets in regular session on Monday, Sept. 27, 2021.

The recommendation was made during a committee meeting held on Monday, Sept. 27, 2021.

The requests came from the West Highlands Home and School, which is looking to add to the school’s playground equipment (\$4,000), Amherst Artisan Gallery, which is seeking support for its When Elvis Met Jerry Lee, Johnny and Carl music festival (\$3,000) and Maggie’s Place, which is seeking funds to support the local Trail for Treats Halloween event (\$750).

Funding, if approved at the upcoming council session, would come from the current Community Support Grant budget.

‘A’ Fresh Start Initiative

The committee endorsed sending a staff proposal to cancel the fall portion of the ‘A’ Fresh Start Initiative to the Sept. 27 council session for approval.

The staff proposal was made after zero applications were received for the fall portion of the initiative despite it being advertised on social media and radio.

The committee also directed staff to review the town’s community support grant policy and bring back a recommendation on whether to hold one ‘A’ Fresh Start Initiative a year, instead of two, to the October committee of the whole session.





Crosswalk flags

The committee directed staff to conduct a six-month pilot project that would see crosswalk flags used at the crosswalk located at 260 Church Street (near Gables Lodge and Pharmasave) and possibly other crosswalks within town boundaries.

The decision to conduct the pilot project came after several councillors observed several near misses at the crosswalk. It is hoped the flags will make those wishing to cross the street more visible and therefor reduce the number of near misses.

The pilot project will also help determine if a crosswalk flag policy should be developed for the community.

Scholarship and Bursary Policy Amendment

The committee approved sending a staff recommendation to amend the town's scholarship and bursary policy to the Sept. 27, 2021, council meeting for approval.

The amendment would remove the reference to the W.A. Reid Memorial School Trust Fund from the policy because the fund is no longer administered by the town. It is now administered by the Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education.

User Fee Policy amendment

The committee approved a staff recommendation to send an amendment to the town's User Fee Policy to the Sept. 27, 2021, council session for approval.

The amendment would correct an error in the policy. It currently indicates HST is to be added to sanitary and storm sewer connection fees. It should have stated those connection fees were exempt from the HST.

There will be no financial implication due to this change in wording as staff have not been adding HST to the connection fees.

Debenture Request

The committee sends a staff recommendation, which asks the Municipal Finance Corporation to issue a \$390,000 debenture to the town this fall, to the Sept. 27, 2021, council session for approval.

The borrowed funds will be used to cover the costs of the Albion Street water main replacement. The resolution also sets the maximum interest rate at 5.5 per cent and





states the term is not to exceed 15 years. The annual debenture principal and interest payments would start in 2022.

Municipalities requiring debenture funds from the corporation in the fall of 2021 are required to make a written commitment by Oct. 1, 2021. The process followed by the committee and recommended by staff is the established process for borrowing from the Municipal Finance Corporation.

As with all borrowing by a municipality for capital purposes, it will also require the approval of the Minister of Community Affairs.

Adjustments to Capital Budget Funding

The committee sent a staff recommendation to adjust this year's capital budget funding to the Sept. 27, 2021, council meeting for approval.

The adjustments would see the water operating capital from revenue increased to \$114,497.16 from \$40,000, the general operating capital from revenue increased to \$606,018.17 from \$575,000, withdrawing \$591,000 from the operating reserve to fund the new pumper fire truck and withdrawing \$271,271.93 from the operating reserve's stabilization reserve to fund the stadium solar project.

The increases in the water operating capital from revenue and the general operating capital from revenue were enabled due to surpluses in the water and general operating budgets at the end of the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Transferring the extra funds to those sections of the budget enables the town to forgo or reduce long-term borrowing for several projects and enables the town to save about \$12,000 in debenture interest payments.

A year-end surplus in the general operating budget also enables the town to cover the costs of purchasing the new \$591,000 fire truck without having to incur long-term debt. The move saves the town about \$125,000 in interest costs over a 15-year debenture.

The adjustment to the solar project clarifies that the funding for the project comes from the operating reserve's stabilization reserve. This was not clearly indicated when the budget was set.





Zamboni purchase

The committee approved a staff recommendation that changes to the way a new Zamboni for the Amherst Stadium is purchased be forwarded to the Sept. 27, 2021, council meeting for approval.

The change would see the \$200,000 cost of purchasing the Zamboni be covered by a transfer from operating reserves instead of long-term debt. The transfer to funding from the operating reserves is a direct result of the town having a surplus at the end of the 2020-21 fiscal year.

By forgoing the use of long-term debt to fund the purchase of the Zamboni, the town will save about \$43,000 in debt interest costs over the next 15 years.

Year-end operating reserve transfer to general operating

The committee approved sending a staff recommendation to transfer \$14,378.17 from its operating reserves to its general operating budget to the Sept. 27 council session for approval.

The transfer enables the town to cover a \$14,378.17 deficit in the solid waste department. Covering the deficit from the operating reserves keeps the solid waste budget from affecting the general tax rate.

Capital Funding Adjustment – fire station parking lot

The committee approved sending a staff recommendation to increase the general operating budget capital from revenue by \$80,000 to the Sept. 27, 2021, council session for approval.

The increase in funding will pay for the paving of the Amherst Fire Department's parking lot and comes from a \$296,000 surplus that was reported in the first quarter of the 2021-22 fiscal year. Staff believe funding the paving from the surplus is a positive use of surplus funds.

Recommend signing of agreement

The committee endorsed sending a staff recommendation authorizing the CAO to sign a contribution agreement and a memorandum of understanding that facilitate the





implementation of a Tactical Placemaking Program to the Sept. 27, 2021, council meeting for approval.

The program was created by the Nova Scotia Business and Economic Labour Coalition as part of their plan to kick start economic recovery following the COVID-19 shutdown. The program supports community-led projects that encourage people to gather and connect downtown, supports economic recovery and invites increased visitation to downtowns.

More details will be released once the agreement and memorandum of understanding are approved and signed.

Skate Park Update

The committee receives an update on installing a shelter and outdoor drinking fountain at the skate park located next to the Amherst Stadium.

The report indicated it would cost about \$6,400, if town crews did the work. It is estimated it would cost an additional \$6,000 if the town had to hire contractors.

The report noted the project will have to be completed outside regular working hours in order not to interfere with capital projects and maintenance work currently being carried out by town staff.

Funds would come from the town's unrestricted operation reserve if the project is approved at a later date.

The committee approved the project in principle and directed staff to defer the project until the spring.

Policy and Bylaw Review update

20 Sept 21 Committee of the Whole – The committee receives an update on its policy and bylaw review. It recommends that vaccine guidelines, the community support grant policy, personnel policy, hiring policy, dangerous and unsightly premises policy and the noise bylaw be the priorities for the next two or three months.

The committee was also informed council that it will be receiving recommendations in the near future to repeal some polices that are outdated or redundant.

-30-



TOWN OF Amherst NOVA SCOTIA

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

