

Amherst Town Council

Special Meeting

Minutes

Date: May 23, 2018
Time: 4:00 pm
Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall

Members Present Mayor David Kogon
Deputy Mayor Sheila Christie
Councillor Jason Blanch
Councillor Vince Byrne
Councillor Darrell Jones
Councillor Wayne MacKenzie
Councillor Terry Rhindress

Staff Present Greg Herrett, CAO
Jason MacDonald, Deputy CAO Operations
Bill Schurman. Director Recreation
Greg Jones, Fire Chief
Tom McCoag, Corporate Communications Officer
Shelley Rector, Chief Financial Officer
Rebecca Taylor, Business Development Officer
Sarah Wilson, Manager of Financial Services
Natalie LeBlanc, Deputy Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kogon called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

1.1 Mayor's Comments

I am pleased to present the Town’s operating and capital budgets for the 2018/19 fiscal year. First, on behalf of all members of our Council, let me congratulate our senior management team and staff work in getting us to this point. Members of Council worked as a team and focused on council priorities while recognizing that there are pressures like inflation that impact on budgets.

Following a comprehensive operations and capital budget review process as well as ensuring Council’s commitment to their strategic priorities has been reflected, the Town of Amherst has made the following changes:

1. A half cent increase in the Community Support Area Rate which is a minimal increase for residents that allows for reinvestment into the community.
2. The Tax Reduction Policy will be amended to allow for a \$450 reduction for those with an income of \$25,000 or less. Council recognizes the strain tax payers on limited and fixed incomes have paying their property taxes and would like to expand the household income credit to ensure fair and equitable treatment
3. An increase in the deed transfer tax from 1% to 1.25% of the purchase price. This increase has been ear-marked for poverty reduction and is expected to generate approximately \$50,000 annually.

In early January Council, along with senior management, participated in a very intense and well-coordinated exercise that allowed us to identify and prioritize the issues. Using input from many sources we were able to identify what importance to put on these issues and to a great degree the order in which to tackle them. Last year we had a strong focus on business which has continued with our new Business Development Officer. In addition, this year we are also focusing on other priorities like Poverty Reduction and Community Support.

Council is pleased to provide a budget that reflects the NOW Priorities and NEXT Directions outlined in the 2018 Strategic Priorities Plan.

We’re also pleased to deliver:

- \$17,532,518 operating budget and \$2,988,703 capital budget that includes \$225,000 for active transportation links within the Town;

- The approval of \$84,180 worth of 2018-19 Community Support Grants, such as Bordertown Biker Bash, Fibre Arts Festival and Maggie's Place. (An event will be scheduled in June 2018 for Council to present the 2018-19 community support grants cheques.); and
- An investment of \$3,136,958 for capital for Water. The majority of which is part two of the reservoir project (including Willow Street watermain replacement).

I feel extremely optimistic about the next year for the Town of Amherst. This budget allows the Town to complete necessary infrastructure projects while minimizing tax increases. The Town is fortunate to be able to continue to deliver the level of services provided while minimizing tax increases even while the expenses of the Town continue to be impacted by inflation for items like wages, energy costs and more.

Now there are a series of motions to give effect to this year's budget. I'll ask our CAO to lead us through these.

1.2 CAO's Comments

I am pleased to present the Town's operating and capital budgets for the 2018/19 fiscal year for Council's consideration this evening. I do want to acknowledge and thank the senior management team for their work in the preparation of this year's budget. A special thanks to Sarah Wilson from the Corporate Services Department who played a significant role in the budget preparation this year.

Residential capped assessment grew by 0.1% this year representing \$429,700 in additional assessment yielding a minimal increase in residential tax revenue (\$7,000). Commercial assessment declined by 0.2%, representing about \$11,000 less in revenue.

On the expenditure side, estimated expenditures will decrease by about \$48,000 or 0.3%. This is mainly due to the removal of the CRDA wind-up costs from last year which are offset by wage and benefit increases due to contract negotiations and pension costs.

There have been some internal organizational changes which have resulted in some budget being reallocated between departments but does not affect the overall budget.

This budget has focused on the priorities of Council and specifically on increasing contributions to the Community and to support poverty reduction in Amherst.

A proposed change to the Tax Reduction Policy, increasing the credit available to \$450 for anyone having income of \$25,000 or less (and removing tiers) has been done. This was done within the existing budget, as not all of the budget was spent last year.

The fire protection charge that the Amherst Water Utility charges the Town, by order of the UARB, is set to increase by \$46,000.

