

Northeast Avalon Joint Council Meeting

MINUTES

Wednesday, May 9, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.

Mount Pearl City Hall, 3 Centennial Street, Mount Pearl, NL

ATTENDEES:

- Joedy Wall, Pouch Cove (Chair)
- Bill Antle, Mount Pearl (Vice Chair)
- Sam Whalen, Colliers (Treasurer)
- Owen Mahoney, Avondale
- Sam Stack, Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove
- Kevin Costello, Holyrood
- Allan English, Paradise
- Isabelle Fry, Mount Pearl
- Dave Aker, Mount Pearl
- Sterling Willis, Paradise
- Jordon Blackwood, Wabana
- Michelle Martin, Flatrock
- Mary Thorne-Gosse, Torbay
- Bradley Power, Eastern Regional Service Board & Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove

DELEGATION(S):

- Sean Martin, Municipal Assessment Agency
- Ken Kelly, Eastern Regional Service Board

REGRETS:

- Joanne Whalen, Bauline
- Patrick Martin, Paradise
- Andrea Power, Mount Pearl

PROCEEDINGS:

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Joedy Wall at 6:30 p.m.
2. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Antle, seconded by Ms. Thorne-Gosse, that the agenda be adopted as presented. All in favour. Motion carried.

Ref#: NEAJC2018-009

3. DELEGATION(S)

a) **Sean Martin, Municipal Assessment Agency:**

Mr. Sean Martin from the Municipal Assessment Agency (MAA) joined the group to provide a preview of municipal assessments for 2019. Mr. Martin's presentation is included in the Appendix at the end of these meeting minutes.

Mr. Martin explained that the preliminary number for 2019 will be distributed to communities in June or July of 2018. The base date for the data was January 2017. He explained that assessments should show minimal changes from 2014. While there will be some fluctuation, certain types of properties may fluctuate more than others.

Mr. Martin noted that the number of sales in 2017 were down almost 20 per cent. Sale prices are finally recovering from lows in 2015 and early 2016. New construction and renovations are increasing annually as well.

In 2017, there were 1359 sales in communities served by MAA in the Northeast Avalon Region. The average sale price for a property was \$313,689.

Mr. Martin noted that MAA plans to distribute preliminary assessment data earlier, starting this year. By having the data sooner, communities can do their work more effectively, and roll it out to residents quicker as well.

Mr. English noted a drop in sales of 20 per cent on Page 2 of the presentation, as well as a 10 per cent drop in price. He asked what is the estimated drop overall of assessed value in the entire region. Mr. Martin said the overall drop is approximately 2 per cent. He said this is on account of high prices homes selling for less, and modest homes having more value.

Mr. Antle asked about the impact of assessments on Mount Pearl specifically. Mr. Martin said the City of Mount Pearl saw about a 2 per cent change. Mr. Martin added that MAA looks at neighborhoods, while the presentation tonight is more general and provides an overview of the municipalities, region and province.

Ms. Martin asked if there are any anticipated changes to the assessment appeal process from 30 days to maybe 60. Mr. Martin said the legislation is currently under review and any change to the appeal process is up to the Provincial Government.

Mr. Power asked communities to identify if they lowered their mill rate in 2014 on account of the higher assessments. By show of hands, most communities lowered their mill rate.

Mr. Martin said most homes across the province received a net impact of \$50 in additional taxes on average in 2014, notwithstanding the seemingly significant

increase in assessments. This is on account of towns lowering their mill rate and bringing in creative ways to help relieve the burden on property owners.

Mr. Antle asked about the inspection process, specifically if there are random inspections done throughout the year. Mr. Marin said there were 32,000 inspections done as part of the MAA's quality control process. Some of the inspections were at the request of the home owner, and others from the towns.

Mr. Martin concluded by noting information session the MAA will hold in the fall for elected officials and municipal staff. He encouraged everyone to sign up when the invitation goes out. The finalized assessment data will be presented at these sessions as well.

Mr. Wall thanked Mr. Martin for his presentation and suggested regular updates at joint council meetings moving forward.

b) **Ken Kelly, Eastern Regional Service Board (ERSB):**

Mr. Kelly thanked the Chair for the opportunity to give a short presentation to the joint council. He noted the ERSB Board Members present, including Mr. Whalen and Mr. Willis.

