

NOTL NEWS

A NEWS UPDATE FROM THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF *Niagara-On-The-Lake*

Issue # 170 – April 7, 2009

HERITAGE DISTRICT SHUTTLE

The Corporate Services Advisory Committee endorsed the recommendation of the RFP Evaluation Sub-committee formed to review the Town's Request for Proposal (RFP) process and the staff recommendation regarding the heritage district shuttle. The conclusion was to approve what staff originally recommended in a subsequent report, being to maintain the existing shuttle service model and award the contract to 5-O Transportation for a three year period commencing April 2009 (NOTL News, Issue # 169).

The Sub-committee, with the assistance of legal counsel, reviewed the RFP process and verified the process was followed fairly and consistently, and there were no improper actions. The report also noted, while it is unconventional for an applicant to explain detailed contents of their submission in public, Council cannot publicly discuss what was included in the submission as proposals are submitted confidentially with the expectation the Town will protect proprietary business information.

The Corporate Services Committee advised there appears to be some public confusion that this RFP is dealing with the Community Shuttle service. This contract is for the Heritage District Visitor Shuttle, which operates between the Fort George parking lot and the Court House on Queen Street for tourists needing transportation, and does not relate to the Community Shuttle service operated by Niagara Classic Cabs.

Under New Business the Committee requested that staff review the existing RFP by-law and, if appropriate, develop a policy for Committee's consideration.

2009 CURRENT BUDGET REVIEW

The Corporate Services Advisory Committee considered a staff report related to the review of the proposed 2009 Current Budget which was prepared as a follow up to the initial overview provided to Committee on March 23, 2009. The report provided clarification to Committee regarding the budget process and the budget direction provided to staff at the beginning of the budget process. A discussion document came out of the Council/Staff budget workshop held earlier in the day on April 6, 2009.

The report provided a 2009 base budget with a 12.5% (\$775,192) tax levy increase necessary to maintain Town services as they were delivered in 2008. Additionally, the Executive Budget Committee recommended business cases representing another 4.1% (\$252,500) to provide funding to reduce the Town's infrastructure funding gap and to provide for service building initiatives. Accordingly, the proposed 2009 Current Budget would translate into an increase of \$36.43 per \$100,000 of residential property assessment.

Committee discussed various aspects of the budget as well as certain options raised during the workshop discussions, and decided to refer the proposed current budget to the April 27 Committee of the Whole meeting. In the interim, the Director of Corporate Services will provide budget amendment forms to Committee members who will list any proposed budget amendments which they would like to consider at the April 27 Committee of the Whole meeting. The Director will correlate the information from the forms and provide a summary for Committee.

USER FEES RECOMMENDED

The Planning and Corporate Services Committee recommended the adoption of user fees for the Planning and Development Services Department and the Corporate Services Department as contained in the respective staff reports, including a Committee recommended reduction to the dog license fee to allow for an early payment option.

The recommendations were previously deferred to provide Committee time to consider the recommended changes to the various fees and charges and to provide an opportunity for the Niagara Home Builder's Association to make a presentation if they so desired.

The fees and charges apply to various Town services, including dog licenses; blue and grey boxes; bed & breakfast licenses; hunting licenses; site plan, zoning and official plan fees; building permit fees; minor variance fees; etc. Timing for the implementation of the fees varies and is also dependent, in certain cases, on budget approvals. Building Permit fees require a public meeting process prior to implementation.

Committee further noted there is a significant impact expected to planning fees resulting in a shortfall of application revenues. Under New Business the Committee directed staff to prepare a plan to mitigate the department's exposure related to the reduction of revenues and report back to Committee.

WORK TEMPORARILY HALTED

The Corporate Services Committee received a deputation from a resident on Lakeshore Road regarding the execution of a work order issued for cleaning up the subject lands. It was suggested there is a potential drainage issue created by the construction of a new dwelling on adjacent lands, and direction was given to staff to investigate the grading issue.

Committee noted the process for the enforcement of the property standards by-law had been underway for some time and proper notices had been given pursuant to the by-law and the courts. The timing of the clean-up may be adjusted due to the particularly wet weather; however, the clean-up is more likely to leave the property in better condition than it was before the work started. Under New Business the Committee directed the authorized work to be delayed until the weather conditions become suitable. Staff will also provide an update to Committee regarding the property standards order.

LAURA SECORD SCHOOL DESIGNATION

The Planning Advisory Committee endorsed a staff recommendation to refer a request to designate Laura Secord Memorial School in Queenston to the Municipal Heritage Committee (MHC) for review and recommendation. The process is in accordance with the requirements of the Ontario Heritage Act, and the staff report and recommendation was prepared as a result of a request from the Queenston Residents' Association.

Once the report from MHC is received Council may pass the designating by-law or withdraw its intention to designate. The review and report from MHC usually takes approximately six months to prepare.

In a related matter, Committee expressed its concern about dormant commercial and institutional lands in the community and their derelict state. Direction was given to staff to investigate options related to having these lands properly maintained and to report back to Committee.

