

Meeting #587

MINUTES OF MEETING

GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR TOWN COUNCIL

HELD IN THE TOWN HALL

7:00 P.M., TUESDAY, JANUARY 23RD, 2024

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

Prior to the meeting the Mayor read a Proclamation he signed on January 18th for January 2024 is Crime Stoppers Month. He also signed a Proclamation for Violence Prevention Month 2024.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. and asked for any errors or omissions to the Minutes of Meeting #586 of Tuesday, December 19th, 2023.

Motion
 Hiscock\Noel

Be it resolved that the Minutes of Meeting #586 of Tuesday, December 19th, 2023 would be adopted as circulated. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

None

DISBURSEMENT REPORT

Councillor Dwyer presented the Disbursement Report in the amount of \$3,123,541.97.

Motion

Dwyer\Browne

Be it resolved that the Disbursement Report in the amount of \$3,123,541.97 would be received as presented. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community Services

The following report was presented by Deputy Mayor Browne.

Joe Byrne Canteen Correspondence

The Committee reviewed the correspondence from Julie Ferraro about operational costs and staffing issues related to the canteen services provided by her company at the Joe Byrne Memorial Stadium.

The Committee recommended that the Director work with the owners and help reduce expenses where possible.

Pedego Electric Bike Correspondence

The Committee reviewed a proposal from Pedego Electric Bike Company on setting up in Grand Falls-Windsor for the summer months.

The Committee recommended that the Community Services Department contact the company to get additional details on the proposal and to work with them to set-up in Grand Falls-Windsor. This assistance may include the temporary use of Town facilities.

Economic Development Update

The Committee reviewed the report from the Economic Development Department on two (2) upcoming health care initiatives. The Director suggested to

the Committee that any Councillor available to participate should contact the Development Officer to register.

Marco Group Advertising Correspondence

The Committee reviewed an advertising proposal from the Marco Group.

The Committee recommended going with a business card advertisement to highlight the Town's website and Facebook. The Committee also recommended that the Communications Officer follow up on this request.

Gorge Park Update

The Committee had some discussion on the recent damage done to Gorge Park from the last rainstorm. The Director informed the Committee that the Public Works and Development Department have carried out the necessary repairs to get the park back open for the winter and that the area will be monitored and reviewed in the spring.

2023 Festival Updates

The Committee reviewed the 2023 Festival Reports provided by the Community Services Department.

With the increase cost of supplies and production, the Committee recommends that the Community Services Department staff work on an updated proposal for the 2024 community events and prepare a budget for review, including any new ideas and improvements that can be made to the events.

Media Resources Correspondence

The Committee reviewed the correspondence from Media Resources regarding the replacement of the message centre on High Street.

The Committee recommended that due to the cost of the sign, and the ability to carry out promotion through our own platforms and private signage companies, that we do not purchase the media centre. The Committee also recommended that the Director work with the Public Works and Development Department to have the old media centre removed.

Sliding Hill Opening

The Committee had some discussion on the opening of the newly developed Sliding Hill at the Exploits Nordic Ski Club.

The Committee recommended that the Community Services Department monitor sliding conditions and have the opening as soon as the weather allows.

New Business

The Committee had some discussion on building a fence around the duck pond at Church Road Park. The Director informed the Committee that he has discussed the issue with the Public Works and Development staff and will put this work on the list of projects to be completed in the summer.

The Director informed the Committee that a grant application completed by the Leisure Services Officer for the Exploits 50+ Club was successful and that the Club will now get two (2) heat pumps installed in the coming months. This will help with heating requirements for the winter and cooling for the summer at affordable cost savings for the Club.

The Committee had some discussion on in-town signage for our recreational facilities, in particular, the Exploits Nordic Ski Trails and Sliding Hill.

The Committee recommended that this issue be discussed at the next Directors' meeting and report back to the Committee at a later meeting.

The Committee had some discussion on the new Accessible Plan that is being worked on for 2024. The Director informed the Committee that he will follow up with staff to ensure the facilities are reviewed and any tasks included in the plan.