Mr. Kelly explained that the ERSB has setup a new Facebook Group called NL Community Leaders Forum. This page is private and intended to facilitate online discussion around municipal service delivery and regionalization opportunities. Joint council members will receive an invite to the group if they haven't already. This is a great opportunity to initiate important overdue discussions.

Mr. Kelly also highlighted a survey that the ERSB has developed that will soon go out to municipal officials. The survey will support the ERSB's development of a new Corporate Plan. It will have four or five questions aimed at garner input about the future of the organization. Everyone is asked to participate in the 2-3 minute survey. Submissions should reflect individual opinions, versus that of a council as a whole. Anyone with questions can call Mr. Power for additional details and instructions.

Mr. Aker arrive at 7:10 p.m.

Mr. Kelly provided a short update on regional fire and emergency services. The ERSB has been providing this service in the Salmonier Line area for the last year. The Board is hopeful that the Provincial Government will soon expand its mandate to deliver this service in other areas. The Board has a list of over a dozen communities interested in buying the service from ERSB and neighbouring communities. This can also address the issue of billing local service districts and unincorporated areas, too.

Mr. Kelly reminded joint council members of the website FairWatse.ca that was launched a few months ago to explain how the ERSB delivers services and collects

fees. There has been a lot of activity on the website. Joint council members are encouraged to send the link to their colleagues and constituents.

Mr. Kelly concluded by saying the ERSB is always available to work with municipalities on exploring new regional services or initiatives. He said other areas are looking at water and wastewater, animal control and municipal enforcement. Mr. Power and Board Members will ensure the joint councils gets updates on the ERSB's activities on a regular basis.

The Chair thanked Mr. Kelly for his attendance and the ERSB's support to the joint council. He encouraged Mr. Kelly to reach out for additional time on the agenda as new issues come up in the future.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Antle, seconded by Mr. Whalen, that the Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday, March 14, 2018, be adopted with the noted edits. All in favour. Motion carried.

Ref#: NEAJC2018-010

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- a) **Regional Joint Council Meeting:** Mr. Power noted that all other joint councils are most interested in holding a collaborative meeting of all organizations in the fall. He asked that joint council members bring back ideas for agenda items to the next meeting. The ERSB will coordinate the meeting and out together the agenda and other necessary materials.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Whalen delivered the financial report:

- The current bank balance is approximately \$14,000.
- There are no outstanding accounts payable.
- In terms of accounts receivable, remittance of 2018 membership payments is almost complete. We are following up with the remaining community.
- In comparison to previous years, the joint council is in a strong financial position leading into the summer. Notwithstanding the cost of the upcoming summer social, the current bank balance gives the joint council the ability to take on a project or new initiative.

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Whalen, seconded by Mr. Antle, that the Treasurer's Report for May 2018 be adopted as tabled. All in favour. Motion carried.

Ref#: NEAJC2018-011

7. EASTERN REGIONAL SERVICE BOARD UPDATE

Mr. Whalen delivered a report on behalf of Eastern Regional Service Board:

The ERSB met last on Wednesday, April 25. The Board discussed a number of issues, including Board Expenditures, Fee Collection Policy Issues and the awarding of the tender for the new Whitbourne Maintenance Depot. In addition, a request was sent to the Provincial Government requesting funding for a new Waste Recovery Facility and for the closure of the Wabana Landfill on Bell Island.

In regard to the Fee Collection Policy Issues – the Board received an update on the collection of interest by the Board and additional information on interest rates and methods used to collect interest by several municipalities in the region. The annual rate of interest applied varies from 5.95% per year to 24% annually and can be simple or compound within that annual range. While the current practice of ERSB accumulates a lot of interest in some cases, it should be noted that the rates and methods used by the other municipalities are on much higher dollar value amounts – a higher principal. So, the impact and message that the interest has and its method of collection is more impactful because it is being charged on a higher principal amount. In our discussion we noted that for the most part everyone is within the range of 1% to 2%. The major difference is whether you charge simple or compound interest. The method of applying interest is what gets the most criticism. Obviously the compounding of interest and compounding of interest on interest are the aspects that are criticized the most. In the City of St. John's and other communities they have other tools in order to try and get people to pay their bills, such as cutting off water service. Applying interest is the main tool that the Board has in attempting to get people to make payment. As a result of the research and discussion, the Board will implement a new interest rate in 2019. It will be 1.75% monthly simple interest on all outstanding account on a go-forward basis.

