

Township of Frontenac Islands
Howe Island
Parish Hall
March 13th, 2014
6:30 p.m.

A Special Meeting of the Council of The Corporation of the Township of Frontenac Islands was called to order on March 13th, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall on Howe Island.

Members Present:

Mayor: Denis Doyle

Councillors: Natalie Nossal

Deputy Mayor: David Jones

Staff Present:

C.A.O./Clerk/Treasurer Darlene Plumley

Frontenac County Acting CAO Marion VanBruinessen

Frontenac County Director of Transportation Services Paul Charbonneau

A number of members of the public were there to observe the meeting.

The Agenda for March 10th, 2014 was introduced.

Moved By: Councillor Nossal (01-13/03-2014)

Seconded By: Deputy Mayor Jones

THAT the Agenda be approved.

CARRIED

No conflicts of interest or the nature thereof was declared by any Member.

Mayor Doyle opened the meeting by welcoming those present and the Howe Island Ratepayers Association (HIRA) for organizing the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide positive, constructive discussion on the operation of the Howe Island Ferry and seek input on ways to move forward to improve the service to Howe Island residents and ratepayers.

This is not a verbatim report.

The structure of the meeting will be as follows;

- 1) A brief address from the Mayor/Deputy Mayor/Council and Staff;
- 2) A panel consisting of Ed Beseau, Brian Humphrys and Jim Mills/members of HIRA, with Brian Humphrys acting as the moderator providing an overview of the survey of ferry operations which was taken in mid December;
- 3) A question and comments period which would be open to the public.

Mayor Doyle stated that;

- throughout the sequence of events which led up to the disruption in service, safety has always been the prime concern
- An Emergency Plan is in place and can be activated if required
- Meetings have taken place with MTO and County Staff
- Agreement was reached that the bubbler system is in need of repair
- A meeting took place with MPP John Gerretsen which identified the option to meet with the Minister of Transportation/Glenn Murray
- With the assistance of County Staff briefing notes were prepared for presentation at the meeting
- At the ROMA/Good Roads Conference held in late February a meeting was arranged with myself, County Staff, MTO representatives and Minister Murry
- An additional meeting took place the next day with representatives from MTO/Township CAO/Mayor Doyle
- At this meeting it was stated that MOE and Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans approval is required prior to any changes made to the bubbler system or enhancement of service. Environmental Studies must be undertaken and there is a process that needs to be followed. New technology may be an option
- MTO has provided an update on the Howe Island Ferry System where a review of the existing system would be undertaken between now and May 2014.

Mayor Doyle then invited Director of Transportation Services Paul Charbonneau to speak to those present.

Mr. Charbonneau thanked the ferry staff for their diligent efforts and attempts to ensure the continued operation of the ferry, he also thanked those residents who called in and provided updates and information. The issues identified were dealt with when possible.

- MTO holds ownership of the ferry, vessel docks, bubbler system and cables and are responsible for the maintenance and costs of all these assets
- The County is responsible for the staffing
- Through discussion with residents a new communication system has been established. Twitter and e-mail are now used to notify of any changes to service
- Meetings have taken place with staff with the possibility of adding a third person when necessary
- The utmost concern is operating the ferry in a safe manor for those using the service
- MTO has a preparedness plan with backhoes and trucks on standby
- Howe Island Fire and Rescue Members have been well trained and well equipped in order to provide First Medical Response
- Rescue falls with the Fire Services for a contingency plan

- Frontenac Paramedic Services has a contingency plan in place to use ORNGE Helicopter Assistance if required or CF Search and Rescue Helicopter, OPP can utilize this if necessary

Mayor Doyle invited CAO/Clerk/Treasurer Plumley to speak to those present.

Ms. Plumley requested that the residents work together as a community to develop a network which will provide assistance should there be a prolonged disruption in service. Any suggestions as to how a cohesive community program would be welcomed.

Mayor Doyle invited Deputy Mayor Jones to speak to those present.

Deputy Mayor Jones praised the exemplary efforts of the ferry operators for the efficient and safe ferry service they provide. The comments and suggestions he received throughout the crisis were helpful and much appreciated.

Mayor Doyle then turned the meeting over to panel moderator Brian Humphrys.

