

MINUTES OF MEETINGGRAND FALLS-WINDSR TOWN COUNCILHELD VIRTUALLY5:00 P.M., TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21ST, 2021

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor: Mike Browne
 Councillors: Amy Coady, Holly Dwyer, Bob Hiscock,
 Andrew Little, Dave Noel
 Mayor: Barry Manuel
 Staff: Darren Finn, Chief Administrative Officer
 Nelson Chatman, Director of Public Works and
 Development
 Steve Gosse, Director of Corporate Services\
 Town Clerk
 Robyn Hannaford, Communications Officer

Prior to the meeting Deputy Mayor Browne announced that Mayor Manuel was present on the virtual meeting, but not well enough to Chair. He wished him and his family a speedy recovery and he encouraged the citizens of Grand Falls-Windsor and the Province to take the necessary precautions against the omicron virus that is very much present in our Town.

He also congratulated the winners of the Best Decorated Floats in our Santa Claus Parade:-

1st Place - Perfectly Centered Gymnastics Group
 2nd Place - Midland Island Animal Hospital
 3rd Place - Exploits Valley Paving

He thanked the Santa Claus Parade Committee on a great job with the parade. He also congratulated Councillor Dwyer and Sarah McIntosh for putting off a successful after-parade High Street event.

Deputy Mayor Browne called the meeting to order at 5:03 P.M. and asked for any errors or omissions to the Minutes of Meeting #552 of December 7th, 2021.

Motion

Dwyer\Hiscock

Be it resolved that the Minutes of Meeting #552 of December 7th, 2021 would be adopted as circulated. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

None

COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee of the Whole

The following report was presented by Councillor Noel.

COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

The Committee reviewed a final draft of the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for the organization.

The Committee recommends that this Policy be approved and implemented. The Committee recognizes the importance of vaccination and commits to protecting the health and safety of all employees and residents.

2022 Budget

The Committee reviewed the updated Goals and Objectives for each Department and provided feedback to each Director to include in their final versions for the Budget document.

The Committee also reviewed the most up-to-date version of budgeted figures for the 2022 Operating and Capital Budget.

The Committee recommends that staff finalize the Budget document based on these figures and prepare for the next meeting.

Motion

Noel\Coady

Be it resolved that these recommendations and report would be adopted as circulated. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

NOTICE OF MOTION

None

BUDGET – 2022

Before Councillor Dwyer presented the 2022 Budget she requested a motion that the Corduroy Brook Enhancement Association Grant item be separated and voted on individually.

The following motion was presented by Councillor Dwyer:-

I move that the line items for the Corduroy Brook Enhancement Association be removed from the 2022 Budget and voted on separately.

Motion

Dwyer\Coady

Be it resolved that this motion be adopted as presented. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

Councillor Dwyer presented the 2022 Budget, and her Budget speech is as follows:-

Mayor and Council,

As Chair of the Corporate Services Committee, I present the 2022 Municipal Operating Budget for the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor.

Our community has faced significant hurdles recently, with the onset of the COVID Pandemic in 2020, and a subsequent work stoppage in 2021, our resiliency has been challenged in unfamiliar ways. It is with professionalism, engagement, and forward-thinking that we will achieve a new sense of normalcy as an organization and a community. Grand Falls-Windsor has a long history of perseverance, and these recent years have reminded us that we always come

through on the other side – together. And that is what makes this Town the best place to call home.

Council has always been proud of the level of service that our staff provides to our residents. From garbage collection and snow clearing to trivia nights and other special events, we offer services of the highest standard to the residents of Grand Falls-Windsor three hundred and sixty-five (365) days of the year. All of this is achieved while maintaining low average taxation of residential and commercial properties at rates comparable with other communities in the Province.

Property assessments will decrease by just under two percent (2%) for 2022, this creates significant impact on the budgeted revenue, as there is a direct correlation between the assessed property value and the amount of tax collected. Despite this, residents and small businesses will be pleased to hear that there will be no change in the mil rate or water and sewer tax for 2022. To offset some of the revenue lost from the decrease in assessed value, some large businesses can expect an increase on their tax bill in accordance with Council's implementation of a "minimum tax" per business category. Historically, all businesses were required to remit a minimum fee of \$250; moving forward, the minimum business tax will vary depending on the tax category that the business falls into.

