



Minutes

Meeting of Alma Village Council

February 22, 2022, at 7:00 pm – Video Communications via Zoom

PRESENT:

Andrew Casey – Mayor

Susan MacCallum – Deputy Mayor

Tiffany Bowron – Councillor

John Ereaux – Councillor

Hanna Downey – Clerk/Treasurer

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Casey called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

IT WAS MOVED by *Councillor Ereaux* and seconded by *Councillor MacCallum* **THAT** the amended agenda be approved as circulated. Amendments:

- Addition under Committee Reports to include an update from *Mayor Casey* regarding the flooding situation. **MOTION CARRIED** (unanimously).

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

IT WAS MOVED by *Councillor MacCallum* and seconded by *Councillor Ereaux* **THAT** the minutes of January 17, 2022, be approved. **MOTION CARRIED** (unanimously).

ADOPTION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

IT WAS MOVED by *Councillor MacCallum* and seconded by *Councillor Bowron* **THAT** the Council of the Village of Alma accept the Financial Statements for January 2022 for both General Operating and Utility Accounts. **MOTION CARRIED** (unanimously)

PRESENTATIONS

Alicia O'Hara & Amy O'Keefe – The ParticipACTION Community Better Challenge. Amy O'Keefe stated that she has been with Horizon Health as a Community Developer since July 2021. Amy provided information on the spring Coin-G process, which are grants available for any new projects that address any social determinants of health or that will benefit the health of your community. Alicia and Amy advised they will be helping to promote the ParticipACTION Community Better Challenge which takes place during the month of June. *Mayor Casey* stated they have Council's support and that we would welcome the idea to work together on this incentive. *Mayor Casey* thanked them for their presentation.

RCMP REPORT

Councillor Ereaux asked if an update has been received on the RCMP backpay; per *Mayor Casey*, no. *Councillor MacCallum* stated that Council had passed a motion in November 2021 in support of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities efforts in calling on the Federal government to absorb all retroactive costs associated with the implementation of the new RCMP labour relations regime. *Mayor Casey* stated that we will keep the public informed when more information is made available.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mayor Casey - Southeast Regional Service Commission. *Mayor Casey* advised that he attended a meeting with Roland LeBlanc, Mayor Campbell, Mayor Rochon, and a third-party consultant to discuss economic development reform for the region. *Mayor Casey* advised that a report from that meeting will be presented to the SERSC and when completed, *Mayor Casey* will bring the information back to Council.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – cont'd

Mayor Casey – Local Governance Reform. *Mayor Casey* stated the following points:

- The process of reform is set by the Province of New Brunswick and is not controlled by the Council of the Village of Alma,
- **Councillor Ereaux** and himself represent the Village of Alma on the Elected Officials Advisory Committee,
- The incorporated Village of Alma will cease on January 1, 2023, and will be reformed into what is referred to as Entity 42, which is the largest entity being amalgamated in New Brunswick, and
- **Councillor Ereaux** and himself will represent the Village with their best intentions.

Mayor Casey advised there have been two Elected Officials Advisory Committee meetings. The purpose of the initial meeting was to discuss ward boundaries and council composition. It was decided at that meeting that the southernmost boundary of the entity (Alma to Hopewell) would have one councillor in Entity 42. *Mayor Casey* advised this decision was unacceptable and the committee reconvened the following Saturday where **Councillor Ereaux** articulated why Alma would require more representation. The outcome of the latter meeting was that Alma's representation boundary would be comprised of Alma, Alma Local Service District (LSD) and Harvey LSD. *Mayor Casey* and **Councillor Ereaux** reluctantly agreed to this decision. *Mayor Casey* said that representation in the new entity is population-based, and that he will continue to work as hard as he can for the Village of Alma. *Mayor Casey* stated that the challenge moving forward is that most of the new entity's population reside in Lower Coverdale's LSD. *Mayor Casey* stated that Council has been communicating the decisions made at the Elected Officials Advisory Committee using bulletins and our website. *Mayor Casey* advised that we have requested a meeting with MLA, Mike Holland. **Councillor Ereaux** added that in addition to the Elected Officials Advisory Committee, there is a second committee called the Administrative Advisory Committee. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that Alma's Clerk, Hanna Downey, sits on that committee, along with the other two municipal clerks and transition facilitator, Chad Peters. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that Council is not in control of the process of governance reform, as previously stated by *Mayor Casey*, and that there is a lot of information regarding the reform process that has not yet been provided to the Council. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that one fact we do know is that representation for Alma and council composition for Entity 42 is quite different than what we currently have. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that Entity 42 will be divided into six (6) wards. One ward will consist of Alma, the LSD of Alma, and the LSD of Harvey. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that within that ward, Alma is the minority by population and reiterated that the change of representation for Alma will be significant. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that it remains unknown how money is raised in our community as we move forward into the new entity and that it hasn't been made clear how the money will be divided or managed. **Councillor Ereaux** further stated that the representation in the new entity has been skewed in favour of Alma, which is only 4% of the new entity. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that a future council could decide to make the representation by population a fairer situation which would result in more representation to the north end of the entity (Lower Coverdale and Hillsborough). **Councillor Ereaux** stated that he is aware of several residents who have sent letters to the Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform outlining their concerns of amalgamation that have not yet received responses.