The Committee had some discussion on a legacy project for Gordon Pinsent.

The Committee recommended that Councillor Dwyer and the Director of Community Services initiate some discussions with the family about any suggestions they may have and then report back to Council.

The Committee had some discussion on the new ticketing program ordered for the Joe Byrne Memorial Stadium. The Director informed the Committee that training will be carried out in the coming weeks and that the program should be up and running in February.

I move the recommendations and report of this Committee.

Motion

Browne\Little

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

Councillor Dwyer noted as the Minutes state we have two (2) Health Care Initiatives upcoming, one of those has passed that was a Medical Resident Academic and Wellness Workshop that myself, Councillor Coady and Councillor Hiscock attended. It was a great opportunity to speak to a lot of the medical residents about such things as what it was that made them choose Grand Falls-Windsor to work and live, so it was very informative. The other initiative, which is taking place 7:00 P.M., January 31st, at the Classic Theater, and it is a public information session that the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, in partnership with the Grand Falls-Windsor Community Health Care Coalition is hosting. There will be a presentation from NL Health Services talking about the Family Care Teams, what they are, how they impact our residents, and how you can avail yourself of their services to become connected with a physician or health care provider. This is a great opportunity to have any health care questions answered and she encourages those interested to attend.

Mayor Manuel advised this information is a great opportunity to provide clarity on what the Health Care Team is, and to get questions answered for many residents that do not have a Family Physician.

Deputy Mayor Browne mentioned as soon as we get some snow there will be a Sliding Hill Opening, so stay tuned to our Facebook page for more information on that event. As mentioned in the Minutes, it was agreed to remove the message centre sign on High Street due to the expense of maintenance, and we intend to continue to advertise our events through social media.

Mayor Manuel advised we will be proceeding with a fence around the duck pond at Church Road Park, we have also talked about doing some work on the walkway at the Park that leads from the Park to the Central Health Office building also known as the old Carmelite House. Often times when there are events at the Park that are outside the Central Health working hours, the large parking lot there is completely empty mostly because people don't know that a walkway exists and could be used more because parking on Church Road is limited. We have also had a lot of discussion lately on in-town signage, and he recognizes that we need to have a plan in place and more discussion on current signage that may no longer be applicable before replacing signage. The highway signage is not in our jurisdiction

so we would have to engage the Provincial Government to improve the signage on the highway to make sure people are seeing what we have to offer.

Public Works and Development

The following report was presented by Councillor Coady.

Water Quality

The Committee continued discussion around water quality within the Town. Staff has addressed all areas that have had issues over the last few months and continue to monitor the quality on a regular basis. The Consultant continues to work on their analysis and a report should be available in February.

Public Works Production Report

The Committee was presented with the year-end Public Works Production Report for 2023. Overall, production was good with improvements in asphalt patching, landscaping repairs, sign replacement and sidewalk repairs. The Public Works Division also dealt with forty-nine (49) water breaks and repairs as compared to twenty-seven (27) in 2022.

The Committee was pleased with the report and has requested more improvements in asphalt patching in 2024 and more concentration on line painting to ensure reflectively especially at crosswalks.

Vehicle Disposal – Shanawdithit Centennial Field

The Committee reviewed a request from staff seeking approval to dispose of an abandoned vehicle on Shanawdithit Centennial Field. Municipal Enforcement has contacted the registered owner and provided ample time for them to remove it; however, it still remains after the deadline on December 21st, 2023.

The Committee recommends this be approved and staff make the necessary arrangements to dispose of the vehicle.

Permit Statistics

The Committee was presented with the final permit statistics for 2023. The overall permits issued was up 4.9% from 2022. However, the total number of new

units created dropped by 62.5%. There were five (5) new commercial development permits in 2023 and general repairs permits were increased by 10%.

