

**VILLAGE OF NEW MINAS**  
**REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING**

**FEBRUARY 10, 2014**

**7:00 p.m.,**

**Conference Room, Louis Millett Community Complex (LMCC)**

The regular monthly meeting of the Village Commission of New Minas was held on Monday, February 10, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of the LMCC.

**In attendance:**

Chair Dave Chaulk  
Vice-Chair Maynard Stevens  
Commissioner Mary Munroe  
Commissioner James Redmond  
Clerk Treasurer Terry Silver

**Also in Attendance:**

Councillor Jim Winsor, District 11  
Mr. Brian Desloges, Manager Protection Services, Kings County  
Ms. Ann Rogers, Resident  
John Ansara, Recreation Director  
Mr. Tom MacEwan, CAO, Kings County

**CALL TO ORDER, Chair Chaulk**

Chair Chaulk called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Chair Chaulk stated that the Village Commission and staff are all saddened to have lost Commissioner Dean Hatt. He stated:

*“Dean was a true gentleman and one of the nicest people I have ever met. I am a better person for having known and worked with Dean, and for sure the Village of New Minas is much better off having had Dean as a Commissioner. Dean always had the best interests of the people of New Minas at heart. On behalf of the Village Commission, I want to say ‘Thank You’ to Dean. His efforts are very much appreciated. Everyone agreed that Dean will be deeply missed by us all.*

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA: February 10, 2014**

**It was moved by Vice-Chair Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Munroe, that the Agenda for the regular Commission meeting of February 10, 2014 be approved with the following addition: under “Other Added Items – a) Call for By-Election”. MOTION CARRIED**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Regular Commission Meeting January 13, 2014

**It was moved by Commissioner Redmond, seconded by Vice-Chair Stevens, that the minutes of the regular meeting of January 13, 2014 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED**

**BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

a) Sale of Civic Center – Update

Terry Silver advised there is no update for this meeting.

b) LED Lighting Program – Update

Terry Silver advised that staff is currently working on the RFP to call for tenders. She will forward the draft RFP as soon as it is ready.

c) Kings Partnership Steering Committee Village membership – Update

Chair Chauk stated there is no update on the Villages' request for membership on the KPSC.

d) Fire Department Capital – Update

Chair Chauk stated that County CAO Tom MacEwan will be making a presentation to the Commission later in the meeting, and everyone agreed that this would be a good time to have an update on the Fire Department Capital item.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

a) Recreation Director's Report – John Ansara

The Commissioners reviewed the Recreation Director's monthly report. John Ansara was invited to comment on the past month's activities and his report. He stated that he had made a presentation to the New Minas Sunrise Rotary Club on the Splash Park project, and he will be meeting Tuesday, Feb 11<sup>th</sup> with the New Minas Lions' Club. He stated things in the Rec Department are pretty standard for this time of the year, and he is extremely busy filling out grant applications.

**It was moved by Commissioner Redmond, seconded by Commissioner Munroe that the report of the Recreation Director be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED**

b) New Minas Water Commission Report – Vice-Chair Stevens

Vice-Chair Stevens stated there was no meeting of the New Minas Water Commission since the last Village Commission due to inclement weather.

➤ Governance Regional Sewer Agreements – agreement in principle

Vice-Chair Stevens stated that the Regional Sewer Committee has received a recommendation from the Governance Committee to hire a consultant to review and produce new Agreements for the members. The Regional Sewer Committee is asking each member for support in principle to hire the consultant for this task. He referred the Commissioners to a report submitted by Terry Silver.

**It was moved by Vice-Chair Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Munroe to advise the Regional Sewer Committee that the Village Commission of New Minas is in agreement, in principle, to proceeding with a study to develop new Agreements and Terms of Reference for the partners in the Regional Sewer Facility. MOTION CARRIED**

c) New Minas Planning Advisory Committee

Commissioner Munroe stated there was no meeting of the New Minas Planning Advisory Committee.

**NEW BUSINESS**

a) Revision of Payroll Policy

Terry Silver referred the Commission to discussions that had taken place last summer regarding issues that had developed around a section in the Payroll Policy (Salary Scale), where casual employees were to receive a 50 cent an hour increase, if eligible, for returning to work for the Village. She stated the problem had occurred because the Salary Scale showed that casual employees would receive minimum wage, but there was nothing to deal with the return bonus in the policy.

Terry drew the Commission's attention to the changes proposed by staff in the Payroll Policy.