Sustainability is a top priority for Council this term – a challenging goal facing municipalities with increasing costs, aging equipment and infrastructure, and recent reductions of residential and commercial development. A reduction in assessed values will decrease anticipated Capital Out of Revenue comparable to previous years; however, Council remains committed to providing the best possible options for residents and working to prevent future increases.

Moving forward, focus will need to be on economic development to bring more businesses and residents to Grand Falls-Windsor. Our team works diligently to track all opportunities and promote our beautiful Town as much as possible and have recently discussed providing incentives for new businesses or current business expansions. This option will be explored more throughout 2022 to ensure our Town is the first choice for prospective business.

We would also like to get input on the issues that impact our businesses in the area, and plan to create a Business Growth Advisory Committee in 2022 comprised of citizens and business owners from the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor.

We continued the Capital Equipment Replacement Strategy in 2021, purchasing a grader, three (3) light vehicles, a semi-dump, a new trackless machine, and a backhoe. In addition, to these purchases, a Capital Program had several significant projects such as the Wastewater Treatment facility, Goodyear Avenue Field upgrades, and regular infrastructure work such as paving, water and sewer work and building upgrades and repairs. Most of this work comes with

funding from either the Provincial Government or the Federal Government through ACOA.

Overall, it is expected that the Town's final 2021 Capital Investment will be \$5.9 million (of which we expect to receive \$2.9 million in Government funding). Investing in equipment and infrastructure will remain one of our biggest costs; however, it is essential to the sustainability of our community moving forward.

In 2022, Council plans to;-

- Continue to work with management and staff on the implementation of the KPMG recommendations from the Organizational and Operational Review.
- Complete the UV Building portion of the Wastewater Treatment facility. The full Wastewater Treatment Facility Project will end up costing just under \$14 million over three (3) years.
- Build upon the initial work completed in 2022 regarding a formalized Strategic Plan for the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor.
- We want to improve our community engagement in 2022.
- We will form a collection of Advisory Committees to provide input to Council so that we can be more directly informed as to issues and concerns of citizens. In addition to the Business Growth Committee previously mentioned, we are considering a Youth Advisory Committee, an Environmental Action Committee and a People and Culture Committee.
- We are investing in software which organizes our budgeted Capital Projects and provides transparency to our residents about the various ongoing and planned projects.
- We will continue investing in technology to be able to better serve and inform the community.

Revenue

There will be no increases to the mil rates in the current year. Total municipal revenue for 2022 is forecasted to be \$20.1 million, eighty-eight percent (88%) of which is from taxation. The remaining revenue is derived from various sources such as permits, fees, land sales, rent, recreation fees and Provincial transfers. Total fees from our recreation programs and events bring in approximately \$762,000 of this amount, and include registration from gymnastics, and the ice-time rentals from our stadiums. There is a corresponding costs to these revenues which is included in the expenses section; however, in most cases, we aim to break-even on these programs and events. In addition, Council will continue to aid our senior residents through offering a five percent (5%) discount

for taxes paid prior to March 31st, 2022. Seniors who qualify for an income-based discount will be eligible for an additional twenty percent (20%) off their tax bill. These taxes are due before March 31st of each year unless you are on a payment plan. Citizens can contact our Corporate Services Department to discuss payment options for 2022.

Expenditures

Total expenditures 2022 are forecasted to be \$20.1 million, a 0.5% increase over the 2021 Budget. Approximately fifty-five percent (55%) of operating expenditures come from the Public Works and Development Department, which performs all maintenance of parks, buildings, and all municipal infrastructure.

The total Capital Program is anticipated to be approximately \$9.5 million, and there is Provincial and Federal Funding available in the amount of \$5.4 million. This leaves the Town's portion of the capital costs at approximately \$4.1 million. This balance is offset by a projected Capital Out of Revenue in the amount of \$383,865 along with utilization of the capital reserve in the amount of \$750,000, which both decrease the amount required to borrow to just over \$3 million. Borrowing has increased in recent years, and this has been required with the focus on equipment replacement and infrastructure improvement. However, the forecasted debt service ratio of 10.5% is still among the lower ratios in the Province and remains a positive indicator for the Town.

