
MAYOR'S UPDATE

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Spring 2020

As I get ready to complete this update, it is now Monday, April 20. We are just learning the extent of the horrific mass shooting in Colchester County. On behalf of the Town, I would like to express sincere condolences to the families of all the victims. Nova Scotia and the country as a whole, is trying to make sense of a senseless tragedy. I would also like to recognize all members of our emergency services especially our policing community. Our Police were already working under very demanding circumstances and now their job becomes more difficult.

COVID-19 Operations and Council Update

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world. Here in Berwick, things have also changed.

The Berwick Town Hall has been closed since March 16 and the administration staff are working from home. Public Works and Berwick Electric continue to provide core services under new operating procedures. They are exploring ways that they can safely resume some traditional spring tasks while respecting public health requirements.

Important work has continued and meetings are taking place through video conference or teleconference. Since March 31, the Berwick Electric Commission has met by telephone conference call and video conferences have been arranged for our regular AREA (Wind-farm) meetings. Council has met through videoconference three times to consider a number of issues, many to do with changes required to deal with the pandemic. Check out the meeting minutes on the Town's website.

For the past three weeks I, along with CAO Mike Payne have joined a video conference with Mayors, Wardens and CAOs from across the province, organized by the NS Federation of Municipalities (NSFM). The main topic involves NSFM discussions with the Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA) around how municipalities will be able to continue to provide services in these unprecedented times.

Councillors who serve on inter municipal bodies like Kings Transit and Valley Waste Management continue to represent the Town on those Boards through videoconference as well.

COVID-19 Operations and Council Update

The Town was deep into budget discussions for our new fiscal year that started April 1 when the province declared the state of emergency. We have put the budget discussions on hold hoping to have a better idea of how we will be effected by this complete upheaval in the coming days and weeks.

Prior to COVID-19, Berwick was experiencing some solid economic growth and gaining a reputation as a place to live and/or start/grow a business. Our efforts in the renewable energy field were attracting national attention. At our most recent virtual meeting, Council agreed to authorize a small expenditure to put in place an option to purchase a suitable piece of land for our proposed solar panels garden.

Staying with renewable energy, as part of our AREA “meeting” March 20, the annual report on the wind-farm in Ellershouse indicates, despite a very poor January for wind, our yearly total is slightly ahead of projections. In addition, although AREA was formed to oversee the build and operation of a wind farm, staff expertise is proving valuable, and generating revenue, in other areas of energy production and distribution.

Council deliberations, in these strange times, are focused on how we can continue to provide essential services anticipating that revenue may be significantly impacted by a shrinking economy locally, nationally and globally. On a positive note, we do know that things will change for the better in time and we are seeing signs of development locally. There are at least four significant potential developments in town related to construction of various types of housing, that’s a good sign for the future.

We will take the next while to grieve with our province. Eventually we will get through the pandemic and life will get back to normal. In the meantime it is critical that we respect and comply with public health requirements. The more we do that consistently, the more likely the province can begin easing restrictions.

Mayor Don Clarke
April 20, 2020