

**CAPE BRETON REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**  
*Special Council Meeting – Minutes*

**Wednesday,  
May 26, 2021  
10:00 a.m.**

**Via Video Conferencing**

**Mayor Amanda M. McDougall called the meeting to order.**

**Council:** Mayor Amanda M. McDougall  
Councillor Gordon MacDonald  
Deputy Mayor Earlene MacMullin (left 12:36 p.m.)  
Councillor Cyril MacDonald (left 12:42 p.m.)  
Councillor Steve Gillespie  
Councillor Eldon MacDonald  
Councillor Steve Parsons  
Councillor James Edwards  
Councillor Ken Tracey  
Councillor Darren Bruckschwaiger  
Councillor Darren O’Quinn  
Councillor Lorne Green

**Staff:** John MacKinnon, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer  
Jennifer Campbell, Chief Financial Officer  
Deborah Campbell Ryan, Municipal Clerk  
Demetri Kachafanas, Regional Solicitor  
Wayne MacDonald, Director of Engineering & Public Works  
Michael Ruus, Director of Planning and Development  
Bill Murphy Director of Recreation, Parks, Grounds & Buildings  
Michael Seth, Fire Chief and Director of Fire & Emergency Services  
Paul MacDonald, Manager of Facilities  
Kirk Durning, Manager of Recreation  
Ken LeBlanc, Community Development Coordinator  
Sharon MacSween, Senior Administrative Assistant  
Tanya Nicholson, Recording Secretary

**Absent:** N/A

## **Summary of Decisions**

### **Land Acknowledgement:**

### **Roll Call**

#### **2. Welcome and Introductions:**

The Mayor welcomed all the presenters and noted introductions would take place before each presentation.

#### **3. Overview of Island Tourism:**

The CEO of Destination Cape Breton provided an overview on Island Tourism and their “Rise Again 2030” Development Strategy.

#### **1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**Motion** to approve the May 26, 2021, Special Council Agenda as circulated. **Carried.**

#### **4. Public Health and Wellness Implications of COVID-19:**

The Deputy Minister of Health & Wellness provided a presentation on Public Health and Wellness Implications of COVID-19.

#### **5. Presentations from Industry Subject Matter Experts:**

##### **a) CBRM Staff: Events and Recreation:**

CBRM Manager of Facilities and Manager of Recreation provided a presentation on the *Sydney Event Attraction Report* dated April 2021.

##### **b) National Parks and Historic Sites:**

The Field Unit Superintendent - Cape Breton for Parks Canada provided a presentation on “Parks Canada Administered Places in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality – Preparing for the Upcoming Season”.

**Continued...**

**Presentations from Industry Subject Matter Experts (Cont'd):**

**c) Culture & Festivals: Celtic Colours International:**

The Executive Director of Celtic Colours International Festival provided a presentation on the Festival and recommendations for support of the Tourism and Culture Sector.

**d) Hotel Industry:**

The General Manager of Cambridge Suites Sydney provided a presentation on the impacts of COVID on the Hotel Industry and recovery from same.

**e) Restaurant Industry:**

The Association & Marketing Manager of the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia provided a presentation on the impacts of COVID on the Restaurant Industry and options for support.

**f) Transportation – Land:**

The General Manager of Carabin's & Transoverland provided a presentation on the impacts of COVID on their business sector.

**6. Transportation – Air:**

The Mayor advised a written submission was received from the CEO of the JA McCurdy Airport outlining the proposed schedule for operation of air services in the summer of 2021 which is included in the agenda package.

**7. General Discussion**

Council engaged in general discussion with the various subject matter experts following presentations.

**Adjournment**

## **Land Acknowledgement**

## **Roll Call**

### **2. Welcome and Introductions:**

Mayor McDougall welcomed presenters to the Special Council meeting with a tourism theme, noting that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss with subject-matter experts how CBRM can support the efforts of the Tourism industry with COVID recovery.

The Mayor asked presenters to introduce themselves before the start of their presentation.

### **3. Overview of Island Tourism:**

Terry Smith, CEO - Destination Cape Breton, provided an overview of Island Tourism highlighting the following:

- 2009 statistics compared to 2019
  - Room Nights Sold
  - Visitation to Cape Breton Highlands National Park
  - Growth in Cruise
  - Economic Impact of Celtic Colours
- Rise Again 2030 (Cape Breton Island Destination Development Strategy)
- Care of Community
- 365 – Day Season
- Sustainable
- Cluster Focused
- Digitally Driven
- Game Changers
- Supporting Themes
- 2021 Tourism Season

Following the presentation, some issues discussed by Council included:

- Promoting the Black Community Culture within CBRM
- Marketing Cape Breton as a safe destination
- Province promoting Lifestyle Migration
- Percentage of small businesses not opening this tourism season
- Marine Tourism

The Mayor thanked Mr. Smith for his presentation.

**1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

At this point in the meeting, the Mayor called for a motion to approve the agenda.