Development Regulations Amendment – Garden Suite

The Committee reviewed a proposal for an amendment to the Town's Development Regulations to add Garden Suites as a permitted use in residential neighbourhoods. The use would need to meet specific requirements but has the potential to add additional housing and rental properties in the Town. The Garden Suite is essentially a smaller second home on a lot that could be constructed in existing neighbourhoods.

The Committee recommends this proposal be approved and the process for the amendment to commence. This approach will assist with addressing some of the housing needs in the Town.

Crown Lands Approval – Toulett Drive

The Committee reviewed an application for Crown Lands from A & A Realty at 7 Queensway to increase the size of their application from 0.07 to 0.291 hectares. The intended use is for a fenced parking area.

The Committee recommends staff gather more information on the proposed use including a layout plan and what type of vehicles will be at this location.

Tiny Home – Rothermere Street

The Committee looked at a proposal for infilling on Rothermere Street to help provide some additional housing. This location has 540 square meters of land that could accommodate a building footprint up to 79 square meters. This meets the Town's Development Regulations in the zone as a discretionary use.

The Committee recommends staff commence the discretionary use process for this location and bring it back to a future Committee meeting for discussion.

I move the recommendations and report of this Committee.

Motion

Coady\Dwyer

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

Councillor Noel noted there is nothing more near and dear to this Council than making sure residents have clean drinking water, so he asks that if anyone is experiencing discoloration to immediately contact the Town so we can address it and deal with it effectively and efficiently.

Mayor Manuel said we do on occasion flush the lines and that will cause discoloration for everybody for a short period of time, but what we are worried about mainly is any ongoing sustained discoloration. It does seem that some of the problem areas have seen significant improvement which is great because we have put a lot of resources towards this, and we still continue to monitor and sample the water because our infrastructure is decades old and poses a problem.

Councillor Coady mentioned we continue to work with consultants on the condition of the water lines around Town and what may be causing discolored water. We are hoping to receive their report by the end of February. Council did attend a presentation that was to the Exploits Regional Water Supply Board with two (2) process engineer speakers with CBCL out of Halifax. It was an assessment of the water process for the Exploits Regional Water Treatment Plant. They spoke about the cleanliness of our Water Treatment Plant, the pride the employees take in the plant, the work that they do, the layout of the plant, and that all speaks volumes of the pride the employees take into the work and the pride and satisfaction they get by getting the good water out into the community and they work hard to achieve that. We need to know when you have noticed discolored water, because if there is flushing or a break in your area, chances are there will be discoloration for a period of time. It is important for residents to notify the Town when they experience discolored water because we need the most accurate and up-to-date information. She wanted to recognize great work from staff, consultants and everybody involved.

Mayor Manuel said he has always been amazed every time that he has visited the Water Treatment Plant of the cleanliness, in this state-of-the-art facility. The water is tested multiple times during each day and, at the end of the line, and it is a very difficult challenge to have perfectly clean water all the time. We have identified some improvements that are required to the Plant now, which came from the assessment evaluation plus the work we have been doing around Town, work on the dam with millions of dollars invested which includes some Capital improvements and for New Bay Road to be fixed which we are still lobbying Government for. He thinks we should do a video, so that residents can see how the Water Treatment Plant works and the technology that is used because education and understanding goes a long way. So, we will follow up on that again in further discussions.

Councillor Coady noted it was mentioned in the Minutes about the approved amendment to our Development Regulations for Garden Suites, so she wanted to clarify what that is. Garden Suites are an additional residence on an existing block of land, like a detached granny suite. This would obviously have to meet the requirements and must be approved by Council to meet the regulations. This would allow families to have another family member living on the same property, have a student residence, have a small apartment, all ways to increase the amount of housing that is available. We are looking at changes in our Development Regulations regarding infilling, we are also talking about duplexes, apartment buildings, tiny homes and looking at infrastructure upgrades to certain areas that would encourage developers to increase their development lots which will help alleviate some of the housing demands. A lot of things are happening and changing, but we recognize that these things need to happen.