In regard to the new Whitbourne Maintenance Depot – the tender was awarded to Can Am Platforms and Construction Limited for the sum of \$1,709,633.01. This project is funded by the Provincial Government. It will provide the Board with much needed space, and will allow the Board to conclude renting space to store trucks and equipment in Blaketown. Construction is expected to start soon, and be completed in the fall of 2018.

The next meeting of the Eastern Regional Service Board will take place on Wednesday, May 23 at 7PM in St. John's. Joint council members were reminded that these meetings are open to the public.

8. NEW BUSINESS

c) Water and Waste Water Regulations:

Mr. Power noted that water and waste water regulations are the advocacy issue for discussion this month. He opened the floor to comments:

Mr. Costello noted that the Town of Holyrood has 4 or 5 outfalls that are currently being monitored by BioMax.

Mr. Wall noted the Town of Pouch Cove has one outfall, also being monitored by BioMax. The monitoring process takes three years.

Ms. Thorne-Gosse noted that the Town of Torbay will begin their monitoring process next month.

Mr. Willis noted that the Town of Paradise is doing \$5.2 million in upgrades to their water treatment plant. They are now installing UV treatment. While these upgrades will improve their system, it will still not meet the new federal regulations. It will take time and more money to meet the new requirements. He also encouraged communities to explore the FCM Infrastructure Bank for potential financial support for water and waste water initiatives.

Mr. Wall said it is a big worry for staff when these systems don't meet regulation. Town staff are ultimately responsible in the legislation and could be penalized as a result.

Mr. English said the regulations seem to be unrealistic for most communities. He encouraged all joint council members to advocate to the provincial and federal governments for more money to address the issue. He expects billions of dollars are required to bring things up to the level the federal government requires, which is complete unrealistic.

Mr. Power will speak to representatives at Municipalities NL at their next advocacy meeting in June to see where they are in regard to this issue. Mr. Power will report on his findings next month (if the meeting has taken place by then).

b) **Not for Profit Taxation:**

Mr. Stack asked how other communities deal with non-profit organization operating in their towns, specifically how they are taxed. Mr. Power said the Town of Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove does not collect business taxes from non-profits. Mr. Antle said the City of Mount Pearl has the same policy. Other communities were asked to find out their respective policy and let Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove know.

c) **Update on BanTheBagNL Campaign:**

Mr. Wall noted that the issue of a plastic bag ban was once again discussed at the recent MNL Symposium. He reminded joint council members that a letter came out

from past chair Craig Williams requesting that each individual town send a letter to government advocating for a ban. A number of communities sent a letter. Those that didn't are asked to do so as soon as possible. Mr. Power will send out a template letter to those who haven't sent one yet.

Mr. Costello noted that the Town of Holyrood sent a letter recently and the response was not favourable. He said we all need to continue advocating in order for this to be successful. The group agreed.

d) **Special Project Ideas for Fall 2018:**

Mr. Wall noted that the joint council is in a good financial position to take on a special project in the fall. He asked that all joint council members think about potential ideas for the next meeting. In the past the council has been limited by resources in this regard, but Mr. Power can now put together any required proposals or applications on the council's behalf.

e) **Joint Council Summer Social:**

Mr. Power and Mr. English noted that the summer social is tentatively booked for after the next joint council meeting at the St. Thomas Line Community Centre. They will be determining any additional requirements in the coming days and will send out a note to the group. The social is open to all council members and their spouses/partners.

f) **Frequency of regular Meetings:**

Mr. Power asked the group if they are satisfied with the current monthly date for joint council meetings. While attendance has declined somewhat in recent months, the vast majority of communities are sending at least one rep to each meeting, which is great. No one flagged any issues with meeting remaining on the second Wednesday of the month moving forward. Mr. Power will reach out to communities who have been absent lately to determine the reason. It is expected that things will ramp up again in the fall, which has historically been the case.

9. ROUNDTABLE

a) **Municipal Awareness Day:**

The Chair noted that Municipal Awareness Day is today, May 9. He thanked everyone for their service and encouraged joint council members to show their appreciation to staff and volunteers today who support our communities. He concluded by noting that Minister Parsons from Municipal Affairs and Environment, and Mr. Peckford from the Professional Municipal Administrators, expressed their appreciation to the entire municipal sector at the MNL Symposium.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, June 13, 2018 in the Town of Paradise.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: It was moved by Ms. Martin, seconded by Mr. English that the meeting adjourn. All in favour. Motion carried.

Ref#: NEAJC2018-012

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

APPENDIX – MAA PRESENTATION (MAY 2018)