

MINUTES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HURON
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING



Date: Monday, February 26, 2018
Time: 7:05 p.m.
Location: HELD IN THE WINGHAM TOWN HALL THEATRE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Reeve Neil Vincent
Deputy Reeve James Campbell
Councillor Ray Hallahan
Councillor Yolanda Ritsema-Teeninga
Councillor Trevor Seip
Councillor Brock Vodden
Councillor Bill Knott

STAFF PRESENT: Dwayne Evans, CAO
Richard Al, Clerk/Manager of Information Technology
Donna White, Director of Finance

OTHERS PRESENT: Mary Lou Perrott, Eileen McGlynn, Don and Pat Pattison, Barbara Snell, David Crich, Joe Hallahan, J Heffron, Evonne Carter, Winona Thompson, Con Van Vliet, Bob Foxton, Margret Siertsema, Hebo Siertsema, Jack Vincent, Ken Mathers, Susan Duvall, George Duvall, Helen Grubb, Doris Curran, Dave Gray, Corrie Nixon, Ralph Nixon, John Manning, Don Scrimgeour, Tom Cronin, Steve Howson, Bruce Howson, Murray Vincent, Frank Hallahan, Greg Buchanan, Bryce Toll, Kathy Adams, Jim Griffith, Pat Fraser, Brian Rintoul, Murray and Mary McLean, Bob Pike, Steve Hallahan, Norm Ladouceur, Marjorie Foxton-McKay, Dave Willis, Mike McDougall, Neil Edgar, Dale Beninger, Teresa Blackwell, Ben Blackwell, Mike Scott, Wade Smith, C Knoll, Kathy Van Engen, Theresa Machan, Robert Machan, John Bruce, John Brown, Stu Holloway, Dave Tiffin, Phil Beard, Mark DeLuce, Jane Vath, Alexa Dore, Maribeth Dixon, Verna Steffler, Marjorie Cook, Brenda Cathers, Linda Espensen, Shawn Bromley, Bernie Bailey, Doug Lapp, Marilyn Lapp, Grant Currie, Julie Deans, Mary Havers, Debbie Prue-Havers, Doug Kuyvenhoven, Inge Wraith, Ken Whitmore, Lorna Whitmore, Janice Nichol, Sherry Griffin, Lorraine Poulin, H. S. Wardrop, Tim Willis, Greg Blackwell, Larry Cerson, Bryan Verhaeghe, Mark and Lisa Foxton, Jamie Fischer, Steve Hill, Jamie Leslie, Sheila Marklevitz.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Reeve Vincent called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

1.1 Overview of Meeting Format

Reeve Vincent provided an overview of the meeting format.

M109/18

MOVED BY: T. Seip

SECONDED BY: J. Campbell

THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby permits an exemption to Procedural By-law 116-2017 for the February 26, 2018 Special Meeting of Council to permit public questions and/or feedback during the appropriate designated time.

CARRIED

2. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

M110/18

MOVED BY: R. Hallahan

SECONDED BY: J. Campbell

THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron accept the Agenda for the February 26th, 2018 Special Council Meeting; as presented.

CARRIED

3. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

None disclosed.

4. DELEGATIONS

4.1 Wingham Police Chief and Wingham Police Association Representatives

Wingham Police Chief, Tim Poole, provided a history and overview of the Wingham Police Service and outlined the training that Wingham Police Service Officers have taken.

T. Poole explained that currently the Wingham Police Service is the only service in Ontario that has only one officer on duty at all times.

T. Poole noted that if the Police Services Board approves an increase in the

number of officers to accommodate two on duty per shift the additional cost would be approximately \$400,000 per year.

T. Poole explained that the only way to continue is to expand the service.

T. Poole noted that budget to maintain equipment is a concern as many pieces of equipment will need to be replaced in the next few years.