Some reduction in cost has occurred for mandatory contributions to provincial agencies where we see an estimated decrease of \$129,000 for Housing and a \$17,000 increase in Education costs. Although there has been a decrease in expected budget numbers for housing, we do note that any expenditures over budget are required to be funded by the Town. Your worship, you will recall that Council approved the rate for the Provincial Mandatory Education Area Rate in February and was reduced from .41 cents to .39 cents.

Projected year-end financial results point to a balanced budget this year with Council focusing on strategic priorities in areas like active transportation, poverty reduction, community support and pension plan review.

This year's capital budget was once again prepared with reference to the various studies that have been completed over the past couple of years including the Asset Management Study, the Recreation Master Plan, the TIR assessment of the Town's street infrastructure and the Vehicle Replacement Plan. In addition, this year's budget references the Town's recently created Active Transportation Plan. The recommended capital budget is included in the budget document at page 15 and totals \$2,988,703 in general capital.

Last year the residential tax was held constant and the commercial tax was reduced. The recommended tax rates for the 2018/19 fiscal year are outlined on page 6 of the budget document. There is a half cent increase in the Community Support Area Rate to enable Council to provide additional support to the community. Although there is a change in the mix of rates, the overall result is that the total residential rate is proposed to increase to \$1.635 and the commercial rate is proposed to be increased to \$4.435.

We have modeled the change based on the average residential assessment for Amherst residents (\$103,814 in 2017/18 and \$103,873 in 2018/19). The details are at page 10 of the budget document (increase is a total of \$36.16 per household annually – that’s less than 10 cents per day)

In addition, deed transfer tax has been increased from 1% to 1.25%, effective July 1, 2018. The funds raised from this tax, estimated to be about \$50,000 annually, will be ear-marked for poverty reduction programs.

It is worth noting, Your Worship, that our ten year operating and capital models indicate that there are ongoing pressures expected on costs and revenues, and that Amherst needs to continue to be vigilant in ensuring the long term viability of the Town.

A final note: while the budget is being presented for approval today, there still remain a few items left for Council meetings in May and June to give full effect to entire plan. The Community Support Grants policy, the new Tax Exemption Policy, second reading of the Bylaw to Repeal the Tax Exemption Bylaw and amendments to the Deed Transfer Tax Bylaw will work their way through the next two regular meetings of Council.

2. BUDGET RESOLUTIONS

2.1 Estimates of Revenues and Expenditures

Moved By Councillor Blanch
Seconded By Deputy Mayor Christie
That Council accepts the following estimates of the sums required by the Town of Amherst for the fiscal period ending March 31, 2019, prepared in accordance with Section 72 of the *Municipal Government Act*:

Revenues	
Taxes	\$13,085,860
Grants in Lieu of Taxes	311,991
Services Provided to Other Local Gov't	188,208
Sale of Services	1,387,027
Other Revenue from Own Sources	642,270
Unconditional Transfers	1,260,382
Conditional Transfers	350,000
Other Transfers	306,780
Total Revenues	\$17,532,518

Expenditures	
Corporate Services	\$4,915,929
Police Services	4,213,492
Fire Protection Services	1,769,926
Operations	4,188,245
Planning	125,626
Community & Economic Development	319,047
Recreation	1,854,473
Strategic	145,780
Total Expenditures	\$17,532,518

Motion Carried

2.2 General Tax Rate

Moved By Councillor Byrne

Seconded By Councillor MacKenzie

WHEREAS total estimated expenditures for the fiscal period are \$17,532,518; and

WHEREAS total estimated revenues, other than taxes to be levied are \$4,446,658 ; and

WHEREAS the balance of revenues required, \$13,085,860 must be rated;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT for the Town of Amherst for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019:

1. The general tax rates are as follows:

Residential / Resource \$1.18 per \$100 of assessment

Commercial \$3.98 per \$100 of assessment

AND THAT these taxes are due and payable on September 28, 2018 with interest to be charged on all final tax accounts outstanding on or after October 1, 2018 at the rate of 1% per month, 12% per annum.

Motion Carried

2.3 Area Rates

2.3.1 Community Support – 2018/19 Area Rate

Moved By Deputy Mayor Christie

Seconded By Councillor Rhindress

WHEREAS the estimated community support for the 2018-19 fiscal period of \$344,752 must be rated;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT for the Town of Amherst for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, the Community Support Area Rate on all property assessments within the boundary of the Town of Amherst are as follows:

Residential / Resource \$0.065 per \$100 of assessment

Commercial \$0.065 per \$100 of assessment

AND THAT these area rates are due and payable on September 28, 2018 with interest to be charged on all final tax accounts outstanding on or after October 1, 2018 at the rate of 1% per month, 12% per annum.

