



## Minutes

### **Village of Chester COW Meeting December 5, 2014**

**Present:** **From MODC** Warden Alan Webber, Sam Lamey, QC, Tammy Wilson, CAO, Pam Myra, Clerk, Brad Armstrong, Councillor District 3, Andre Veinot, Councillor District 1, Robert Myra, Councillor District 5. Sharon Church-Cornelius, Councillor District 7, Floyd Shatford, Councillor District 2. **From VOC** Village Chair Bill Zinck, Commissioner Wynand Baerken, Commissioner Brenda Mulrooney, Commissioner Bill Nauss and Iris Tolliver, Clerk Treasurer.

#### **Call to Order**

Warden Webber called the meeting to order at 2:30

The purpose of holding this meeting was to discuss the position of MODC on the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Review and to hear comments from the Village of Chester Commission.

First to speak was **Commissioner Brenda Mulrooney** who asked to speak as President of the Association of Nova Scotia Villages and give the perspective from the 22 villages in Nova Scotia. She pointed out that Villages do not cost Municipal units anything. They provide a voice for the people in more urban areas of rural municipalities. Village Commissions charge only for the services they provide. She referred to Councillors Andre Veinot's comment from a Committee of the Whole meeting held on November 27, 2014. Veinot suggested that Villages were "sticking their nose" in the business of the Municipality. Commissioner Mulrooney referred to the Municipal Government Act, which permits spending on services that can also be provided by Municipalities, pointing out that the Commission is not trying to take over services that are not in the best interest of residents of the Village. She reported on the co-operative working arrangement between Kings County and the 7 Villages that are within their borders, highlighting the programs in place there to work together to share functions. "A strong Village makes for a strong Municipality". She asked what the position of the Municipality of Chester was concerning the Fiscal Review.

**Warden Webber** agreed that the Village did not try to take over any services that the MGA did not allow. He stated that Council feels it is in the best interest of Nova Scotia to accept the Fiscal Review as a whole, including Recommendation 13 & 14 which pertain to Villages.

**Commissioner Baerken** questioned the value of supporting the whole review and asked whose decision it was to do so. He pointed out that there is more value to look at the recommendations individually. He feels that it is a weak position when there are so many important issues at stake.

**Warden Webber** feels that it is best not to "cherry pick" only the recommendations that are good for this Municipality.

**Commissioner Baerken** reminded the Warden that the Fiscal Review is a draft in the early stages and expressed the disappointment of the Commission over the fact the whole process excluded any feedback from Villages.

**Warden Webber** said that the process is not part of this discussion. He again stated that Council wants to accept the Recommendations as a whole. **Commissioner Baerken** responded that it seems that Council's prefers to eliminate the Village rather than eliminate the Fiscal Review.

**Commissioner Mulrooney** asked if Council has considered the feedback questions that UNSM asked to have submitted prior to December 15. Warden Webber said they had and looking at the financial implications does not alter their view. **Commissioner Mulrooney** said she would like to hear from individual Councillors as to why the province should get rid of Villages.

**Councillor Floyd Shatford** voiced his agreement on taking the Fiscal Review as a whole and complete package. He supports losing villages to Community Groups.

**Councillor Veinot** feels that it is in everyone's best interest to look after the larger area as a whole and eliminate the micro environment at the detriment of the whole. He pointed out that this Municipality actually loses ground with the acceptance of the Fiscal Review as it is, but all of Nova Scotia will benefit if the 41 Recommendations are accepted as a whole.

**Commissioner Baerken** stated it was a democratic right to exist as a Village and asked "Do you think you can take that away?" Councillor Veinot responded that villages impair the ability of the whole. **Warden Webber** added that life would be simpler without villages and that they are not a necessary level of government.

**Commission Mulrooney** suggested that perhaps it is the MGA that should be changed. **Warden Webber** agreed and said that the Municipality intends to ask that current jurisdictions be clearly defined in the MGA. He feels that services provided by the Village Commission could be done by the Municipality with an area rate. **Councillor Shatford** reminded the group that they took an oath of office to represent the whole of the Municipality, which would include the village of Chester. **Councillor Church-Cornelius** feels that Council does support a lot of services in the Village. **Commissioner Baerken** remarked that the only value in the recommendations is that it may provide a stronger initiative to resolve the differences between the two levels of government. **Councillor Church-Cornelius** said that they have been trying to work together for a long time.

**Warden Webber** stated that 11,000 people living in this Municipality only need one level of government. The interest of villages could be addressed by lobby groups. **Commissioner Mulrooney** asked what would happen to the Lido Pool and was advised the pool could function with an area rate. (The Village residents would be taxed for the funds necessary to maintain the pool.) There was continued round table discussion concerning the reaction of other Municipalities, with Warden Webber pointing out that CBRM and HRM both have announced their support for the Fiscal Review as a whole.

**Commissioner Baerken** asked how Council sees the relationship between the Commission and MODC in light of the Premier's comments that there would be no forced amalgamations. **Warden Webber** stated that Council would accept whatever decision was reached by the Province and re-iterated that "cherry picking the recommendations was a waste of time". **Councillor Shatford** feels there will be no effect on the relationship and that both parties would be able to work together. **Warden Webber** said he believes in the Fiscal Review as it is. **Commissioner Mulrooney** related the situation that exists in Kings County which could be dire is the 7 villages amalgamate into towns. There was some reference made to a previous attempt to apply for town status by the Village of Chester. **Warden Webber** advised the Commission of Council's intention to request controls on the size of villages who apply for town status. **Commission Chair Bill Zinck** pointed out that Kings County does not agree that the Fiscal Review must be accepted as a whole. Kings County supports Villages remaining as a level of government. **Councillor Brad Armstrong** commented that recommendation 13 & 14 speaks to the loss of the identity of an area. He thinks the fear of the Village of Chester residents is that the

level of services will diminish with the Commission gone. Also at risk is the assets and capital reserves that would be assigned to the Municipality should Villages be dissolved. He strongly feels that Council should not be making this discussion for villages. **Warden Webber** brought up the topic of the Fire Service Contract and the frustration of MODC that the Commission has not yet agreed to a committee made up of residents from outside the Village that could have input in the operation of Chester Fire Department. **Commissioner Bill Nauss** pointed out that the fire fighters who live in the outside areas have a big part and in fact, it is the fire fighters who make up their own budgets each year. **Councillor Church-Cornelius** feels that there needs to be representation from the Districts covered by the contract with the ability to make recommendations about CVFD.

Discussion continued. **Commission Chair Bill Zinck** pointed out that the purpose in the Commission coming to speak to Council today was to ask for their support in removing recommendations 13 and 14 from the Fiscal Review Draft Paper. **Warden Webber** said they will be interested in the Public Forum meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup> and will make their decision concerning the Fiscal Review at the Council meeting on December 11. The meeting was adjourned.