Mayor Manuel noted that you can only have one Garden Suite per property. There are going to be a lot of requirements that need to be met plus your own water and sewer hook-up, off street parking available to name a few, but all of this will help people with such a lack of rental space in Town.

The Chief Administrative Officer commented that Council is now only giving consideration for allowing the Garden Suites as a change in the Development Regulations, and we will now go through the process of engaging the public through Public Consultation, which will take a few months to work through. If Council continues to support it, and the community supports it, it will be adopted in the months ahead. He also wanted to acknowledge the Director of Public Works and Development, Manager of Development, Manager of Public Works and the Water and Sewer Supervisor who were also heavily involved in the Water Treatment Process Study and very instrumental in resolving water discoloration issues for citizens.

The following Resolution GF-W 2024-379 was presented by Councillor Coady:-

RESOLUTION GF-W 2024-379

URBAN AND RURAL PLANNING ACT, 2000

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE

TOWN OF GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR

MUNICIPAL PLAN AMENDMENT No. 3, 2023 &

DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS AMENDMENT No. 4, 2023

Under the authority of Section 23 of the Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000, the Town Council of Grand Falls-Windsor approves the Integrated Community Sustainability Municipal Plan Amendment No. 3, 2023 as adopted and Development Regulation Amendment No. 4, 2023 as adopted.

Motion

Coady\Noel

Be it resolved that Resolution GFW 2024-379 would be adopted as circulated. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

Committee of the Whole

The following report was presented by Deputy Mayor Browne.

Servicing Private Building Lots Policy

The Committee discussed a draft policy about Servicing Private Building Lots. Revisions to the policy are intended to support new construction that is considered infilling. The Town will charge a \$750 fee per services (water, sewer, and storm sewer) to connect a property owner to an adjacent municipal service line where its adjacent. This new policy gives property owners reduced servicing costs and predictability in their budgeting.

The Committee recommends that revised Policy PWD-14 be approved with changes discussed in the meeting.

ATV Traffic on Bank Road

The Committee met with citizens from Bank Road at 5:30 P.M. who were concerned about the frequency of ATV's, etc... that are using this road to likely access forest roads across the Exploits River. The citizens were concerned about this traffic going in both directions on a one-way street and careless driving. The citizens were lobbying Council for more enforcement of traffic rules, and they requested Council block access from Bank Road to Gilbert Street.

The Committee recommends staff give enhanced patrolling attention to this area and to discuss the suggestion of blocking access in a future Committee meeting.

Residential Fireworks

The Committee met with a citizen delegation at 6:10 P.M. who has concerns about the negative effect of fireworks on some people, pets and wild animals. The citizen delegation is requesting that the Council reduce the hours when fireworks are permitted on New Years Eve. Additionally, the citizens are requesting more public education about the responsible use of fireworks and to mobilize more municipal enforcement when fireworks are used outside of Council's prescribed times.

The Committee recommends that staff undertake more communication efforts about the Council's expectation on fireworks use, and that the other suggestions from the citizen delegation be discussed in a future Committee meeting.

Accessibility Plan

Staff provided an update on the development of an Accessibility Plan for the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor. The development of an Accessibility Plan is a new public requirement set by the Provincial Government. There was a public meeting held on December 18th, 2023 to seek input from the community and an Advisory Committee has also been recently established. The drafted Plan is expected to be available for the next Committee meeting.

The Committee recommends that staff continue working to finalize the Accessibility Plan and report again to the next Committee meeting.

Garbage Collection

The Committee reviewed information about compliance with the Garbage Collections Regulations. It was discussed that an average of four (4) properties per day has not been complaint since October 10th, 2023. This rate of non-compliance is nothing significant when considering garbage collection services approximately one thousand (1,000) properties daily. Equally important is that only a small number of properties can be characterized as repeated non-compliant. The Committee was very pleased with the high percentage of compliance with the Garbage Regulations and is thankful to all the citizens for their efforts.