**It was moved by Commissioner Redmond, seconded by Vice-Chair Stevens that the revised Payroll Policy be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED**

**OTHER ADDED ITEMS**

a) Call for By-Election

The Commissioners agreed that it is difficult for them to discuss this item at this time, but unfortunately, Part XVIII of the MGA – Villages dictates that a By-Election must take place within 30 days of a vacancy occurring, therefore, a By-Election must be called at this meeting to accommodate the nomination day and election day process.

**It was moved by Commissioner Redmond, seconded by Commissioner Munroe that a by-election be called for March 12, 2014. MOTION CARRIED**

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION PERIOD**

Mr. Jim Winsor, Councillor, District 11 – Councillor Winsor spoke about the County's reinstating the County's Planning Advisory Committee. He stated that he believes that the New Minas Planning Advisory Committee will be re-named to the former New Minas Area Advisory Committee.

Councillor Winsor stated that he and other Councillors recently met with Hon. Keith Irving, the MLA and the discussion centered around transportation/roads. He was advised that the stretch

of road from Greenwich to Coldbrook is very high priority. He also advised Mr. Irving on the following, pertaining to Highway 101 issues:

- a) Highway 101 between exits 11 and 12 has the most traffic of any other stretch in the valley;
- b) Highway 1 in the New Minas area has the most traffic of any other section other than Highway 101.
- c) The Village feels the Granite Drive Connector Road will alleviate traffic and will freely-route shopping traffic;
- d) The Village boundary expansion was premised for the Granite Drive extension, and it is very important for the Village.

Councillor Winsor stated that two Councillors agreed strongly that the County as a whole will benefit from the Granite Drive extension, and he agrees with this and feels it is critical.

Tom MacEwan, CAO for the Municipality of the County of Kings, joined the meeting at this time.

### **PRESENTATION – Tom MacEwan, CAO Municipality of the County of Kings re Fire Services Capital**

Chair Chaulk welcomed Mr. Tom MacEwan and invited him to do a presentation on the Fire Services Capital.

Tom explained he would like to advise the Commissioners on the County's proposal to work through the operating and capital requirements for the County's 13 Fire Departments. He stated there is a wide-assortment of funding scenarios, and he and Brian Desloges have worked on this for quite some time to come up with a reasonable plan to deal with current funding issues, as well as those that were identified in the 2012/2013 and 2006 fire studies.

He stated that it was determined by the fire chiefs in those studies that funding through the current structure is inefficient and ineffective. The County of Kings' ratepayers fund over \$4M - \$2.6M for operating; \$1.4M for Capital. There is an expectation that the ratepayers should receive the same level of service, regardless of where they reside. Fire departments in different areas receive different funding.

Tom stated that Brian Desloges has a history of being in a Fire Department, and Tom was able to have a view first-hand of a big barn fire. He stated he was very impressed and amazed at the process – all the Fire Departments were there. It is his goal to make sure all departments are equal. He stated the departments themselves have some boundary issues (with fire districts), and cited an example of how these issues are affecting the better good of the community. He stated the issue of the fire districts presents something else that has to be dealt with.

Tom further explained the process of funding operating through the County's fire grants policy. He stated he has discovered that in most cases these operating grants have little to do with what it actually costs a fire department of operate. As an example, he stated that mutual aid is

not included in any calculations in the operating grants, even though there are obviously related expenses. And some remote fire departments have very limited resources. So, back in 2006/2007, meetings with Fire Chiefs, County reps, and Villages reps resulted in the study, and the conclusion that there was inequity and inefficiencies in the operating grants. Changes were made at that time, but Tom and Brian feel there are still problems, because there is not a unified approach being used to determine what each department receives.

There was a proposal to the Fire Chiefs to look at putting together a system where the fire departments prepare budgets and submit them to the County for operating grants. This required fire departments to turn their minds to the actual costs, (as opposed to some estimated costs eg: so much per vehicle, per volunteer, etc.), and to advise the County of just what those exact costs are. Tom explained that there is currently only 2/3 money available for the grants requested (\$40K available/\$60K requested).

Tom stated that the County currently has agreements with Kentville and Wolfville Town fire departments, and he is suggesting that the County Fire Departments have similar agreements. He advised that he and Brian Desloges will be meeting with all of the 13 County fire departments to discuss this. He also stated that they are only making the suggestion; if there are other options proposed that are agreeable to everyone, they would gladly consider them. He said they have no intention to cut fire department funding costs; in fact, there are some things that are currently not covered in the operating grants – important things such as Workers Comp and disability insurance.