MULTI-USE TRAIL UPDATE

The Public Works Advisory Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Multi-Use Trail Sub-Committee, including a recommendation to move up the trail's construction schedule for an anticipated completion in 2010. The direction refers to the completion of the trail's extension to connect from its current terminus at Concession 4 Road on Niagara Stone Road to Line 1 Road.

Committee also discussed the naming of the trail in honour of the late Councillor Bob Howse and determined this matter be further researched and brought back to Committee for consideration.

ROAD WORKS – CAPITAL BUDGET

The Public Works Committee endorsed recommendations to adjust the 2009 Capital Budget, as approved in principal, and incorporated adjustments to provide for emergency road repairs to Concession 6 Road, Line 4 Road, Line 5 Road, Line 6 Road, and Line 7 Road as previously detailed in a staff report. (NOTL News, Issue # 169). The estimated costs for the adjusted work totals \$265,000, which offsets the estimated total costs for the anticipated emergency road works. All financing will be from the Road Improvement Reserve.

COUNCIL SUMMARY – MARCH 30, 2009

Lord Mayor Gary Burroughs advised Council the two letters which were previously directed by Council to be sent to the District School Board of Niagara have been hand delivered and the Town is awaiting their response.

The Lord Mayor advised he attended a recent function at the Research and Innovation Division of Niagara College related to the College's work with approximately 25 to 30 small businesses to provide them with technical assistance to promote their success.

Lord Mayor Burroughs advised discussions at the Regional level regarding specialized transit have been delayed until April 6, 2009, as the area municipalities have indicated difficulty funding the system in 2009. The Region may have to use surplus funds from their 2008 budget to provide the service.

The Lord Mayor advised there is a youth conference for students in grades 6 to 12 being hosted by the students of NDSS on April 16, 2009, at the high school. The conference will feature guest speakers and an educational trade show.

Lord Mayor Burroughs congratulated planning staff and the consultant team for the success of the recently convened Old Town visioning session, which is moving forward.

There is a special 2009 Budget Workshop scheduled for April 6, 2009, at 4:00 p.m., and the Lord Mayor advised Council to review the materials provided by staff and be prepared for budget discussions.

Mr. Ian McEwan of the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake presented Lord Mayor Burroughs and Mr. Ray Guy of the International Baccalaureate Trustee Committee with a donation of \$10,000 representing the Rotary Club's two year commitment to assist the IB program.

Mr. David Eke, residing on the Niagara River Parkway, provided a review of Council's decisions respecting the funding contributions for the new hospital directed to the Niagara Health System and the new Regional Cancer Centre. He expressed concern about Council's apparent change from their initial position of requiring funding to be based on population and adjusting to an assessment based levy for the Regional Cancer Centre funding.

Mr. Jim Alexander of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Bicentennial Committee updated Council on the Committee's plans for the upcoming 200th anniversary noting several events are scheduled with more to be accommodated. He noted this is a bi-national celebration and will include coordinated events with the U.S. as well as events in conjunction with neighbouring municipalities. He noted the Committee now has its website operational, and interested parties may receive further information on scheduled events at www.1812niagaraonthelake.ca.

In consideration of the Corporate Services Committee recommendation to grant a one-year contract to 5-O Transportation to operate the tourist shuttle, Council went into considerable discussions respecting the RFP process, the evaluation of the two submissions, the potential impact on future RFP processes, and the short time frame between the report's recommendation and the commencement of operations. Council determined to defeat the Committee's recommendation regarding 5-O Transportation and subsequently defeated a suggestion to award a three-year contract to Niagara Classic Cars, the second RFP submission. Council then moved to endorse a recommendation to establish a committee consisting of Council and staff to review the RFP process and report back to the April 27 Committee of the Whole meeting. Council also approved there will be no shuttle service provided for the month of April and buses will be permitted to drop off for this one month period.

The balance of the recommendations of the Committee of the Whole were adopted without change.

Council endorsed a staff recommendation to engage a consultant to facilitate a meeting with stakeholders of the Town and to make recommendations to enhance the Town's ability to take action in the current economy. This is to enhance local business's ability to succeed with a focus on immediate action items by partnering with the Chamber, wineries and growers, and business merchants.

Council also endorsed a previous 'Notice of Motion' adopting a motion to create an 'Unfair Taxation Committee' consisting of Councillors, staff, and residents. During discussions on the item, it was noted the committee will likely consist of 3-4 Councillors and 6-8 residents interested in pursuing the matter. A terms of reference is to be developed to guide the Committee's operation.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 20, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. Additional information on meeting schedules and deputation procedures may be obtained by contacting the Clerk's Department or by visiting the Town's website at www.notl.org.

**Lord Mayor Gary Burroughs, Councillors: Jim Collard, Dennis Dick, Terry Flynn,
Andrea Kaiser, Jack Lowrey, Martin Mazza, Art Viola, Gary Zalepa**