T. Poole noted that there are three possible options:

- Expand the service to Blyth and East Wawanosh and increase staffing to police the entire Township
- Remain with Wingham Police Service in Wingham only, however increase the number of officers to two on duty at all times
- Amalgamate with the OPP

Councillor Knott inquired regarding expanding the service to Blyth and East Wawanosh and the additional cost to add officers.

4.2 Questions and/or Comments Period

John Brown

- Is cost to expand south approximately \$400,000.
- Would rather remain with OPP in East Wawanosh.
- If Wingham would like to keep the Wingham Police go ahead but they would need to keep pay for that service.

T. Poole confirmed the \$400,000 to expand the Wingham Police Service.

Tim Walden

- Is \$400,000 only for additional officers or does that take into account any capital costs.

T. Poole that does not include capital costs.

Marjorie Foxton-McKay

- How long would it take to get a second officer to the scene, is there a safety risk with this.
- Wingham Police could be to the Wingham Hospital in a moment notice but OPP may take longer.

T. Poole noted that the Wingham Police responds immediately and explained how a second officer would be called in to assist.

Marjorie Foxton-McKay

- Not in favour of tax increases however wants what is best for Wingham.

Verna Steffler

- Wingham Police currently have 7 officers, how many will OPP be providing.

T. Poole noted that for the 3 year transitional contract the OPP has indicated a similar number of officers would be available with the OPP but with 2 officers on duty at all times.

Archie MacGowan

- Number of times that Wingham Police has been called by OPP for assistance.
- How many times per month on average do Wingham Police officers get called to assist OPP.

T. Poole noted that assistance is typically provided 3-7 times per month.

Archie MacGowan

- Understands that after 3 year contract officers may not remain in Wingham.
- There is outstanding support from Wingham residents to keep the Wingham Police Service.
- For officer safety, look at the times when highest volume of calls occur and look for solutions.
- If Wingham residents want to keep the service they will need to pay more.

John Brown

- Additional costs associated with Bill 175 and potential fees associated with things like assistance from the OPP in the form of a helicopter patrol how much would that cost.

T. Poole commented that it is unclear what the costs may be. Currently working under the previous agreement in which assistance from OPP is not billed however under the new agreement that may change.

John Brown

- Shouldn't be between Blyth, East Wawanosh and Wingham, we are all North Huron and the money used could be spent on other items.

Councillor Seip noted that this was not the way the board wanted to

negotiate. It was important that the two officers on duty item was communicated. The Police Services Board is negotiating in good faith. Noted that Wingham residents often ask him why taxes are so high.

Steve Hallahan

- Petition circulating in East Wawanosh indicating that they are happy with OPP and want to continue with OPP coverage.

Murray Foxton, Vice-President of Police Association echoed comments of Councillor Seip that the Board and Association are negotiating in good faith. Noted that working alone is a safety issue and the Association is requesting a second officer on duty. The Association supports moving to OPP for safety reasons. Noted that 17 years ago the Association supported disbanding and still supports disbanding as there isn't the population to support the cost.

Bernie Bailey

- How many OPP officers are in Huron County per shift at a given time.

T. Poole commented that it would be approximately 6 - 13 at a given time.

Bernie Bailey

- How much is OPP costing the Blyth and EW wards.

Reeve Vincent noted the cost is approximately \$330,000 per year.

Bernie Bailey

- Suggested reallocating the Blyth and EW OPP funds to cover the cost of additional officers for Wingham which would allow the service to expand to Blyth and EW wards and provide enhanced service.

Reeve Vincent noted that each ward has their say and thus far no Blyth or East Wawanosh rate payers have indicated any interest in expanding the Wingham Police.

Councillor Seip explained area rating and noted that it is not easy to allocate costs as suggested.

Councillor Knott responded to the suggestion and noted that this discussion is about Wingham ward policing at this time.

Councillor Hallahan commented that it comes down to what you want not only about money. Wingham seems to want Wingham Police and Blyth and EW seem to want OPP.

Evonne Carter

- Cost of \$450,000 to disband could be allocated to the additional cost of adding a second officer on duty.
- Does not feel that the cost would go down after the 3 year contract.

