

CAPE BRETON REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Special Council Meeting – Minutes
BUDGET SESSION 2022-23

Tuesday,
April 5, 2022
9:34 a.m.

Council Chambers
2nd Floor, City Hall
320 Esplanade, Sydney, NS

Mayor McDougall called the meeting to order.

Present: Mayor Amanda M. McDougall
Councillor Gordon MacDonald
Deputy Mayor MacMullin
Councillor Cyril MacDonald
Councillor Steve Gillespie
Councillor Eldon MacDonald
Councillor Glenn Paruch
Councillor Parsons
Councillor Edwards
Councillor Ken Tracey
Councillor Darren Bruckschwaiger
Councillor O'Quinn
Councillor Green

Staff:	Marie Walsh	Kathy Donovan
	Jennifer Campbell	Francis Campbell
	Deborah Campbell Ryan	Ray Boudreau
	Demetri Kachafanas	Chris March
	Wayne MacDonald	Paul Muise
	Michael Ruus	Matthew Viva
	John MacKinnon	Bruce Hardy
	Robert Walsh	Bill Turner
	Stephen MacKinnon	Jennifer Collins
	Michael Seth	Adam MacNeil
	Bill Murphy	Sharon MacSween
	Kirk Durning	Angela Ross
	Paul MacDonald	
	John Phalen	

Absent: N/A

Summary of Decisions

Land Acknowledgement

Roll Call

1. Approval of the Agenda:

Motion to approve the April 5, 2022, Special Council Agenda as presented. **Carried.**

Motion that Council reduce the tax rate for all residential and commercial accounts by 5% this year, and that no services be cut and no layoffs because of this motion.

Motion to defer the motion on the proposed 5% decrease in property taxes until the Budget presentations have concluded. **Carried.**

2. DRAFT Capital Budget 2022-2023:

A presentation and overview of the Draft Capital Budget for 2022-2023 was provided.

- **Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – Approval to Apply:**

Motion to the project application as described under the Green Infrastructure Stream of the ICIP program. **Carried.**

3. BUSINESS ARISING:

3.1 Council – March 25, 2022:

- a) Low Income Property Tax Exemption Policy:**

It was **agreed** that this item be deferred until Budget Presentations conclude to allow staff to provide information on a broader Low Income Property Tax Exemption threshold and the financial implications of the 5% property tax reduction.

4. DRAFT Operating Budget 2022-2023

The Proposed Operating Budget for 2022-2023 was presented.

Summary of Decisions (Cont'd):

5. DRAFT CBRM Water Utility 2022-2023 Capital and Operating Budgets:

The Draft Water Utility Operating and Capital Budgets for 2022-2023 were presented.

Motion that a letter be sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Premier of Nova Scotia thanking them for the Municipal Capacity Grant top-up this year, and to inquire on the status of the MOU and potential top-up of the Grant for the next fiscal year.

Carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Land Acknowledgement

Roll Call

1. Approval of the Agenda:

Motion:

Moved by Councillor Parsons, seconded by Councillor Green, to approve the April 5, 2022 Special Council Agenda as presented.

Discussion:

It was **agreed** that Council have discussion prior to the Budget Presentations.

Motion Carried.

Councillor Bruckschwaiger suggested the budget should include a 5% reduction in property tax rates across the board.

During discussion, the Chief Financial Officer explained that the proposed budget already includes a proposed 1.5% tax decrease and an increase in the low-income tax rebate. She also noted that the additional 3.5% tax decrease would have to be adjusted in the proposed budget that is before Council.

After discussion on the proposed decrease in property tax of 5%, the following motion was put forward:

Motion:

Moved by Councillor Bruckschwaiger, seconded by Councillor Tracey, that Council reduce the tax rate for all residential and commercial accounts by 5% this year, and that no services be cut and no layoffs because of this motion.

Mayor McDougall suggested that Council not vote on any motions until all Budget Presentations have concluded.

Councillors shared their opinions on the issue. After discussion, the following motion was put forward:

Motion:

Moved by Councillor Green, seconded by Councillor Parsons, to defer the motion on the proposed 5% decrease in property taxes until the Budget presentations have concluded.

Discussion

After discussion and clarification on the motion the Mayor called for the vote.