Chair Chaulk asked if there is general agreement among the Fire Chiefs with regards to the operating plan. Tom stated that most all of the Fire Chiefs agree with the plan in principle, and again stated they are going to each department for feedback.

Commissioner Munroe asked how the money raised by Fire Departments will affect the plan, and Tom advised that this money belongs to the Fire Departments and will not come into play at all; if Fire Departments want to volunteer to raise money, that's fine, but if they don't want to or can't, they shouldn't have to. Brian Desloges stated that most Fire Departments do not use their own fundraising money for operating costs.

Commissioner Munroe asked if the standards for each department will be the same. Tom stated there are three different levels: rural, urban and suburban, and there are standards for each of these levels. Tom explained that the operating expenses (grants) come from the County's general tax rate (that equates to the \$2.4M), and the cost is spread out over all the tax payers in the County's mill rate.

Commissioner Redmond stated that when Brian spoke at the previous meetings about the 6.5¢/\$100, it certainly seemed that ratepayers in the district of Fire Departments whose volunteers work very hard to keep costs down through fundraising efforts would be supplementing those Fire Departments who do not put any effort into it at all. He said those in the New Minas FD district are currently paying 4.25% (referring to the Capital Grants), and

many Fire Chiefs agree with him that this new process will be unfair to those departments. Tom stated that each Fire Department would prepare a five-year capital plan to present to him. The capital rate would then be determined for each budget year, and Council would be presented with the information to make the decision on the rate. He cautioned everyone that the 6.5 cents was just an example.

Commissioner Redmond stated that he is very concerned that the rate will go up, and those in New Minas will be supplementing other areas. He worries that there will be no incentive to fundraise for funds. Tom replied that the submitted capital budgets would determine the rate on a year-to-year basis, and providing a 5-year capital plan will enable fire departments to have a plan for capital purchases. He stated that everyone in the County is subsidizing the operating grants for each of the 13 fire departments, because it is funded through the general tax rate, which every property owner pays, so this capital proposal is based on the same principle.

Tom went on to say that this is the same process they are recommending for the capital grants: instead of some departments going to the public for permission to levy a fire district tax, they would go through the budgeting process and present to the County. Once approved, each Fire Department would receive its own funds by way of a cheque from the County, and then proceed to purchase their capital equipment from these funds. Tom noted that currently the ratepayers that show up to a Fire Department's AGM could vote down the fire capital rate, and potentially prohibit them from levying any capital tax in a given year, and he stated this has actually happened. This process would eliminate the need to go to the public to establish a specific tax rate, and he is suggesting the County create a bylaw for this purpose.

Tom stated that the budgets will be developed by the Fire Chiefs, and the chiefs will go to Tom or Tom and Brian to review, and once all the submissions are in, a rate will be determined for Council's approval. He stated that these are public funds and the County has to be fiscally responsible – all Fire Departments must have what they need, and some currently do not and have no way of getting what they need under the current system. He said there is a misconception that the County wants to take over fire departments, and he wanted to make it perfectly clear that it is not their intention to do any such thing; they do not have the ability to take over fire departments and have no intention of doing so.

Commissioner Redmond stated that when New Minas calls for an area rate, and it is approved, the County places their fire charge on the County tax bill in the fire district. The charge from the County for this is 4%.

Tom explained that the County's role in all this is to collect the fees based on the budgets from each fire department and to disburse the funds to the Fire Departments. The County owns nothing. He stated that Fire Departments must be mindful of a fair process, and to understand what other needs are throughout the County. He said he can see the potential for, as an example, every fire department putting expensive equipment in their capital budget in the same year, and they would be asked to stagger purchases to make it more reasonable for the ratepayers. It is very important for Fire Departments to be fair and present their budgets well. If

there is a difficult year, the decision to fund and not to fund in that year would obviously be determined by need.

Chair Chaulk stated that from what he has heard so far, this all seems to be reasonable, but he also understands why feathers are being ruffled. He said the Village does not own the New Minas Fire Department, but his first responsibility is to the people of New Minas, and is concerned that giving the final decision to Council could potentially be detrimental to the people who are currently well served by the Village Commission and the New Minas Fire Department. Tom stated that these concerns could be easily dealt with in a bylaw. He pointed out something that everyone can count on: any disruption to the ability of fire departments to fight fires would be seen by the public as a poor choice. He said he has confidence that Council would make the right decisions.

