

# Planning Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

January 23, 2017

Town Council Chambers

## **Present**

Mayor L. Boucher, Chair  
Deputy Mayor, W. Cormier

P. Andersen, StFX Representative  
B. Gottschall  
C. Hanlon  
S. Hargreaves  
C. Henderson  
J. Kerr  
K. Silver  
J. Sullivan

J. Lawrence, CAO  
S. Day, Director of Planning  
B. Nheiley, Planner  
D. Halfpenny, Secretary

## **Guests**

T. Cameron, Director of Recreation  
B. Grant  
Councilors M. Farrell, A. Murray, and D. Roberts.  
Members of the Public

## **Absent**

Councillor D. MacInnis

## **Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Mayor L. Boucher welcomed new member Patrick Andersen to the PAC.

The Chair mentioned two issues of housekeeping: first that committee members are to declare conflict of interest for agenda items that they deem themselves to be in conflict of and secondly that gallery members are only to speak when addressed by the Chair. She stressed that there are to be no interruptions.

### **Approval of Agenda**

“It was moved and seconded, that the Agenda for the Planning Advisory Committee meeting of January 23, 2017 be approved. With the addition of Stop Gaps Ramps and an update of inspections” **Motion carried.**

### **Approval of Minutes**

“It was moved and seconded, that the minutes of the September 12, 2016 Planning Advisory Committee meetings be approved with the elimination of wording “traffic congestion.” **Motion carried.**

### **Business Arising from the Minutes**

Chair, L. Boucher advised that lights on the bridge near the Wheel have been put on the Capital list for consideration in the 2017-2018 budget.

### **PAC 101**

B. Nheiley provided a brief overview of the role of the Planning Advisory Committee. She noted that mandate for the PAC is derived from the Municipal Government Act section 200, authority of committee. She stressed that the PAC can only make recommendations to council and that council makes the ultimate decision on any development. She also noted that committee members have no authorization to direct staff. B. Nheiley advised that the Municipal Planning Strategy, the Land Use By-Law, and other Town studies, Policies and Bylaws provide the criteria to determine if a project can move forward.

B. Nheiley noted that there are various processes a developer may require to develop their property. She advised that ‘as of right,’ is used when the project fits the zoning of the area and Land Use Bylaw requirements; she noted that variances may be used when a project has unique issues that would prevent it from moving forward; Site Plan Approval would require the approval of specific provisions, and requires neighbouring property owners be consulted and PAC input and requires Town Staff to negotiate with the developer before going to the Building Permit stage; and she advised the most time consuming route would be a Development Agreement process which involves negotiation and Town-wide public engagement sessions and changes to the Land Use Bylaw before it can move to Council for approval and can take 6 months or more to complete depending on the development.

B Nheiley advised that the Planning Advisory Committee plays a very important role in envisioning the long term atmosphere of the community and future benefits of development in the community over the next fifty years. She noted that smaller communities like Antigonish often use spot zoning. She commented that a zoning transect tend to be the clearest route and provide greater certainty to the developer and residents.

Discussion followed on when the last full review was completed of Municipal Planning Strategy and how the document has evolved over the past twenty years.

C. Henderson inquired as to whether the Planning Department was looking into rezoning some areas of town to reflect the higher densities in population such as the St Ninian Street area.

C. Hanlon commented that she agreed with rezoning for predictability.

S. Day advised that Planning Department is looking at zoning issues, but right now in a broader scope and that a redo of the Municipal Planning Strategy is on the list. He reminded the committee that the Municipal Planning Strategy is a fluid document that has seen numerous amendments. He noted that Planning is an ever changing world as new materials, energy efficient considerations, businesses and community concerns evolve. He mentioned that with staff constraints at present other matters are taking priority.

### Extension of the Brierly Brook Walking Trail

T. Cameron provided a visual presentation of the existing and proposed Brierly Brook Walking Trail. She explained that in keeping with active transportation it is being proposed that a third phase be undertaken to extend the walkway following the natural line of the river. The walkway has had two pieces completed to date and this third piece would extend the trail down to College Street. T. Cameron stressed that the trail is not just for recreation but to aid residents in safely walking to amenities, school, work, etc.

T. Cameron noted that the Walking Trail was initially developed in 2013 when funding was realized for phase one. She commented that the plan was not new and had been discussed over several years..

