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Council unanimously passes new development charge bylaws

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May 11 saw Town Council again meeting in a virtual format to discuss the affairs of the Town. Present were all but Coun. Lindsay Wegener.

The first major point in the agenda, was a report from Hemson Consulting, regarding the final bylaws outlined to Council at the previous public meeting. Craig Binning, partner at Hemson, presented the revised presentation, noting that no substantial changes had been made to the overall Town development charges bylaw, however there had been amendments made to the East Specific DC's, lowering them by 27 percent after reviewing a presentation by Fieldgate, the developers.

Due to the fact that the two main intersecting roads, Hwy. 89 and CR 124 were not owned by the Town, certain costs for the changes required to these roads and their intersection, should not be borne by the developer exclusively. Both upper tier governments would be involved and would bear some of the costs.

In addition, Town Planner Steve Wever noted that in an instance where a developer has had to build road intersections, the Town has never become involved and so the will deal with these costs are via area specific charges, rather than general development charges.

Both Mr. Wever and Mr. Binning noted that due to the dramatic changes to the Fieldgate development, from commercial and industrial to commercial and substantial residential, that the increased development charges were not unusually punitive, but rather inline with the norm. Neither thought that any further changes would be justified and recommended immediate approval of the new bylaws as written. Mayor Wade Mills agreed with this assessment.

Deputy Mayor Steve Anderson however, asked if Fieldgate was made aware of these pronouncements and wondered if they agreed to them, or could the Town possibly be facing an appeal process from Fieldgate.Mr. Wever said that they had been notified and that he felt the matter had been adequately dealt with, but that there would be room for further follow up if required. CAO Denyse Morrissey noted that there will always be conflicts and discussions, but that staff supports the recommendations for the benefit of the Town.

Mayor Mills expressed a willingness to help Fieldgate, but stated that if further discussions existed that he would recommend to wait to deal with it at that time, but to proceed with enacting the bylaws now.

The three bylaws - the town-wide development charges and both the school road area and east end area development charges bylaws were all passed unanimously by Council.

Highland Village development

Following this, planner Steve Wever presented a report concerning the Highland Village development in the west end.

It was concerning a part lot Ccontrol exemption, to allow for several multi unit dwellings being built in the development. Under the Planning Act, part lots are not allowed without this exemption. When townhouses or semi-detached homes are constructed, they are built as if on a single lot, however, at some point in order to become freehold dwellings, they are separated off into individual lots. In order for this to occur, an exemption must be granted by the Town.

Mr. Wever outlined how this worked and showed which lots were involved at this time. He noted that no public meetings or notices were necessary, under the Act, as this did not represent any changes to the site plan approval. On the plan, there were more lots that would be separated at a later date in time also.

Coun. Walter Benotto asked what would be the issue with fences, as each home was granted access to a small portion of the adjoining neighbour's property for purposes of maintenance. His concern was that future owners would have their access to the lots denied. Mr. Wever explained that this was not a Town easement and that the matter would be a civil one and sorted out by the two neighbours in a civil court proceeding.

The motion to grant the exemption was passed unanimously.

Quarterly financial update

Treasurer Carey Holmes then presented her quarterly financial update. She said that due to the COVID-19 virus, the situation was fluid and a cutoff date was enacted for the report.

Consequently, it was not as all encompassing as was usual and some shortfalls, such as recreation incomes were not recorded. Carey did note however tat the Town had received the Connection Link grant it had applied for in the amount of $491,609 for the Main Street upgrades. This represented 90 percent of the cost with the remaining 10 percent, or $54,624, being taken from reserves.

Phase Two of the Town's COVID-19 Relief Plan will be carried out in-house and will see tax due dates extended to September and November from the current August and October deadlines. May's water and sewer payment has been moved to June, without penalty. There are also deferred payment plans available. Dog tag licenses are also extended until June 30, with a possible ability to pay online being considered.

CAO Denyse Morrissey said that after talking with the Town's various sports groups, most have expressed a desire to continue in some format and she suggested that as a gesture of goodwill the Town might consider waiving facility rentals for 2020.

The Town has currently lost approximately $5,800 in rentals, out of an annual total of $16,000. Deputy Mayor Anderson immediately countered that he would be willing to forgive some amount, but not the entire $10,200 remaining. Coun. Benotto mentioned that not only Shelburne children participate in these sports. Mayor Mills opined that even the $10,200 was not a certainty, as if the seasons are cancelled, there would still be no money coming in. He suggested that 50 percent might be seen as an encouragement to continue on. CAO Morrissey said that some of the local businesses are involved in these sports as well.

Coun. Kyle Fegan felt that $5,000 was not a lot of money and that waiving the entire amount would be seen as an incentive to use the fields. Deputy Mayor Anderson replied that $5,000 was a lot of money to the tax payers and 50 percent would still be helpful. At this point Coun. Benotto expressed the concern that taxes would have to be raised next year to offset these incentives and would upset the taxpayers.

The CAO mentioned that most are waiting on word from the Province regarding gatherings and Mayor Mills suggested that there is still time and perhaps this should wait until the May 25 meeting.

A question

In other business, the Deputy Mayor asked why we were successful in getting the connecting grant this year as opposed to previous failures. He wondered if there was anything that was done differently that we could repeat for next year.

Jim Moss said no that it was a standard procedure that is followed each year. The CAO noted that we were one of 24 municipalities that were awarded grants this year and we did expect to receive another next year to finish the Owen Sound portion of the upgrades.

Coun. Benotto asked if any of the money could be used on internal streets but was told no, but other sources would provide some funds for that work.

OPP costing

The CAO also said that the OPP costing is on schedule and that thy are considering virtual report, if possible. And finally, the Deputy Mayor, Steve Anderson took a moment to thank Councillor Shane Hall for his efforts to have KTH supply PPE's to the Town's frontline workers and to applaud the Mayor for his outstanding and dedicated leadership during the COVID 19 Pandemic .