The Committee recommends that staff continue with enforcement. The Town certainly looks much tidier and is cleaner as a result of this change.

Labour Report

The Committee reviewed the Labour Report for the period ending week fifty-two (52) showing actual year-end expenditures at \$3,710,777. This expense was \$262,523 under Budget and Council was pleased with this result.

The Committee recommends that staff continue with their vigilance when managing the Labour Budget going forward.

Taxation Receivables Analysis

The Committee reviewed the Taxation Receivables Analysis for the period ending December 30th, 2023, that reports collections at \$2,113,730.24. This is only 0.13% greater than the same collection period in 2022.

The Committee recommends that staff continue with their vigilance in tax collection.

I move the recommendations and report of this Committee.

Motion

Browne\Little

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

Councillor Hiscock said Grand Falls-Windsor is an ATV friendly community, and we are working on further development for them, as we are hoping to get the River Road one of these days which will alleviate a lot of ATV traffic in Town. He asks that the ATV operators be mindful that their vehicles must be registered, insured and you must obey all traffic rules and regulations. This means you cannot go the wrong way on a street, or drive at a high rate of speed or drive imprudently, and you must be cognizant of what you are doing. We also notice that some of the ATV users are underage, as you must be sixteen (16) years of age to operate these vehicles. So, we ask people to be mindful of the rules and regulations, and respectful of the citizens in our community.

Mayor Manuel noted ATV traffic is more prevalent these days than ever before, and there are many challenges with any kind of policing. Most people in this community follow the rules, it is just a small percentage of reckless people that make it bad for everybody. We have been trying to obtain the Abitibi River Road for the last number of years, and we will continue our efforts. Yes, we want the Mill property without the liabilities attached, but really, we just need the Government to support a corridor that goes from the T' Railway to the Mill bridge.

Many residents would be overjoyed because they would not have to go down any roads putting safety at risk, so Government needs to understand that this is a serious issue and something that our residents want. We have tried for years to get this corridor, so he's considering asking every single resident to show up down there in the spring and show Government how many people want this access granted. He also wanted to mention that we went through so much to get a Garbage Policy having mandatory containers with lids ironed out, we even gave notice a full year in advance before it came into effect. Within the first year we had a lot of non-compliance, but it is nice to see that everyone is complying, and the Town looks so neat and tidy on garbage days. Good job to staff for making that work because it has improved our Town and our garbage collection. Regarding the request to provide more public education on the effect of fireworks, he is not sure what else they can do. They have already put a Facebook video out, media press releases, reduced hours and days that fireworks are allowed, he appreciates where the complaint is coming from, but there comes a time when there is only so much you can do. The hours fireworks are permitted is 6:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M. New Year's Eve and Canada Day, and it is incumbent on the residents to obey. There is also a lot of danger with fireworks, as we saw in an incident just recently on New Year's Eve where a house was significantly damaged because of using fireworks, so we hope residents understand and are onboard with following the rules.

NOTICE OF MOTION

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Coady wanted to recognize the passing of Minister Derrick Bragg, who she first met when he was the Town Manager of the Town of Greenspond and the President of MNL's sister organization Professional Municipal Administrators. She claims that he was such a character, very entertaining and funny, so much so that whenever he was a public speaker in a session people would go just to hear his stories. He moved into Provincial Politics, and served as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, then he was the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, and lastly, he moved into Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. It was very sad to hear that he had passed away, our condolences go out to his family, friends and Government colleagues.

Councillor Noel commented that we need to address cell phone dead spots in our community. He asks for any residents living in Town that's experiencing poor cell phone service to tell us about it. Having this information will add strength to our letters we plan to present to cell phone providers. Lastly, he commented there is a small amount of snow with a lot of ice, and he wanted to encourage snowmobile riders to think before you go and do not ride alone.