B Nheiley advised that during the week long Public engagement sessions that were held at a downtown cafe pop up, Farmer's Market booth and at local schools it was identified that citizens wanted to see an expansion of the trails and overall increase in walkability, bikeability for the the Town. She commented environmental stewardship is top of mind, with citizens and visitors wanting access to green elements and the opportunities to enjoy nature in an urban setting.

T. Cameron noted that phone surveys also identified the need for active transportation. She advised that E. Stackhouse, Director of the Pictou County Regional Libraries has been consulted concerning an expansion of the trail. His only concern was the loss of seven parking spots in the downtown and the importance of maintaining parking spots at the library for seniors and young families to participate in programs. A parking lot usage study of public parking lots identified that while some parking lots are not as convenient as others, public parking is only occupied at an average rate of 52% in the downtown, so there is adequate parking in the downtown core and this information was shared with E. Stackhouse.

B. Nheiley provided an overview of the proposed changes near Piper's Pub to facilitate the trail and noted that seven parking spaces would be eliminated.

B. Grant, Piper's Pub expressed support for the project and further explained the vision for a renovation of the pub area to create a tiered deck with the vision of great community atmosphere by creating a gazebo, an outdoor cooking area that guest businesses would be invited to use. He provided the examples of several food vendors from the Farmers Market that would be able to set up for special events. He also indicated that the waste receptacles would be enclosed and a 20'x 40' fence erected to delineate the area.

B. Nheiley advised that the changes to the deck would see the sound directed more towards StFx University. It was noted that students currently use the area and that the slope is steep.

P. Andersen asked if the trail would be natural or wooden boardwalk and if tables could be added to the area with checkers or chess for community interest.

B. Nheiley stated that the idea would be to work with the existing patio and that due to steep slope considerations the goal will be to make the area as safe as possible.

T. Cameron advised that it costs \$150,000 per km of trail and that therefore it is important to plan sections of the trail to create a realistic timeline for completion.

T. Cameron noted that improved connectivity will make it safer for all enjoying the trail, she commented that the cost to expand the trail is expensive and that it will require community partnerships. She stated that more refined communication pieces will be developed in next couple of months. She advised that the next steps will be to speak to DFO, NSE and continue with public engagement sessions before anything is ready to go to Town and County Councils.

Deputy Mayor W. Cormier recommended that T. Cameron get a letter in writing from the People's Place Library indicating support for the project.

J. Kerr asked how far east to College the walking trail would go.

T. Cameron noted that the overall plan would see future steps taken to expand the trail until it ideally could loop behind the Antigonish Market Square and continue to Columbus Field, she commented that the Town has lovely sidewalks and these could also be included in the overall trail footprint to increase connectivity. She stressed that it is important to not end the trail in middle of a parking lot or anywhere that would create unsafe conditions. She reiterated that at present only phase three is being considered, that expectations must be kept realistic, and a phase four extension of the trail would require negotiations with landowners which is not being acted upon at this time.

S. Hargreaves commented that the project sounds great and that it is a very encouraging development.

Discussion followed and the Planning Advisory Committee members agreed that the continuation of the trail should be pursued.

The Chair thanked T. Cameron for her presentation.

## Mobile Home Parks

S. Day stated that the Mobile Home Parks risk analysis project is underway. He advised that B. Nheiley, J. MacDougall and he had met with consultants Emergency Solutions International who have been hired to review the risks in each of the four mobile home parks located in the Town. He provided a quick overview of the plan which will see a shared responsibility between the Town and park owners to move towards identifying and mitigating risks. He noted that it will not be an easy process and that it will take time to gain total compliance. He advised that all park owners have been aware of the concerns for sometime and that an initial survey had been completed by park residents which was distributed and collected by park owners and then submitted to the town.

S. Day identified that the Town is funding Part 1 of the study for the broader strokes of the project such as wind direction, hydrants, private hydrants, etc.

The Park owners will be dealing with site specific issues and be required to phase in priority based plans to make their parks safer.

Deputy Mayor, W. Cormier raised concerns about Town liability and timeline for park owners to become compliant.

S. Day provided a timeline of Phase 1 being completed in mid winter, Phase 2 by April of May and Licensing for two year period in place by April, 2017.

S. Day commented that it took some time to find a qualified company that could provide a risk assessment. He advised that Emergency Solutions International is working for the province of PEI to do a total risk assessment of the entire province and on several other large projects. He noted that the Fire Code regulations and the Building Code regulations are currently out of sync. He commented that the town of Antigonish is doing its due diligence to get these parks moving towards compliance in a timely fashion.