Mr. Humphrys introduced Jim Mills who provided an overview of the survey which was undertaken in December of 2013. Fifty-nine surveys were completed representing approximately one hundred and twenty residents. A summary of the topics covered include;

- Efficiencies
- Communications
- Operations
- Capacity Issues
- Service Issues
- Communications
- Maintenance Issues
- Safety

It was identified that there was an improvement in the level of satisfaction when compared with the survey taken in 2007. However, this was prior to the service disruption experienced in January of 2014. A complete copy of the survey can be viewed on the www.howeisland.org.

Mr. Humphries outlined the format for the questions and comments portion of the meeting.

- Those wishing to speak will come to the microphone, state their name and to who they wish to address their comments/question to
- Questions would be limited to approximately two minutes
- Only constructive comments/questions would be considered
- Limit to one question per person/if additional question wait until the microphone is free

- When are the ice breakers scheduled to arrive?
Director of Transportation Services Paul Charbonneau stated that no ice breakers are available due to the fact that they are stationed on Lake Erie, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the largest tug is in Hamilton Harbour and due to the severity of the ice conditions it would not be possible to make its way here.
- Mr. Farrar wished to take this opportunity to thank the Howe Island Fire Department for the excellent service they provide.

Elaine Coleman

- Foot Ferry service is deteriorating over the past few years, what is being done to improve the service level.
Deputy Mayor Jones stated that there was no short answer, Council is serious about the future of the ferry and is looking at what can be done during budget deliberations in 2014

Rachel Whitman

- Commented that the bubbler system is a huge disappointment, CKWS recently ran a story indicating that the disruption in service was weather related. This statement was false and has had a negative impact on property values. They should be made to retract this story and provide an accurate report on the bubbler system.

Bruce Higgs

- Stated that he has seen the whole process and the improvements are unbelievable
- The bubbler system has not been working properly and has contributed to the problem this winter
- He would be in support of a coordinated effort to bring the three car ferry and the one owned by MTO under one administration

Greg Hinton

- Commented that those providing information should do it as quickly and in as much detail as possible
- Signage indicating scheduled ferry shutdowns would be worthwhile

Wayne Covell, a ferry operator, stated that there are times when disruptions in service occur due to ice flow patterns and cannot be predicted.

Director of Transportation Services Paul Charbonneau stated that twitter @HICountyFerry releases through hand held devices are coming through the paramedics services supervisors, e-mails www.frontenacounty.ca are also relayed through the paramedics supervisors but

can be only utilized when the use of appropriate equipment is available. The County will work towards improving this service.

Scott Marshall

- Suggested that gravel trucks be scheduled for off hours delivery, this would eliminate the backup caused while they are transporting material. Also school busses with no children should be scheduled at times when things aren't as busy.

Tim Dowling

- Thanked those who have allowed for the priority of milk truck delivery, continuity of service is essential in his farming operation.

Kelly Chamberlain

- Stated that better communication should be put in place with Tri-Board Education to inform drivers of service reductions on the ferry.

Wade Coulter

- Questioned what safety consideration were taken into account when dealing with children on the ferry during times when heavy equipment is operating.

Rick Monroe

- Questioned Director of Transportation Services Paul Charbonneau as to who is responsible for the bubbler system and when what is the process associated with determining "System Readiness"
- What reports have been forthcoming as to the compressor shutdown which took place during the second week of January
- Why was the Director of Transportation Services Paul Charbonneau not aware of the shutdowns and why did it take so long to get the information.

Director of Transportation Services Paul Charbonneau stated that he was just recently made aware of the compressor shutdown. The County's responsibility is for staffing, collection of fees and fares and safe operation of the vessel.

The system is monitored by County Staff and if there are any concerns or issues MTO staff are contacted.

When in use, unless an emergency (oil leak, etc.) the system is only shut down when instructed by MTO Staff.

Scott Marshall

- Wished confirmation that Council would take the lead and act as the one body in charge to bring the concerns and questions forward. Have one person in charge.

Seeing no further questions or comments the meeting was turned over to Mayor Doyle for adjournment.

Moved By: Deputy Mayor Jones

Seconded By: Councillor Nossal

THAT the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Frontenac Islands adjourn the Special Meeting of Council at 7:47 pm.

CARRIED

Mayor Doyle

C.A.O./Clerk/Treasurer Plumley