Motion Carried

2.4 Sanitary Sewer Rates

Moved By Councillor Blanch

Seconded By Councillor Rhindress

WHEREAS Council is authorized by the Town of Amherst Sanitary Sewer Rates By-law to set rates for sewer services;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT owners shall be billed for sewer services using one of the following methods effective April 1, 2018:

• Metered Customers

Those owners whose water service is metered shall pay a usage charge:

o Residential: \$0.99 per cu. meter of metered water consumption as determined by the Amherst Water Utility;

o Commercial/Industrial/Institutional: \$0.49 per cu. meter of metered water consumption as determined by the Amherst Water Utility.

o Base Charges

Those owners whose water service is metered shall pay a base charge quarterly. The quarterly base charge by meter size is:

5/8"	\$18.00
3/4"	\$27.00
1"	\$43.75
1 1/2"	\$86.00
2"	\$136.25
3"	\$271.25
4"	\$500.00

- **Non-Metered Customers**

For non-metered customers in unmetered mobile home parks, the park owner shall pay \$178.53 per dwelling unit per annum.

Motion Carried

2.5 **Wastewater Treatment Facility Uniform Charge**

Moved By Councillor MacKenzie

Seconded By Councillor Byrne

WHEREAS Council has included in its estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, an amount to be raised for a portion of the debenture principal and interest payments for the wastewater treatment facility, a purpose for which the Town may expend funds; and

WHEREAS there are approximately 486 unmetered mobile homes within a land leased community within the boundaries of the Town of Amherst; and

WHEREAS the Council may, under paragraph 75(4)(b) of the *Municipal Government Act*, in lieu of levying an area rate, levy a uniform charge on each unmetered mobile home within a land leased community in the area;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a uniform charge of \$72.00 be levied for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019 on each unmetered mobile home within a land leased community within the boundaries of the Town of Amherst, and that these uniform charges are due and payable on September 28, 2018 with interest to be charged on all final tax accounts outstanding on or after October 1, 2018 at the rate of 1% per month, 12% per annum.

Motion Carried

2.6 **Solid Waste Management Uniform Charge**

Moved By Councillor Byrne

Seconded By Councillor Blanch

WHEREAS Council has included in its estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, the amount of \$564,855 to be expended for the purpose of solid waste management, a purpose for which the Town may expend funds; and

WHEREAS \$564,855 is funded from the Solid Waste Management Uniform Charge; and

WHEREAS there are approximately 3,223 dwelling units within the boundaries of the Town of Amherst in residential premises with less than four such dwelling units; and

WHEREAS the Council may, under paragraph 75(4)(b) of the *Municipal Government Act*, in lieu of levying an area rate, levy a uniform charge on each property assessment in the area;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a uniform charge of \$175.00 be levied for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019 on each dwelling unit within the boundaries of the Town of Amherst in residential premises with less than four such dwelling units, and that these uniform charges are due and payable on September 28, 2018 with interest to be charged on all final tax accounts outstanding on or after October 1, 2018 at the rate of 1% per month, 12% per annum.

Motion Carried

2.7 **Operating Budget - Water Utility**

Moved By Councillor Jones
Seconded By Councillor MacKenzie
That Council approves the 2018-2019 Amherst Water Utility Operating Budget of \$2,154,099 as presented.

Motion Carried

2.8 **Capital Budget - Town of Amherst & Amherst Water Utility**

Moved By Councillor MacKenzie
Seconded By Councillor Rhindress

That Council approves the Town of Amherst General Capital Budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year as presented in the amount of \$2,988,703 and the Amherst Water Utility Capital Budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year in the amount of \$3,136,958 to be funded as follows:

	<u>Town of Amherst</u>		<u>Amherst Water Utility</u>
Capital from Revenue	\$ 590,000	Capital from Revenue	\$ 40,000
Gas Tax Funding	1,025,280	Water Capital (Depreciation)	191,234
Long Term Debt	535,000	Federal Grant – CWWF	1,343,988
Reserves	<u>838,423</u>	Provincial Grant – CWWF	690,919
Total	<u>\$ 2,988,703</u>	Long Term Debt	<u>870,817</u>
		Total	<u>\$ 3,136,958</u>

And further, that Council approve in principle the subsequent nine years’ Capital Budget plan as presented:

	<u>General Capital</u>	<u>Water Capital</u>
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Total Amount</u>	<u>Total Amount</u>
2019 – 2020	2,811,750	483,750
2020 – 2021	2,082,500	388,750
2021 – 2022	2,584,000	235,000
2022 – 2023	1,638,250	296,000
2023 – 2024	1,613,250	225,000
2024 – 2025	1,605,250	200,000
2025 – 2026	1,399,000	265,000
2026 – 2027	1,608,000	375,000
2027 – 2028	1,548,000	385,000

To be clear, the second part of this motion contemplates the approval of the amounts for the years 2019-2020 to 2027-2028 for planning purposes only; this is not the authority to spend, nor is it necessarily the final and complete listing.