Motion Carried.

Mayor McDougall advised that the speakers list was noted for discussion when the motion is brought back for debate.

Continued...

2. DRAFT Capital Budget 2022-2023:

Wayne MacDonald, Director of Engineering & Public Works, provided a presentation and overview of the Draft Capital Budget for 2022-2023.

Jennifer Campbell, Chief Financial Officer, summarized the Capital Plan, how it is funded, and amount of debt which included the initiatives that the Municipal Capacity Grant top up would fund.

The Chief Financial Officer noted that the recommended Capital Budget motions were on page 36 of the Budget package.

Council discussed J-class roads and the difficulties with cutting the tax rate without a reduction in services.

Mayor McDougall advised that she would be extending an invitation to the CBRM MLAs to participate in the conversation on the transportation needs in CBRM at the upcoming Council meeting with the Department of Transportation officials scheduled for May 17th, 2022.

Council recessed for Lunch at 12:02 p.m.

Council resumed at 1:08 p.m.

Mayor McDougall welcomed everyone back to the afternoon session.

Council discussion on the draft Capital Budget continued, noting the following items that were highlighted:

- J-class roads funding
- Upgrades to the windows at the Civic Centre
- Retrofit for the South Dock of the Port of Sydney
- Upgrades to Centre 200
- CBRM Central Library

Deputy Mayor MacMullin assumed the Chair.

Mayor McDougall resumed the Chair.

Continued...

DRAFT Capital Budget 2022-2023 (Cont'd):

- **Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – Approval to Apply:**

Wayne MacDonald, Director of Engineering & Public Works, reviewed the Issue Paper in the agenda package regarding two projects for applications under the “Green Infrastructure Stream” of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP). He recommended Council approve the project applications.

Motion:

Moved by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Parsons, to approve the project application as described under the Green Infrastructure Stream of the ICIP program outlined in the staff Issue Paper dated April 5, 2022.

Discussion:

During Council discussion, consideration to defer the motion until the end of the meeting was discussed. After clarification that the motion was only to approve the application for funding, the Mayor called for the vote.

Motion Carried

3. BUSINESS ARISING:

3.1 Council – March 25, 2022:

a) Low Income Property Tax Exemption Policy:

It was **agreed** that this item be deferred until Budget Presentations conclude to allow staff to provide information on a broader Low Income Property Tax Exemption threshold and the financial implications of the 5% property tax reduction.

4. DRAFT Operating Budget 2022-2023:

Jennifer Campbell, Chief Financial Officer, presented the Proposed Operating Budget. She reviewed the Expenditure Summary and expenditures by Department.

Following the presentation, Council discussion took place.

5. DRAFT CBRM Water Utility 2022-2023 Capital and Operating Budgets:

Wayne MacDonald, Director of Engineering & Public Works, presented the Draft Water Utility Operating and Capital Budgets for 2022-2023.

After the presentation and Council discussion, Mayor McDougall reviewed requests for staff that she heard during the conversation.

- What are the implications of a decrease of tax rate?
- What is the benefit of an increase to the household low-income tax threshold?
- What happens to the J-class roads residual money?
- What is the amount of conditional funding?
- Can we go against the borrowing policy and what does that look like?
- Are there reserves? Where are they and what are they for?
- A breakdown of Centre 200 upgrades
- Staff to provide ideas/recommendations to reduce taxes by 5%.

Motion:

Moved by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Gillespie, that a letter be sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Premier of Nova Scotia thanking them for the Municipal Capacity Grant top-up this year, and to inquire on the status of the MOU and potential top-up of the Grant for the next fiscal year.

Motion Carried.

Marie Walsh, Chief Administrative Officer, noted that a property tax rate decrease was discussed at Council Workshops, however, staff was not provided with a directive by Council, nor did they feel it was supported by a majority. She noted that staff did recommend a 1.5 percent property tax decrease along with an increase to the tax rebate to help low-income families.

Following Council discussion, Mayor McDougall advised that this meeting would adjourn and reconvene the following day at 1:00 p.m. to allow staff time to prepare alternate scenarios.

The meeting recessed for the day at 3:33 p.m.

Mayor Amanda M. McDougall

Deborah Campbell Ryan
Municipal Clerk

/acr