

Pontiac Council meeting - altered agenda delays funds for local groups

Mo Laidlaw

Over 20 residents attended the regular meeting of Pontiac municipal council on the 12th March 2019 at the Luskville community centre.

There were several questions on municipal spending but Siri Ingebrigtsen was the only resident to continue to question tax increases for businesses, focussing her comments on the lack of adequate communication from the municipality, and emails not being acknowledged. Mayor Joanne Labadie apologized, saying she assumed the members of municipal staff addressed in the email would have dealt with the matter.

Questions on municipal budget

Kevin Brady asked again for exact numbers on losses of taxable property and other costs due to floods in 2017 and tornado in 2018. Labadie said that about 29 houses were a complete loss. "About \$120,000 in lost tax revenue?" suggested Brady. Labadie replied that other properties had lost substantial value, "The Director of Finances is meeting the auditor on the 21st and after that there will be more time to put the numbers together."

Sue Lamont is worried that the municipality is overspending. There's "only \$6 million to last a year." Labadie will ask the Director of Finance to attend the April meeting to answer questions. (Expenses vary from month to month). Lamont also asked about the cost of the summer day camp for which staff are being hired. Labadie said that the camp is revenue neutral, or may generate a small amount of revenue. (Elza Sylvestre is the coordinator again this year.)

Composting continues to be a popular subject for public input. Andrea Goffart asked if there has been a turnaround in thinking. Labadie replied, "More of a slowing down than a turnaround. Since Dominic Labrie left in September there is no one to manage this. The existing garbage and recycling contract (that ends in May) will be renewed for a year." Sheila McCrindle announced a petition on composting, available at dépanneurs and the town hall, and brochures "Fact Check: On composting and door-to-door collection in the Municipality of Pontiac" (also on-line).

Christian Lauzon had comments on the Davis-Soulière ice rink. "What percentage of tax comes from Breckenridge?" He considers the maintenance this winter by Public works was inadequate, "not maintained Friday to Monday," and that the boards are leaning because of the amount of snow and using a backhoe. Labadie said this is the first year that Public works has maintained rinks and will be assessing what needs to be improved.

Blake Draper wanted to make sure that Public works realizes that there is a lot of water in the snow and that manholes and culverts must be steamed now, before the thaw, to avoid flooding. Labadie replied "the steamer has been out already and high risk areas have been identified."

Councillor Nancy Maxsom requested that four items be removed from the agenda because she had not been able to attend the caucus meeting. This was agreed. The approval of grants to local community groups was one of the postponed resolutions, another being the mandate of citizen members of the planning committee (CCU). Maxsom also suggested that two more resolutions were written incorrectly, but they were adopted by a majority without amendment. One of these was a request by the Director of Finances to remove her additional duties as Human Resources Director.

The Fire chief's report was read: 6 deer accidents, 6 vehicle crashes, 3 house fires (one fatal), 1 open fire and, 3 alarms were responded to in February. The level of firefighter training and need for equipment such as air tanks that last for 45 minutes was mentioned in the report.

The draft borrowing bylaw for \$2 million over 20 years for road works including ch de la Montagne, was adopted.

Another property on ch Bord de l'Eau (#85) was acquired by the municipality for \$1 following the spring 2017 floods.

Approved:

Invoices amounting to \$45,894 and fixed expenses for February, \$484,843; and incurred expenses for March, \$3,627.

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