Tim Walden

- Quality of OPP and Wingham Police are not in question simply about budget.
- Gave response time example regarding call about deer poachers in East Wawanosh.
- Does Wingham Police Service have training to deal with similar situations.

T. Poole noted that Wingham Police officers are trained in dealing with armed individuals and long guns. Response times vary.

Tim Walden

- Wingham Police are nice to have however most other municipalities have disbanded.
- Costs are getting out of control, does not make budgetary sense having own service.
- Not sure how to keep OPP cost in check or if any bargaining is possible.

Reeve Vincent noted that there would be no bargaining with OPP.

Councillor Knott clarified that the \$400,000 to disband is a one time cost but the \$400,000 for a second officer on duty is a recurring cost.

Evonne Carter

- Why are many municipalities unhappy with OPP and wishing they had not gone to OPP and are wanting to switch back.

Councillor Knott commented that all except one officer live in Wingham and have for many years. With OPP you lose the community attachment but have to decide if you are willing to pay for it.

Dave Bourne

- Commented on costs associated with switching to OPP.
- Will we get the money back after the three years.
- How are we guaranteed that the costs will not increase significantly.

Reeve Vincent responded that the initial money used will be gone and will not be received back.

Councillor Seip noted that the one time costs are gone after switching to OPP, however cannot guarantee that costs will not increase after three years. Taxes unlikely to go down but that money would be allocated to reserves to fund asset management planning for infrastructure. Unfunded initiatives from the province require that we allocate funding from other areas.

George Duvall

- Appreciates the Wingham Police officers.
- Explained situation where officer responded and he assisted.
- Understands the need to have a second officer as back up and that this would cost more in taxes.
- In 3 years would the cost increase and at that time it would not be possible to go back to Wingham Police.

Reeve Vincent commented on level of service and noted that there are 86 OPP officers serving Huron County which is 1 officer per 800 people. Commented on the requirements of Bill 175.

George Duvall

- Understands that Blyth and East Wawanosh want to keep OPP.
- Indicated that Wingham wants to keep the Wingham Police.

Archie MacGowan

- Council should respect that the wishes of Blyth and EW to keep OPP.
- It is clear that Wingham residents want to keep the Wingham Police.
- Other areas have switched and are unhappy, those municipalities have lost control over their policing costs.

Councillor Seip commented that he respects the Wingham Police for what they do, need to understand what the ratepayer wants, need to look at the long term for savings. Constantly get asked why taxes are so high.

Archie MacGowan

- Might need to spend more but he is okay with it that.
- Should make this a question on the ballot.

Councillor Ritsema-Teeninga agreed that this should be a referendum issue at election time and noted that North Huron must be fiscally responsible and look at the long term.

Councillor Seip commented that Council needs to be fiscally responsible and do what is right for the municipality as a whole. A decision on the OPP

proposal is due by March 25 and so putting a question on the ballot when the election is October would not work.

Brian Rintoul

- How long can Wingham tax payers continue paying taxes in Wingham if they keep going up.
- Others are buying homes in other places with lower taxes.
- A theft at the Wingham Hospital gift shop was not responded until 2 days later.
- Taxes in Wingham are much more than East Wawanosh and other areas.

M. Foxton responded that there are confidential elements to this matter and he could not speak regarding the matter unless to someone with authority from the hospital.

Mike Scott

- Retired OPP officer.
- Many OPP officers do live in the North Huron community.
- Explained that OPP can mobilize resources quickly and proud of the resources that the OPP has available.
- Respects the Wingham Police and if Wingham would like to keep Wingham Police that is fine, but he would like to keep OPP in East Wawanosh.

Steve Hill

- Is it true that Wingham Police officers are in favour of disbanding.

M. Foxton responded that current Wingham Police officers would like to continue policing in Wingham. However, they support disbanding based on cost and safety of officers.