Mayor Casey – Flood Damage Mitigation. *Mayor Casey* advised that the Village of Alma was greatly affected by the rainstorm that resulted in the flash melting of snow causing floodwaters on village streets and roadways on the weekend of February 18. *Mayor Casey* stated he and the Administrator have been in constant contact with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DTI), who he stated have been extremely helpful and had been on the scene over the weekend to estimate the damage and determine priorities. *Mayor Casey* stated that due to the storm, the bottom of the Forty-Five Road has been completely washed out. Fixing this road has been a priority for DTI since Friday's storm and DTI hired a contractor who will begin work tomorrow, February 23 and have committed to having the Forty-Five Road reopened to one lane by end of the day tomorrow. *Mayor Casey* stated that an early estimate of

COMMITTEE REPORTS – cont’d

damage to the Village of Alma is over One Million dollars. **Mayor Casey** stated that the bridge on Foster Drive is also a top priority to be repaired. **Mayor Casey** stated that DTI is also prioritizing fixing the shoulders of Highways 114 and 915. **Mayor Casey** thanks everyone for their patience while this work is undertaken. **Councillor Ereaux** added that the damage has also impacted our infrastructure defences and reminds residents to remain vigilant as upcoming weather approaches.

Councillor Bowron – Fundy National Park. **Councillor Bowron** reviewed an encouraging update on Fundy National Park’s projection on the upcoming season, including Parks Canada Reservation System launch date, and a 2022 Winter Offer update.

2022 Winter Offer Update

Fundy National Park’s winter offer is as popular as ever. This past January was record-breaking for Fundy National Park, welcoming the most visitors January has ever seen. We hope that this is also translating to increased traffic for local businesses. Our visitors enjoy the convenience of the general store, restaurants, coffee, etc. The remaining months of winter look promising. February and March are almost fully booked with some availability during weekdays.

2022 Parks Canada Reservation System Launch

Camping reservations for the 2022 tourism season, as well as the 2022-23 winter season, opened on Tuesday, February 15, and Fundy National Park received a total of 6,411 bookings – which exceeded last year’s launch day where the number was 6,390 and double the numbers of the 2019 launch. Although online traffic is always busy on launch day, there is still ample availability throughout the year. Availability for long weekends may be limited but visitors are encouraged to be flexible, consider visiting during the week rather than weekends or visiting during shoulder seasons. Visitors are also encouraged to check periodically for cancellations. Reservations can be made through the Parks Canada Reservation website at reservation.pc.gc.ca or by calling 1-877-RESERVE (1-877-737-3783). Watch for social media updates on availability throughout the season as well.

2022 Tourism Season Outlook

2021 was the closest to normal that we have experienced since the beginning of 2020. We expect that momentum to continue this year, as people value travel and personal vacations more and are eager to hit the road again. Seasonal offers at Fundy National Park will be similar to last year as we continue to focus on the health and safety of visitors, employees and all Canadians.

More details on Fundy National Park’s summer offer will be announced in the spring, stay tuned!

Councillor MacCallum – Alma Fire Department. **Councillor MacCallum** advised that Fire Chief, David Rossiter, reports that he and his crew assisted where they could during last weekend’s rainstorm, and they are concerned about the damage that was done throughout the village.

Councillor MacCallum – Climate Change Adaptation Plan. **Councillor MacCallum** advised that Laura Leger, the project lead from our engineering firm Englobe, hosted a public engagement session on February 8th via Zoom Communications. The turnout wasn’t as good as had been hoped for, but Laura took the opportunity to provide a review of the project and to introduce the public climate change questionnaire. Laura reported that she had, to date, received a decent number of responses to the questionnaire. The village posted the questionnaire on its new website and sent a public reminder on the village’s Facebook page so hopefully, there have been more responses sent in to add to the data collection process. The committee expects to receive a draft climate change adaptation plan sometime this week to review.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – cont'd

Councillor MacCallum - Alma! Committee. *Councillor MacCallum* advised that eight of the twelve Alma! Committee volunteers were able to attend a committee meeting on January 28th. Following are some points from that meeting's draft minutes:

- A funding application to the federal Celebration and Commemorative Reopening Fund was submitted on January 31st. The ask included landscaping/beautification costs, a tide clock, benches for open-air seating, new garbage receptacles, paint and new signage, hanging baskets, hydro pole hardware and banners, and dark sky preserve lighting.
- Two committee members provided updates on their research and costing for benches and garbage receptacles.
- A general discussion and assignment of project tasks for 2022 based on individual committee member interests followed.

Councillor MacCallum advised the next committee meeting is Friday, February 25th.

WATER REPORT

Mayor Casey provided an update on the progress of the exploratory well site. **Mayor Casey** stated that the access road and the new well pads are now complete. Our engineer firm, Englobe, is pushing to get the well drillers on-site as soon as possible, and requesting that prior commitments be pushed to a later date. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that the Village of Alma has a formal agreement with the landowner to enter the land to conduct this exploratory water project. **Councillor Ereaux** stated that this is as close as we have been in two years to find an additional water source and stated he is hopeful to have an update for residents at the next council meeting.

CLERK REPORT

The Clerk advised there was one building permit issued in January, to convert an existing single-unit dwelling to a three-unit dwelling on Ocean Drive, valued at \$100,000.

The Clerk advised a 2022 membership request came from the Albert County Chamber of Commerce; **Mayor Casey** suggested that we ask them to do a presentation on the benefits of membership.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk stated that she was cc'd on several letters from residents addressed to the Minister of Local Government and Governance Reform with their concerns of amalgamation.

The Clerk received two emails from residents thanking our Public Works employee for snow clearing/sidewalk clearing and stated that she has also received positive feedback about snow clearing done by our snow removal contractor.

Mayor Casey stated that the Clerk is compiling the concerns received from residents on local governance reform and that we have requested a meeting with MLA, Mike Holland to present those concerns.

PAYING OF BILLS

The Clerk advised that all bills have been paid.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Opportunity for residents to ask questions to members of Council.

ADJOURNMENT

IT WAS MOVED by **Councillor Ereaux** **THAT** the meeting be adjourned at 8:29 pm.

Mayor

Clerk/Treasurer