Capital Expenditures 2022

Council, in partnership with the Provincial and Federal Governments, continues to invest into Town infrastructure that is essential to every resident of Grand Falls-Windsor. Total Capital Works planned for 2022 is approximately \$9.5 million. Work planned for 2022 includes:-

- Street Resurfacing
- Continuation of the Gorge Park Phase II Development – Design Work
- Completion of the Wastewater Treatment Facility expansion, including a UV Treatment Building to ensure the water quality entering the Exploits River exceeds the requirements of the Provincial Government.
- Completion of the upgrades to the Goodyear Avenue parking lot, playground and baseball fields.
- \$803,000 in purchases as per the Equipment Replacement Strategy.

- Other Capital purchases such as additional new garbage cans for parks and other areas around Town, a new wheelchair lift at the Town Hall, and a snow clearing attachment for the grader.

Community Requests

Council continues to support groups that help make our community a better place. There is a section of this Budget allocated to Community Grants where amounts are budgeted to various community initiatives. Included in the Community Grants this year is support for the local Lionel Kelland Hospice by way of a grant of \$25,000 per year for three (3) years - \$75,000 total. Hopefully this, in addition to the many other generous donations it has received, will help the Hospice towards its goal of opening its doors in 2023.

Conclusion

Mr. Mayor, Council, and residents of Grand Falls-Windsor, I present to you the 2022 Municipal Operating Budget. We continue to invest in our infrastructure and equipment so that we can become more sustainable as an organization and a community. By keeping the mil rate the same for 2022, Council can provide some additional relief to its residents and small business owners while we focus on growth and development for the future.

I move the adoption of the 2022 Municipal Operating Budget.

Motion

Dwyer\Coady

Be it resolved that the 2022 Municipal Operating Budget for 2022 would be adopted as presented with the Corduroy Brook Enhancement Association section removed to be voted on separately. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

Mayor Manuel exited the meeting at this time due to a perceived conflict of interest, for Councillor Dwyer to proceed with the section of the Budget pertaining to the Corduroy Brook Enhancement Association.

Councillor Dwyer moved to adopt the budgeted amount of \$40,000 for an annual Grant to the Corduroy Brook Enhancement Association.

Motion

Dwyer\Coady

Be it resolved that the budgeted amount of \$40,000 for an annual Grant to the Corduroy Brook Enhancement Association be approved as presented. This motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

Mayor Manuel returned to the meeting at this time.

Councillor Coady congratulated the Finance Department and Councillor Dwyer for the presentation of the Budget. She feels very strongly that this is a very good Budget considering we are coming out of COVID-19 year two (2). It has been very difficult for our business community and our residents and for the Town operations overall. To be able to have a Budget with no increases to our residents and a very minimal increase to a select few businesses with regards to a change in a minimal tax bracket is great. She thanked the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Corporate Services\Town Clerk along with staff and Council for the time put into making this Budget as good as it is.

Councillor Little echoed the comments of Councillor Coady and also congratulated staff and Council on the Budget. There were some creative solutions that everyone came up with to solve some of the issues such as the two percent (2%) decrease in property tax due to the reduction in assessments, but thankfully those solutions were found and we can keep tax rates stable for our residents.

Councillor Hiscock agreed that everyone worked very long hours and the staff did a great job, and we again were able to provide no tax increase as we have for the last four (4) years while maintaining our services.

Councillor Noel stated as a first time Councillor, it has been an eye opener to see the amount of hours that go into the preparation of the Budget document, therefore commended the Finance Committee who diligently worked long hours to create a Budget whereby we have maintained the status quo with no tax increase for 99.9% of the population.

Deputy Mayor Browne stated any time you can maintain the tax base and not have any increase in taxes, yet maintain the level of services that is provided to the citizens that makes for a very good Budget. He highlighted some of the items within the Budget as follows:-

- The Community Services Department is looking forward to being able to have events, which we have not been able to do because of COVID-19. We look forward to Festivals again, in particular the Salmon Festival and the food and beverage events that were very well attended before COVID-19 struck us.
- The Corporate Services Department looks forward to the establishment of the Advisory Committees that was noted in Councillor Dwyer's Budget

speech. It is always beneficial to engage with the community to get input, thoughts and ideas on business moving forward.

- The Public Works and Development are happy that citizens can look forward to new directional signage in strategic areas around Town. And will be receiving a new street sweeper, which is badly needed. Also, the infrastructure replacement on Union Street\Circular Road that will prevent the waterline breaks that area of Town have been facing.

Councillor Dwyer thanked everyone for their input and as most Councillors have already stated we really put our emphasis on making sure that everything was done fairly and she is proud to say that they were able to come up with a Budget that does not increase taxes for our residents.