**Motion:**

Moved by Councillor Cyril MacDonald, seconded by Councillor O'Quinn, to approve the May 26, 2021 Special Council Meeting Agenda as circulated.

**Motion Carried.**

**4. Public Health and Wellness Implications of COVID-19:**

Mayor McDougall welcomed Dr. Orrell and thanked him for agreeing to participate in this Special Council meeting.

Dr. Orrell provided an overview of the Public Health and Wellness implications of COVID-19, highlighting the following:

- The provincial government is conscious of the internet disparities across the Province and are working on the digital divide, which is especially important for health care delivery during the pandemic and into the future.
- Government recognizes the impacts of the public health measures as a result of the pandemic on business and tourism, however good health is good for business.
- Epidemiology: overview of timeframe for the first, second and third waves of the pandemic, noting the third wave peaked around the end of April 2021 and is being driven by the variants. Current case numbers were provided, noting those in hospital.
- Testing: Testing continues to be an important tool in the fight against this virus. History of the testing was provided, noting the significance of the first pop-up testing sites that identified asymptomatic people who had the virus.
- Vaccination: an overview of the history of the types, supply and distribution of the vaccines (i.e. Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca) was provided, noting the priority groups (by age) and the outbreaks, especially at Northwood. The review of Northwood helped to avoid outbreaks in the future waves. Currently there are 500,000 Nova Scotians who have received at least one dose of the vaccine. On May 27<sup>th</sup> the 12 years and older age group will be eligible to receive their first dose. The timetable for the second dose may be shortened due to increased supply.

**Continued...**

**Public Health and Wellness Implications of COVID-19 (Cont'd):**

- How to proceed: Continued testing is a very important part of reopening. Young people must be encouraged to get tested and vaccinated. The Provincial Government's plan for the easing of restrictions should be released on Friday, May 28<sup>th</sup>. The Atlantic Bubble may be open by July, and the second vaccination roll-out should be completed by the end of September. It is unknown at this time when the border will be open to Ontario and the western provinces given their current issues. International borders are under Federal jurisdiction.
- It was noted that some appointments for vaccinations were unfilled in the Eastern health region, thus those vaccines were sent back to Central region so they could be used before they expired.

Following the presentation, some of the issues discussed by Council included:

- Public announcements and social media advising of available vaccination appointments
- Majority of COVID-19 exposures at Box Stores which now have less strict safety protocols than in first wave
- Only stores that sell essential goods can open at this time
- Province will have enough vaccine when the population needs their second vaccine.
- Transportation to vaccine clinics
- Mobile vaccine clinics and pop-up testing sites in different communities
- Principle is to have as much of the population with one vaccine dose before giving second dose.
- Encouraging younger generation to get vaccinated and COVID-19 tested

Mayor McDougall thanked Deputy Minister/Dr. Orrell for his presentation.

At this point in the meeting, the Mayor asked Council members to make note of questions for each presenter and at the end of the presentations, Council will have a broader discussion. **AGREED**

**5. Presentations from Industry Subject Matter Experts:**

**a) CBRM Staff: Events and Recreation:**

Paul MacDonald, Manager of Facilities, and Kirk Durning, Manager of Recreation, provided a presentation on the *Sydney Event Attraction Report* dated April 2021, highlighting the following:

**Continued...**

**Presentations from Industry Subject Matter Experts: CBRM Staff: Events and Recreation (Cont'd):**

- Why Events
- Event impacts for Sydney
- Current State Assessment
- Sport Tourism Roadmap
- Comparative Municipal Models
- Sydney Event Attraction
  - Event Classification System
  - Event Operating Model
  - Mandate
  - Objectives
  - Staffing, Reporting and Accountability
  - Financial Requirements
  - Events Sydney Brand Position
- Next Steps
  - Determine preferred event governance and operating model
  - Develop event classification system
  - Determine event impact priorities
  - Develop event decision-making process and criteria
  - Develop 5-year rolling event attraction model
  - Determine revenue development opportunities through hotel marketing levy and/or partnership funding
  - Determine operational practices for event attraction and hosting support
  - Establish event brand position

Mayor McDougall thanked staff for their presentation and noted a plan would be developed with a list of next steps.

**b) National Parks and Historic Sites:**

Blair Parady, Field Unit Superintendent - Cape Breton for Parks Canada, provided a presentation on “Parks Canada Administered Places in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality – Preparing for the Upcoming Season” and highlighted the following:

- Current Status
- Guiding Principles
- Incremental Service Offer
- Moving Forward – Recovery and Support

Mayor McDougall thanked Blair Parady for the presentation.

**Presentations from Industry Subject Matter Experts: (Cont'd):**

**c) Culture & Festivals: Celtic Colours International:**

Mike MacSween, Executive Director - Celtic Colours International Festival, provided a presentation on the Festival, highlighting the following:

- Success Despite Adversity in 2020
- Livestream Results
- Local Impact – 2020
- Testimonials
- Context – Celtic Colours in 2019
- Economic Impact Analysis – 2018
- Celtic Colours – Plans for 2021
- Support Tourism and Culture Sector

Mayor McDougall thanked Mike MacSween for the presentation.