Commissioner Redmond stated that when New Minas started its fire department, it was agreed that if the fire department could no longer supply services, the assets would be turned over to the Village. He asked what happens to assets purchased after this new plan comes into effect if they are purchased through the general tax rate? Do they belong to all the departments because all ratepayers have "paid" for them? Jim pointed out that New Minas is in the position where 90% of the money collected comes from people living in the Village. The NMVFD is an incorporated entity and the terms are within the constitution of the body. Tom stated that in his position as CAO for the County, he is not permitted to speak on legal matters. He stated that when some fire departments are required to make large capital purchases they have to borrow money, and these loans must be guaranteed by the County of Kings. If a Fire Department should default on the payments, the County would be required to make the payments.

Commissioner Redmond stated the NMVFD currently raises \$80K voluntarily, and because of this, can keep their rate down to 4.25¢/\$100 of assessment. Chair Chaulk asked what would stop them from continuing to fundraise. Commissioner Redmond stated they work very hard fundraising to keep the capital rate down – would it be expected they would do this if their capital money is being divvied up amongst other fire departments?

Chair Chaulk asked if Council has the right to impose this plan through a bylaw, even if they don't get the approval of the 13 fire departments. Tom replied the short answer is "yes", but they couldn't stop Fire Departments from also going to their districts for an additional area rate (the Act allows them to do so). He stated that if this were to happen, it is always possible that someone from the County could attend such a public meeting and advise those present that Council feels the amount being billed within the County's bylaw is adequate.

Discussion then took place with regard to response time and procedure (and fire district issues). Chair Chaulk asked if he can assume that, theoretically, the closest department would be the first to be called to respond to the incident. Brian Desloges affirmed this. He said they have maps, and timing is critical. Chair Chaulk asked about scenarios where there could be "turf wars", and an officer takes command, it's not his/her jurisdiction, etc., etc.. Tom stated that this

really does not come into play with the funding issue. Chair Chaulk stated he would hate to see these turf wars to worsen. Tom stated it only makes sense that whichever fire department is closest to the location of the incident (fire, accident, etc.,) should be the one that responds first. Then when the Fire Department with jurisdiction arrives on scene the incident would be turned over to that FD.

Brian Desloges emphasized that fire fighters in the County provide a professional service and everyone knows how it works. Commissioner Redmond stated that it is critical that each fire truck/department is in sync, because if one fire truck is out of place during a major fire, it can ruin the whole fire command scene.

Vice-Chair Stevens stated he, too, has concerns that County Council has the final say on how the budgets and ultimately funding is approved, particularly those who are not fire fighters and those who do not know how to put budgets together. Tom responded by saying that Council is approving the overall rate; it will be his job to scrutinize the presented budgets from the chiefs and to advise Council. Brian stated that Councils, Commissions and Fire Departments are all trying to do a good job, and this is an attempt to put everyone on the same level. Furthermore, he stated, everyone will have a chance to present to Council. He noted that Council has rejected one budget where a fire chief was being paid. He said in his opinion, it is very important for fire departments to maintain their independence; they are just recommending a tool to allow them all the same opportunity.

Chair Chaulk stated he does not disagree with the theory, and the Commission must look out for the best interests of New Minas. He asked if there would be a guarantee that the money required by the New Minas FD will go to the New Minas FD. He agrees that all fire departments should have equality and feels this would, hopefully, eliminate the disparity. Tom stated the fire departments will be treated equally and fairly. Discussion took place on hypothetical situations where one fire department over another would be requiring more or less. Tom stated that there will be a need for co-operation and co-ordination, and Council will determine whose needs will be addressed first. Chair Chaulk cautioned that over a long period of time, the Village Commission would not want to be constantly subsidizing other fire departments if some just can't manage their own departments.

Commissioner Munroe asked for timeline: Tom advised that the discussion on the Capital funding program is on-going, while 2014/2015 is the transition year for the operating budgets.

Chair Chaulk thanked Tom MacEwan for doing an excellent job stating his case. He stated it is good to have the dialogue, and hopefully, if this process goes through, everyone will be satisfied with the outcome.

#### **PUBLIC DISCUSSION – continued**

Tom MacEwan stated that the Kings Partnership Steering Committee has met and the County gave notice they would like to have a review of the Committee's terms of reference to increase

their members by 3 (in response to the Villages' request). The Towns all responded that they did not support this. Tom said that the item will likely not be on the next meeting agenda (March), but he expects it to be discussed at the following meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**It was moved by Vice-Chair Stevens that the meeting adjourn.**

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**Dave Chaulk, Chair**

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**Terry Silver, Clerk Treasurer**