

## TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – MINUTES – MAY 27, 2024

Minutes of the Council meeting held on May 27, 2024 at 7 p.m. in the O'Connor Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Vezina  
Councillors: Crane, Rea, Sobolta, Torkkeli  
Clerk-Treasurer Buob

Visitors: Greg Croft, Provincial Offences Officer, By-law Enforcement Officer  
Candace Phillips, BDO, Auditor  
Fire Chief Greg Biloski

Mayor Vezina called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Moved by Brendan Rea  
Seconded by A. Crane

**THAT THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING BE APPROVED.**

Carried

Disclosure of pecuniary interest and general nature thereof: None.

2. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024 BE ACCEPTED AS PRINTED.**

Carried

Visitors were asked if they wished to address Council on any matter that was not already on the agenda and they replied no.

Mr. Greg Croft was welcomed to the table and introductions were held. Mr. Croft informed Council that he has recently taken and passed the Ontario By-law Officer CORE Training. He provided Council with his work history and experiences in law enforcement. He has spoken with the Provincial Offences office in Thunder Bay and will be picking up enforcement tickets. He asked Council what they wanted him to do in regard to the position. The course noted that they do not have to fine. Council confirmed that they would like him to investigate the situation and attempt to resolve the issue prior to fining, considering the Township Policies and By-laws. If the issue continues and he feels a fine is warranted, then he could fine. Mr. Croft would like to try to have the people cooperate and educate them first. It was noted that, if required, the police can still be called. Mr. Croft informed Council that he has purchased notebooks to do his note taking, which will belong to the Township to keep for future potential court matters. While he will have the authority to deal with all Township By-law's, Council informed him that the majority of the complaints he may have to deal with will likely be in regard to dogs and noise.

Payment for the position was discussed. Council agreed that Mr. Croft will be considered an employee and not a contractor, and will be indemnified by the Township.

Mr. Croft was thanked for attending.

Candace Phillips, Auditor, for BDO Canada, was welcomed to the table to present the highlights of the Township of O'Connor's 2023 Financial Statements and Trust Fund Financial Statements. She explained the recent changes in the reporting requirements, including the qualified audit opinion and the new accounting standards. The landfill liability is a new standard, as well as the asset retirement obligations. The scope of the requirements is larger than originally anticipated. This requirement is for municipalities to estimate the cost of bringing something disturbed back to its original state, including asbestos recovery in any buildings, or underground tanks, wells or septic systems for anything that municipalities have done or put in the ground within the Township. The Township of O'Connor will have to get quotes, or possibly hire engineers, to determine these costs. The Township has not met this requirement as of December 31, 2023, so

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this will be noted in the Financial Statements. Ms. Phillips noted that a lot of municipalities will have the comment that this has not been completed included in this year's statements. At this point it will be a work in progress. Currently, the Ministry is not offering funding for the municipalities to meet these requirements and it could potentially be a large cost to Municipalities. The Statement of Financial Position was explained and compared to 2022. Ms. Phillips noted that the decrease in landfill closure liability is due to the interest rate change. The balance of the statements were reviewed.

The Trust Fund Financial Statements were presented. The Trust Funds are for the monies in the Cemetery Care and Maintenance Fund for both the Township of O'Connor Cemetery and the O'Connor Free Methodist Cemetery, as the Township is the Trustee for this fund as well. The opinion was discussed with no concerns. It was noted that due to the maturity date of the Trust Fund GIC's, the short-term deposit shown in the statements is higher than last years.

In summary, Ms. Phillips noted that it was another great year for the Township. The audit went well. It was noted that this was the last year in the current proposal for audit services and the Township will be going out for quotes this year and she is anticipating a large increase in fees to perform the audit.

Ms. Phillips was thanked for attending and left the meeting at 7:58 p.m. It was

3. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by Brendan Rea

**THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE DRAFT 2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR AS PRESENTED BY BDO, THE AUDITOR, AT THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MAY 27, 2024.**

Carried

Fire Chief, Greg Biloski, was welcomed to the table. The Fire Department Report for the period of April 8 to May 27, 2024, was reviewed. There were three fire related calls, one motor vehicle collision and one First Response call since the last report. It was noted that an additional First Response call did come in after the report was submitted. Fire Chief Biloski provided more detail regarding each call. He provided an update on membership and retention. Two new members have signed up for the team, for both Fire Department and First Response and he is requesting Council's approval for them to join. Their qualifications were included in the report. Fire Chief Biloski also provided an update on the Trucks and Equipment and noted that a ladder inspection was recently conducted. A pump test on the Pumper Truck is scheduled for September of this year. The Tuesday evening training schedule for May and June was included, as well as the upcoming courses that members are registered for. It was noted that one member has dropped out of one of the courses due to the online portion of the course and the limited time and resources to complete this portion. They will be responsible for reimbursing the Township for the expense of registration. It was also noted that the department may have access to twelve used SCBA units (Pack, Cylinder, and mask) and a RIT pack coming for surplus, as the Department will be updating to a new model.