Deputy Mayor Browne congratulated the Director of Corporate Services\Town Clerk and staff in that Department on a great job at preparing the Budget. And to all the Directors who worked many hours, to ensure there was not tax increases.

Mayor Manuel thanked all staff, and this being his ninth (9th) Budget he understands the work that is done behind the scenes to get to the point of presentation and adoption of a Budget. He announced that he has a positive COVID-19 result and because of that he has not been as present in the Budget meetings as he normally would be, so he thanked Council for their hours that they put into the meetings that he was not able to attend. Any time that you can keep the residential mil rate the same, especially due to the difficult times we have been facing, is a great achievement that we should be proud of, and it provides a measure of relief to residents as well to have a Budget with all Councillors in favour.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Little wished all citizens a happy, healthy safe holidays season. He stated that it may be discouraging to face another COVID-19 scare, but he is confident that we will persevere especially in our great community. He is also looking forward to some normalcy and seeing our citizens take part in all of the recreational and social opportunities that our community has to offer.

Councillor Dwyer stated on behalf of herself and her family she wished her fellow Councillors and all residents and staff a very safe and Merry Christmas. She reminded people to over the holidays to take some time to stop and think about others and to be thankful for the efforts of some people that are working around the clock to keep us safe. She stated that one thing she has come to value is

handwriting, so what she has been doing over the last couple of days and will continue to do is to write some handwritten notes which has been very therapeutic for her, so encourages people to try it.

Councillor Noel wished residents of Grand Falls-Windsor a very merry and safe holiday season, and advised that if you are out and about this time of year to think twice about indulging and getting behind the wheel. He also encouraged people to consider neighbours that are elderly and to take time to visit them and make sure they are ok. And lastly, he wished Council and staff a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Deputy Mayor Browne acknowledged that COVID-19 is now in our Town and wished anyone that is ill a speedy recovery. He wished staff and their families a Merry Christmas and to the citizens of Grand Falls-Windsor a very Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year. He stated that the residents in Grand Falls-Windsor have always had a rich history in being kind so where possible please contribute to your local food banks, charities and reach out to your neighbours, as a simple act of kindness can travel far.

Mayor Manual stated that he has been involved with some healthcare workers over the last week and commended them for being very professional and cordial especially when they are putting in long hours during these difficult times. He stated that under his observations, it was disappointing at times that some residents were losing patience, and it is important to recognize that everybody is having a difficult time, it just may not look the same as yours. Everybody is inconvenienced, and he just asked that everybody take a deep breath when dealing with anything stressful this holiday season and understand that the healthcare workers are not the people that you need to be taking your frustration out on because we are better than that. Treat people how you would treat your own, especially during this tough time. Merry Christmas to all residents, Council and staff and he hopes everyone enjoys a safe and happy Christmas and he will see you all in the New Year.

Councillor Coady reminded residents that as of January 3rd the new Garbage Regulations are in effect, so a covered garbage container is the only thing to be placed at your curb side on your pick-up day. There is a post on our Facebook page that there will be no change to the garbage schedule over the holidays, also the Town Hall is closed to the public with services offered over the phone; however, the services will be closed from 12:00 Noon on December 24th until 8:30 A.M. on January 4th for Christmas. She reminded residents to shop local and encouraged residents to support our local businesses especially since the past couple of years have been hard with COVID-19. She wished a speedy recovery to Mayor Manuel and his family and anyone else that is suffering with the COVID-19 virus. She wished a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all residents,

businesses, and our staff. She hopes that everyone's Christmas is filled with love and peace.

Councillor Hiscock advised on behalf of himself and his family that he wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He asked that people be courteous to our snow clearing operators as we are now into the season, and they are doing their very best. He wished everyone a happy and healthy New Year.


Deputy Mayor Browne acknowledged the passing of Ray Keough and sent out sincere condolences to his family on behalf of himself and Council.

Motion

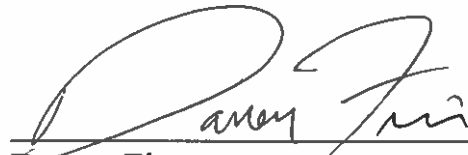
Dwyer\Noel

Be it resolved that the meeting of the Grand Falls-Windsor Town Council would be adjourned until the next regular scheduled meeting of January 25th, 2022. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 P.M.



Mike Browne
Deputy Mayor



Darren Finn
Chief Administrative Officer