**d) Hotel Industry:**

Michele Bianchini, General Manager – Cambridge Suites Sydney, provided a presentation on the impacts of COVID on the hotel industry, highlighting the following:

- Loss of Revenue impact
- Employment Impact - 60% less employees in this sector
- Action plan on training and re-training in a Hotel or Restaurant industry
- Fixed Expenses still must be paid
- What/when recovery looks like

Mayor McDougall thanked Michele Bianchini for the presentation.

**e) Restaurant Industry:**

Natasha Chestnut, Marketing Manager of the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia, provided a presentation on the Food and Beverage Sector Recovery, highlighting the following:

- Current Environment
- COVID-19 Impact on Restaurant Space
- Options for Support
- Marketing to Pent-up Demand
- Recovery Time Frame

Mayor McDougall thanked Natasha Chestnut for the presentation.

**Presentations from Industry Subject Matter Experts: (Cont'd):**

**f) Transportation – Land:**

Mitch Carabin, General Manager of Carabin's & Transoverland, provided a presentation on the impacts of COVID on their business sector, highlighting the following:

- Transporting various groups such as Cape Breton Eagles, University groups, school sport teams, church groups, weddings, etc.
- Port of Sydney requested 25 busses on the dock daily to provide charter services for the second berth for the 2020 Cruise Season
- Decline in revenue since March 2020
- The overhead costs to run a Charter Bus Company
- When busses are idle, there are more mechanical issues and costs
- Hiring new drivers (previous drivers had to secure new employment)
- Expanding their services, including bidding on garbage removal and automotive work
- Impacts of 2021 Cruise season cancelled, sport teams cut short, and weddings postponed

Mayor McDougall thanked Mitch Carabin for the presentation.

**6. Transportation – Air:**

Mayor McDougall noted that Council invited Mike MacKinnon, CEO of JA McCurdy Sydney Airport, to participate in this meeting, however he was unavailable due to another meeting he had to attend in regard to advocating for a restart plan for the Sydney Airport. However Mr. MacKinnon did provide a written submission outlining the proposed schedule for operation of air services in the summer of 2021, including PAL Airlines. Mr. MacKinnon's letter is included in the agenda package. Mr. MacKinnon did note he is available for any questions via email or phone.

The Mayor advised she met with the CEO and Minister Labi Kousoulis to discuss the importance of funding for operational support at the Sydney Airport. The Mayor noted the reserve funds were used to keep the airport operational.

## 7. General Discussion

Mayor McDougall expressed heartfelt thanks to all the presenters and noted Council needed to keep this information in mind for the recovery phase in our community.

At this time, the Mayor opened the floor for discussion, which included:

- Restaurant Industry:
  - Expedite approvals on patios and extensions to patios
  - Natasha Chestnut, Marketing Manager of the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia to provide Council with contact information of the Government Affairs Committee overseeing patio permits
  - Many downtown Sydney patios are set up and ready for business
  - Waive cost of patio permits
- CBRM Staff: Events and Recreation:
  - CBRM would not be promoters for events
  - Risk factors in terms of liabilities for events
  - Comparative event budgets across the country and how they are funded
- Public Health and Wellness Implications of Covid-19:
  - COVID-19 testing for international students at CBU
- Overview of Island Tourism:
  - Promoting local beaches and recognizing seal issues on beaches
  - Letters of support for beaches
  - Training individuals for employment in the Tourism industry
- National Parks and Historic Sites:
  - Visitors to Fortress of Louisburg and Marconi Museum 2020 versus previous years
- Culture & Festivals: Celtic Colours International:
  - Expanding virtual concerts or hosting bi-monthly concerts for local talent
  - Work with broadcasters to expand virtual concerts, but end goal is back to live entertainment
- Transportation – Land:
  - Cost to ready one bus for use is approximately \$20,000
  - Regular updates from Transoverland on their progress over next year
- Hotel Industry:
  - NSCC construction effect on the Cambridge Suites
  - With no events happening, Cambridge Suites is currently only selling 7 to 8 rooms a night in a hotel with over 100 rooms

Continued...

**General Discussion (Cont'd):**

Mayor McDougall referenced that a larger strategy/action plan for the Tourism and Service Sector would be developed by Council in follow-up to the presentations, noting the following items:

1. Promote and encourage COVID-19 testing and vaccination, specifically to the younger population;
2. Follow up with Public Health and CBU re: testing and vaccinations for International students;
3. Invest and support event venues, and lead the bid/hosting process as outlined in the *Sydney Event Attraction Report* dated April 2021 presented by CBRM staff
4. Attraction of people to work and be trained in the service industry (i.e. hotels and restaurants);
5. Use such tools as: lifting of fees; expedited permit process; parking/green spaces/patio permits extension.
6. Overwhelming Message: use tools available to CBRM to market and promote.

**Meeting adjourned at 1:04 p.m.**

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**Mayor Amanda M. McDougall**  
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**Deborah Campbell Ryan**  
Municipal Clerk