

Council holds public meeting for development charges bylaw

Written By PETER RICHARDSON

Council met Monday in their second virtual meeting of the COVID-19 pandemic era, to hold a public meeting in regards to the ongoing development charges study being conducted by Hemson Consulting.

However, prior to the start of the meeting, Mayor Wade Mills took a moment to express the community's sadness at the events that have unfolded recently, in Nova Scotia and to hold a 'moment of silence' for the victims, their families and all those involved in those tragic events.

Following this, he read out a proclamation, declaring April 19 through 25 to be National Volunteer Week in the Town of Shelburne. The mayor noted that over 12.7 million volunteers work throughout Canada and that here in Shelburne, our many volunteers are instrumental to the success of many Town functions and programmes.

Development charges public meeting

Following this, the floor was turned over to Craig Binning from Hemson, who took Council through a presentation of the DC Study. He began by explaining that the public meeting was mandated under the Development Charges Act, in order to accommodate their input to the study, which was made publicly available on March 12, with the bylaws made available on April 6.

A DC bylaw must be renewed every five years, and the current Shelburne one was established on May 25th, 2015 and will expire on May 26 of this year. On April 14, the Province passed legislation to extend that date by up to six months, following the end of the State of Emergency. It is up to individual councils whether or not to take that extension.

By not passing the new bylaw as originally proposed, the Town could suffer adverse financial impacts, due to the freezing of rates at the application stage of developments but also would affect the developers' ability to obtain front-end credit for capital costs. These costs must be included in the DC study in order for the developer to receive credits off it. DC costs are applied against, fire protection services, police services, public works, roads and related services, water services and wastewater services. Town wide, this amounts to \$44.7 million.

In addition to town-wide development charges, certain areas have specific charges related solely to that area. Currently in Shelburne there were two such areas in the study and a third which will be dealt with at a later date. The first two are the School Road and the east area centring around the Hwy 89 and CR 124 developments and the last one being the west area, where Tribute Homes is currently building.

As an example of what is being proposed, A single family unit, or a semi detached unit on a fully serviced town lot, would pay \$15,421 in development charges. If they were in the School Road area, there would be an additional \$4,963 levied and in the east area the additional would be \$12,531. These extra charges directly relate to the increased infrastructure that would need to be constructed to accommodate water, waste water, roads etc.

Currently, for the above outlined services the charges are \$12,228 per unit with the new suggested charges going up by 26 percent to \$15,421, or an increase of \$3,193. By comparison to other similar communities, this places Shelburne in about the middle percentile for detached single family residential dwellings.

Those areas which have been removed from the Development Charges Act, such as parkland, will now be covered under a separate legislation called the CBC, or Community Benefits Charges, and appropriate Town bylaws will be required within one year of the CBC legislation being passed.

In questioning from Council and developers, Hemson stated that the west area rates would be determined later in the year and brought before Council at that time. It was noted that some of the infrastructure construction is being built oversized, to allow for future development and discussions were ongoing with Tribute as to what portion would be allocated to them vs future developers in the area. Shakir Rematullah, from Flato Developments stated they were fully in support of the proposed increases and changes, but asked if the Town had plans in place for accommodating future development north of Main Street on 4th Ave. Town Planner Steve Wever and Hemson answered that indeed this had been included in the study.

Coun. Lindsay Wegener asked if some clarification could be made, for the residents, who think that developers should be made to pay for all the Town's infrastructure needs. Craig Binning explained that development charges are mandated to be used for each specific development and in as much, the developer is paying for 100 percent of the infrastructure required by his development.

It was explained by Mayor Mills and others, that there are certain life- time expectations for infrastructure that have to be accommodated by the Town and therefore the residents, apart from new developments. The waste water treatment plant for example, was built over 50 years ago and has to be maintained to accommodate the increased demands put upon it by a growing population. Pipes must be replaced and so forth. None of this is the responsibility of the developers. They pay for their part, but solid costs are spread out over the entire community. Mayor Mills added that the plant, being old, requires maintenance regardless of new growth, or perhaps in spite of it.

The resolution to receive the report as presented was carried.

COVID-19 efforts

In other business, Deputy Mayor Steve Anderson took time to thank Shelburne's community members for their efforts to combat COVID-19, and in particular our frontline workers. He wanted to know if it was possible for Council to obtain some PPE's and distribute them to those individuals.

It was noted by Treasurer Carey Holmes that money was available, in the 2020 Budget for emergency measures and it was decided that staff would try and locate PPE's and purchase some. Mayor Mills added that the Shelburne business group was trying to provide some 200 non-medical masks to workers in the supermarkets and related stores as well. At this point, Shakir Rematullah from Flato Developments added that they would supply Shelburne with 1,000 masks and 200 hand sanitizers as early as Tuesday's close of business.

In a second point, the deputy mayor mentioned that Bella Carter had requested that the Town host a flag raising for injured workers, on April 28 and fly the flag for two weeks. It was determined that if a flag could be safely delivered to town staff, this would indeed be accomplished