S. Day advised that the Mini Home Parks will be subject to a licensing fee as outlined in the original 1968 bylaw. He commented that a two year license may be more realistic to manage. He noted that park owners who do not move forward with compliance issues would not have their license renewed. He mentioned that there is potential to create other land leased affordable housing options such as double wides, condos or townhouses. He reported that all park owners are on-board and that initial response from the surveys indicates that storage sheds and add ons will be an issue in some parks. He noted that some park owners have taken steps to increase distance between homes such as when an older trailer is removed it is not replaced.

Discussion followed. Concerns of possible displacement of mini park residents when unsafe conditions are identified was note.

S. Day advised that Community Services and financial institutions will have to be made aware of the situation in order to be proactive and prevent displacement of people. He noted that this is a very sensitive situation and safety is the overall goal. He commented with the recent fire in the North Grant Trailer Park that resulted in loss of life it is top of mind for all involved that Safety is the number one priority.

### Lodging Units-review and decision on bedroom count

J. Kerr expressed concerns as to whether he would be in conflict of interest where his existing properties would be grandfathered in.

S. Day noted that even though the current rental properties would be grandfathered as far as number of bedrooms there would be an impact in that J. Kerr may have to make changes to be compliant such as do extra safety improvements.

C. Henderson commented that J. Kerr would also have to determine if he planned to purchase more properties in R1 zones and increase the number of bedrooms as his primary business model.

W. Cormier, Deputy Mayor reiterated that R1 zones are deemed lowest population density and the general principle is to have lower number of bedroom. He noted that the growth of the university created a demand for rental units in the community and that certain areas such as St. Ninian may require a rezoning to R2 and quieter R1 streets should remain as streets with less density. He commented that it is important to differentiate between the two types of areas.

Discussion followed - item tabled and will be placed on a future agenda.

Deputy Mayor asked that separate meeting be held and that a report should be sent out to PAC members and a copy to the Rental Association.

Mayor L. Boucher, Chair reminded the PAC that it is their job to make a recommendation to Council and that only Council will make a decision.

S. Day did a brief review of why the Planning Advisory Committee was looking at limiting the number of bedrooms, the length of meeting time spent on discussing the number of bedrooms in a lodging home and that a recommendation was moving forwards to a first reading before Committee change. He note that Antigonish is not isolated and that other municipalities are facing the same issue. He explained that the lack of a definition was preventing clarity and allowing 14 bedroom properties to be developed in the R1 zones. He stressed that it is important to use a clear definition.

J. Kerr commented that it is important for the landlords to have clarity and to avoid uncertainty in resale of their properties but also not to forget about the senior wanting to sell their house for retirement.

C. Henderson requested that a package of material go out to PAC prior to the meeting.

### **Motion**

“It was moved and seconded that a special meeting be held to deal with lodging units and an invitation be sent to the landlord association.” **Motion carried.**

B. Nheiley advised that materials will be available to the public on the town website for review prior to the meeting.

## Residential Periphery Zoning Overlay

The Chair tabled residential periphery zoning overlay.

B. Nheiley noted that work is moving forward on this matter but that no application has been received,

## Stop Gap Foundation

C. Henderson reported that the Stop Gap Foundation is intended to increase accessibility by providing organizations with the means to create temporary ramps that allow access over steps. The ramp is constructed to allow the ramps to be quickly laid over the steps as needed and then stored away. She noted she had provided G. Smith with the information to see if the ramps meet building code.

B. Nheiley advised that the temporary ramps do not meet code, however she noted that HRM is allowing for use of the ramps providing there are no complaints or concerns and that no permits would be issued for these ramps.

Mayor L. Boucher, Chair advised that the Stop Gap Foundation information will be reviewed by the Accessibility Committee and that groups in the community such as CACL, and Chamber of Commerce will be given opportunity to provide input.

## Building Inspections

S. Day advised that on Monday and Tuesday he provides Building Inspection services to for any residential project that has booked an inspection. He advised that R. Fraser has been contracted to provide inspections and file review on Thursday of each week for any commercial projects that have booked a building inspection.

J. Lawrence, CAO noted that although there have been some change in the level of service typically provided by the Town due to an HR matter it is intended that the Town continue to provide high quality building related services in a timely fashion.

Mayor L. Boucher commented that it is an HR matter, and every effort is being made to maintain a level of service.

**Motion to Adjourn**

“It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned.” **Motion carried.**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.**