Councillor Hiscock noted Minister Bragg is a great loss to our Province for sure, but we also lost a long-time resident of Grand Falls-Windsor on January 15th, Ms. Eva Maidment. Ms. Maidment was ninety-two (92) years old; she worked in the canteen of F. G. Bursey Memorial Collegiate (now Exploits Valley High), she was active in her church the Salvation Army Citadel on Circular Road, and when she retired, she was involved with the Auxiliary in the Hospital for many years. Condolences to her family on the loss of such a wonderful, beautiful lady. This Thursday at 11:30 A.M. at St. Alban's Anglican Church Hall there is going to be a soup, sandwich and chat about online safety for seniors. Lastly, congratulations to Captain Mike Goodyear who celebrated forty (40) years with the Grand Falls-Windsor Fire Department on January 10th, 2024, a great achievement for this well-respected firefighter who is very dedicated to his services.

Mayor Manuel thanked Mike Goodyear for his service and congratulates him on his retirement from the Fire Department. We are thankful for his commitment, as we are with all members of our Fire Department.

Councillor Little advised preparations are already under way for the Queen Street Dinner Theatre summer season, so residents can look forward to more great shows. As well, he commented that we offer free public skating on weekends and the details will be posted on our Facebook page every Thursday, so we encourage residents to come out and enjoy it when it is offered. He wanted to remind residents to be cognizant of the upcoming snow weather events, and to avoid parking on the streets during the winter months so you don't get a ticket.

Mayor Manuel commented that when he looked at the little amount in revenue for skating several years ago, Council decided to make it free for all to enjoy. Our Family, General, Senior and Pre-school skating are all free, and we would love to see more people take advantage of that so if you are interested, you can call our Community Services Department at 709-489-0450.

Councillor Dwyer advised she attended a Community Engagement Session today at the College of the North Atlantic called Spaces Shared. This is a program that matches seniors that have empty rooms in their homes with students who need accommodation. This is an opportunity for seniors to get the companionship they might be missing, some extra money and some extra help around their homes. This may result in seniors being able to stay in their homes longer because of that extra help, and benefits students by providing them with safe affordable housing.

If you would like more information on this program you can go to spaceshared.ca, and you can also register there or reach out for additional information. She would like to acknowledge the supporters of the Exploits Search and Rescue and their project, it is very heartwarming to see so many people, businesses small and large to come forward and make donations for their project which really speaks to the important work they are doing.

Deputy Mayor Browne noted he had a chance to view the new Riverside Suites with the owner who won the “Accommodator of the Year” with the Adventure Central Awards, so congratulations to them and it is great to see another place for people visiting Grand Falls-Windsor to stay. The Cataracts are here again this weekend playing Stephenville Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. He encouraged people to come out and show their support. Lastly, he would like to acknowledge the volleyball team from 1991 that are going to be inducted into the Volleyball Hall of Fame. It was the Grand Falls Academy Gryphons Volleyball Team and that season they won many championships and were undefeated for the whole season. Congratulations to all players and coaches on this well-deserved nomination.

Mayor Manuel mentioned tomorrow is “Bell Let’s Talk Day”, which helps raise awareness about mental illness in Canada, so we will be having a flag raising tomorrow at noon that everybody is welcome to attend. Adult Mental Health is a concern in our community, he just recently was approached by people struggling and looking for ways to get out more, and that is a big reason why we provide so many events and opportunities for people to get out, enjoy life, and socialize because that can improve mental health. Next Wednesday at 7:00 P.M. at the Classic Theater there will be a public meeting that citizens from all the regions are welcome to attend, about bringing some clarity to Family Care Teams and how to obtain physician care through Patient Connect NL. Lastly, he would like to encourage people to drive better, because we see time and time again people that have lost their lives due to distracted driving. Do not take that split second to look down at your phone, because that is all it takes to have an accident, and nobody wants that.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion

Dwyer\Little

Be it resolved that the meeting of the Grand Falls-Windsor Town Council would be adjourned until the next regular scheduled meeting of Tuesday, February 13th, 2024. This motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 P.M.

Barry Manuel
Mayor

Darren Finn
Chief Administrative Officer