

Pontiac Council meeting - tax bills up 2.2%

Mo Laidlaw

Over 30 residents turned up for the regular meeting of Pontiac municipal council on the 15th January 2019 at the Luskville community centre. Charlotte Laforest, the Acting Director General and Ginette Chevrier Bottrill, Director of Finances were present.

The budget was adopted unanimously.

The municipality is in the unusual situation that the total property evaluation has gone down this year because of damage and loss of housing due to floods and the tornado. This has the effect that the overall tax rate has increased to 68.09¢ per \$100 of evaluation from 64.78¢ in 2018.

The share of MRC des Collines costs is \$2.1 million (25% of the budget) with Public security - Police at \$1.6 million, being the largest portion.

However the service fees for residential garbage (\$143.64) and recycling (\$53.74) are down 8% and 33% respectively, due to bigger provincial grants, so the increase in tax is effectively 2.2% according to Mme Chevrier Bottrill. An "average" property worth \$238,266 will owe \$39.71 more in tax this year.

Charges for mains water and sewage in Quyon have increased by \$42 and \$23.

Peter Erwin suggested that the property tax increase is above the cost of living adjustment (COLA) and that "People will leave, go back to the city." Mayor Labadie said, "We still have the lowest tax rate in the MRC except for L'Ange-Gardien. Our municipal debt load is too low to qualify for some grants."

To questions from Joan Belsher, Sue Lamont and Thomas Soulière, the mayor stated that the notice given for the 20 December meeting conformed to the municipal code, as confirmed by the municipal lawyer, who is on retainer and very familiar with the municipal code. (Asking Municipal Affairs would take much longer.) It was posted at fire halls as required by the municipal code, but not posted on the internet until Joan Belsher informed the mayor, due to staff shortages and illness.

The former Director General, Ben Kuhn's last day following his resignation was 31 December, and he started at Transcollines on 7 January. He was not dismissed, and was not "moonlighting". (A few people misunderstood the motion dealing with his "termination" on 4 December, to mean he had been dismissed.)

Christian Lauzon didn't hear the call for tenders for ice rinks (he would have offered for the Breckenridge one at Davis-Soulière), and has always acted as a volunteer at the rink in Breckenridge. (The call for tenders was put on Québec's public website (seao.ca) for all three rinks, expected to be over \$25,000, so required to be posted there since the Charbonneau commission, to avoid favouritism.) This rink is now being maintained by municipal public works as no offers were received. The cabin has been repaired, but there is no rink lighting, following the tornado damage.

Compost

Two councillors responded to a question from Kevin Brady about whether councillors felt they received adequate information to manage taxpayers dollars in general, not just about the compost issue. Tom Howard said, "We have information and now we are more experienced." As far as compost is concerned, "No one in ward 3 has called [him] wanting door to door pickup." Leslie-Anne Barber said that with respect to compost, "Originally there was not enough

information, but the exploratory tenders for the MRC are providing more.” She is “confident that pickup is wanted in ward 6.”

Andrea Goffart asked council to work with residents on composting. Ms Labadie said that council will make the decision. June is not a firm deadline. It was convenient to make the call for tenders and the announcement with the other Des Collines municipalities. The MRC waste expert, Patrick Laliberté has suggested that a hybrid solution is possible, that is, not a one-fits-all solution.

Rick Knox suggested that the municipality looks at collecting waste materials using its own equipment and employees, instead of subcontracting. In 2006 he deposited a 40 page document. According to his analysis, in-house collection would have saved considerable funds. Mayor Labadie said “This is an excellent idea.” She has discussed it with the mayor of L’Ange-Gardien who do this. It could save money, but there are counter arguments - increased insurance for example. She will follow this up with Public Works.

Two businesses, Poste d’essence Épicerie Claude at 1189 Clarendon in Quyon and Casse croute chez Sylvie at 3000 rte 148 in Luskville, asked for municipal support in their request to Québec to reduce the gas tax in Pontiac, since there is no gas station 20 km west of Gatineau. This will have beneficial socio-economic effects.

Québec will also be asked to revise the new policy on reimbursement to the fire service for extrication services - using the “jaws of life” - to cover the actual cost.

Luskville community centre

Diane Lacasse asked when the floor will be replaced (in two months) and the washrooms upgraded. She said that the Christmas decorations will be removed after the Carnival.

Update on Quyon community centre

There are further delays. The contractor refused to give the municipality the keys to the building until all mechanical systems including water and sewer were tested. Public works had urgent work to be completed before freeze-up so the work on the water and sewer hook up to the community centre only began the week before the holidays (now completed). The contractor still has to confirm the schedule for mechanical-testing the building, and possession. The installation of the kitchen will start shortly after. The hall furniture should arrive within 3-4 weeks.

Two more properties will be transferred to the municipality for \$1, following spring 2017 floods, 50 ch Bord de l’Eau and 107 ch Bélisle. Plage Bélisle has lost at least 16 properties due to flooding.

Expenses approved:

Invoices amounting to \$62,607 and fixed expenses for December of \$932,452 and incurred expenses for January of \$5,411.

\$250 to the Pontiac Artists’ Association for their publicity brochure.

Mo’s reports are archived at: www.heritagepontiac.ca/Municipality