Jane Vath

- Works at a store in Wingham and noted that if she phones the Wingham Police they are there quickly.
- Wingham Police are professional, she respects and supports them.

John Brown

- To Murray Foxton if we were to go with OPP would there be more career opportunities for officers

M. Foxton responded that yes more opportunities would be available if they are hired on with OPP but cannot speak to the career aspirations of the officers.

Lisa Hearnden

- Does this decision have to be made this year.
- Why not add a second officer for a few years and evaluate once others have gone through this process.

Councillor Seip noted that Council need to have a decision by March 25 whether or not accept the OPP proposal.

Evonne Carter

- To Councillor Seip tell me why you think it is going to be cheaper with OPP.
- It will be a different level of service.

Councillor Seip noted he did not say it would be cheaper for the same level of service however the OPP indicate that after 3 years the cost will be cheaper.

Evonne Carter

- Why can we not say no now and make a decision later.

Councillor Seip responded that Council could say no now.

Tim Walden

- Underlying issue is that we do not have the tax base to support our own police service however with OPP we lose bargaining control.
- Have there been discussions regarding the potential for a county wide police force.

Reeve Vincent responded that those discussions have taken place in the past. Noted he will vote based on the feedback from the ratepayers in each ward. Hoping to make a decision on March 5.

Tim Walden

- Are there other examples of county wide policing.

Reeve Vincent responded not exactly but some counties have large parts covered by a single force.

Tim Walden

- Does council have an appetite to speak to other municipalities regarding county wide policing.

Reeve Vincent noted that some Huron County municipalities have service enhancements with the OPP which they pay extra for.

Tim Walden

- Requested that Council investigate a county wide policing model.

Councillor Vodden noted that residents of Blyth want to keep OPP. Residents of Wingham are happy with Wingham Police and so doesn't feel that there is a need to research any other options.

Councillor Seip noted that this is not a one time deal. If a decision is made to decline the OPP offer, Council could get back in the queue in 4 or 5 years for another OPP proposal.

Councillor Knott noted that others such as the Windsor Essex area are going through a similar situation, information is available online regarding their discussions. Clarified comment regarding community policing.

Dave Wallace

- Lives in East Wawanosh and works in Wingham.
- Nothing but praise for Wingham Police
- From what he has heard over all meetings on this topic, there is overwhelming response from Wingham residents that they wish to keep Wingham Police.
- Gave example of experience with a break in and the good service that he received from the Wingham Police.

Bernie Bailey

- Discussion is about cost and what the people want.

Verna Steffler

- Not sure why this is still being discussed, the residents have spoken a number of times and Wingham ward residents have indicated that they wish to keep the Wingham Police.
- Nothing is getting cheaper and switching will not be cheaper.
- Crime is going up, many people with firearms so we need the Wingham Police.
- Residents have already given their answer, understands that additional officers are needed and is okay with the cost.

Tim Willis

- Was a Councillor in 1970s noted that people complaining about taxes then and still are now, that won't go away.
- Supports Wingham Police and would like to keep them.

Councillor Vodden noted that it seems obvious that the overwhelming response from Wingham is to keep the Wingham Police however there is a

chance that this isn't a complete sample of residents and their opinion.

5. CONFIRMATORY BY-LAW

- 5.1 By-law No. 13-2018, being a By-law of the Township of North Huron to confirm generally previous actions of the Council of the Township of North Huron.

M111/18

MOVED BY: B. Vodden

SECONDED BY: T. Seip

THAT By-law 13-2018; being a by-law to confirm generally previous actions of the Council of the Township of North Huron; be introduced, read a first, second, third and final time, signed by the Reeve and Clerk and be engrossed in the By-law book.

CARRIED

6. ADJOURNMENT

M112/18

MOVED BY: J. Campbell

SECONDED BY: T. Seip

THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron agree that there being no further business before Council; the meeting be hereby adjourned at 9:07 pm.

CARRIED

Neil Vincent, Reeve

Richard Al, Clerk