Motion Carried

3. **REQUEST FOR DECISION**

3.1 **General Borrowing Resolution**
Moved By Councillor Jones
Seconded By Deputy Mayor Christie

That Council approves a general borrowing resolution to authorize the borrowing of certain moneys from the Royal Bank of Canada to meet the current expenditures of the Town of Amherst for the year ending March 31, 2019.

Motion Carried

3.2 **Tax Exemption Bylaw**
Moved By Councillor Rhindress
Seconded By Councillor MacKenzie

That Council approve first reading of a bylaw to Repeal the Tax Exemption Bylaw B-1.

Motion Carried
Councillor Blanch Nay Vote

3.3 Tax Reduction Policy

Moved by Deputy Mayor Christie

Seconded by Councillor Byrne

That Council approves amendments to the Tax Reduction Policy 3800-02 to the following income levels and amounts:

- Less than \$25,000 - a credit of \$450

Motion Carried

3.4 User Fees Policy

Moved By Councillor Blanch

Seconded By Councillor MacKenzie

That Council approve the amended User Fees Policy 3470-03 Schedule A.

Motion Carried

3.5 Community Support Grants - Grants to Organizations

Moved By Councillor MacKenzie

Seconded By Deputy Mayor Christie

That Council approves funding in the amount of \$84,180 under the Community Support Grants Policy as follows:

Amherst Little League Baseball Association - included in Policy - \$1,500

Amherst Little League T-Ball Baseball - included in Policy - \$500

Autumn House - included in Policy - \$10,000

Cumberland Early Intervention Program - included in Policy - \$500

Food Assistance Network - included in Policy - \$2,000

LA Animal Shelter - included in Policy - \$10,000

LA Animal Shelter - additional funds requested - \$2,500

Sexual Health Centre for Cumberland - included in Policy - \$500

Amherst Minor Basketball - Coaching Clinic - \$300

Showcase Productions - Summer Theatre Music Camp - \$1,000

Canadian Cancer Society - Relay for Life funding for Stadium rental - \$1,800

Maritime Mosaic - Dayle's Block Party/Concert at Curling Club - \$1,500

Maggie's Place - Cooking Program for Dad's - \$4,630

Fibre Arts Festival Society - Fibre Arts Festival - \$3,000

Bordertown Biker Bash Committee - Biker Bash Festival - \$3,000

Cumberland Y Service Club - Cross Border Challenge - \$2,000

Seniors Safety Program - Support for Senior Safety Program - \$6,500

Cumberland County Museum - Cameras/Security System - \$4,000

Amherst Golf Club - Junior Program reduced fees - \$1,500

NSCC - Make Way Campaign student bursaries - \$20,000

Cumberland Health Care Foundation - Walking Track - \$5,000

Autism NS - Walk the Walk for Autism - \$950

Cumberland Health Care Auxiliary - Highland Fling - \$500

Cumberland Health Care Foundation -Adult Prom - \$1,000

And further that Council approves a five year commitment to the NSCC Make Way Campaign of \$20,000 per year (including this year) to fund Amherst resident students who demonstrate a financial need and who are attending an NSCC campus anywhere in Nova Scotia.

Motion Carried

3.6 Deed Transfer Tax Bylaw

Moved By Councillor Blanch

Seconded By Councillor Byrne

That Council approve first reading of a By-law to Amend the Deed Transfer Tax By-law, which changes the deed transfer tax rate from 1% to 1.25% of the sale price or value of property sold.

Motion Carried

3.7 Rambler Agreement

Deputy Mayor Christie declared a conflict of interest and left the meeting.

Moved By Councillor MacKenzie

Seconded By Councillor Blanch

That Council approve entering into an operating agreement with the Amherst Jr. “A” Hockey Club (the Ramblers) for the 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 ice seasons, and authorizes the Mayor and CAO to sign the agreement on behalf of the Town.

Motion Carried

Deputy Mayor Christie returned to the meeting at this time.

- 3.8 **CUPE Agreement**
Moved by Councillor Jones
Seconded by Councillor Rhindress

That Council approve the CUPE Local 1233 Collective Agreement.

Motion Carried
Councillor Blanch Nay Vote

4. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

- 4.1 **2018-19 Operating and Capital Budget Report**

Information item; no direction given or action required.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**
Moved By Councillor Jones
Seconded By Councillor Byrne

To adjourn the meeting at 4:40 PM.

Motion Carried

Gregory D. Herrett, CPA, CA
Chief Administrative Officer

David Kogon, MD
Mayor