Fire Chief Henry Mattas' retirement party, which was held on Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup> was briefly discussed. There was a nice turnout of members from the O'Connor and surrounding municipal Fire Departments, Emergency Management Ontario, Office of the Fire Marshall, MPP Holland, as well as Council and staff, family, friends, and residents of the Township of O'Connor.

It was also noted that the current Auxiliary steak draw is almost sold out with the sale of 3000 tickets.

A draft Automatic Aid Agreement with the Nolalu Emergency Services Team (NEST) was presented by Fire Chief Biloski for Council's consideration. It was noted that the Agreement was drafted using a similar Agreement between the Municipality of Shuniah and Pass Lake. The O'Connor Volunteer Fire Department and NEST currently train regularly together and feel that it would be a good fit. The Agreement is only addressing Fire Protection Services and not medical calls. Questions of whether or not the other

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department members would be covered under the insurance policy if driving equipment from the other department was also discussed. The Clerk-Treasurer will reach out to the Township's insurance company to see what concerns there could be, including potential slips and falls if attending the other Departments Fire Hall or call under the Agreement. It was noted that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) would automatically attend NEST fires so O'Connor would not be required for wildland fires. It was also suggested that perhaps the members could just become members of both departments, however this would be an added cost to the Township for WSIB coverage. This will be considered in making the final decision on how to move forward. The draft Agreement was brought to Andrew Bak of the Office of the Fire Marshall and he seen no issues. Council noted that they would like to see something in writing from Mr. Bak before proceeding. There are several other similar Agreements in Southern Ontario. Council agreed that this could be a good idea based on the current membership.

The Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) is also currently looking into options for shared services between Departments which could include Agreements between Municipalities. Council agreed that they would like to continue working on these shared issues.

The Annual Maintenance Inspection for Ground Ladders report was reviewed. The 35' ladder failed and has been taken out of service. Fire Chief Biloski is currently getting quotes for a new main extension ladder. He will have to confirm the tallest building in the Township of O'Connor to know if a two or three tier ladder is required.

Fire Chief Biloski also noted that the members will be doing a truck inventory over the summer and reorganizing the trucks to ensure the equipment used most often is easily accessible.

OMERS Employer Bulletin regarding enrolment of non-full-time (NFT) firefighters and paramedics was read. As of January 1, 2023 all other-than-continuous-full-time or OTCFT employees are eligible to join the OMERS Plan. OMERS announced a special project focused on volunteer firefighters and paramedics who may be considered NFT employees for OMERS purposes. This will be discussed further under New Business.

Fire Chief Biloski was thanked for attending and providing the Fire Department update and he left the meeting at 9:14 p.m.

Greg Croft, Provincial Offences Officer and By-law Enforcement Officer also left the meeting at 9:14 p.m.

The appointment of the two new members to the Fire Department were discussed and it was

4. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE FOLLOWING PERSONS AS A MEMBER OF THE O'CONNOR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT AND/OR FIRST RESPONSE TEAM:**

1. JORDAN GRATZ
2. THOMAS GRATZ

Carried

The Administration and Roads Voucher to May 27, 2024 was reviewed and it was

5. Moved by Brendan Rea  
Seconded by A. Crane

**THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND ROADS VOUCHER #2024-10 DATED MAY 27, 2024 TOTTALLING \$27,838.14 BE APPROVED AND PAID.**

Carried

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The Statement of Revenue and Expenditures were unavailable.

A report in regard to the Deputy Clerk-Treasurer's retirement and replacement was read. Linda Racicot's last day in the office will be May 31<sup>st</sup>, however her official retirement date will be later in the year. The Clerk-Treasurer has confirmed that the Township can have more than one Deputy and would like to recommend that Erin Laforest be appointed as Deputy Clerk-Treasurer effective June 1, 2024. As the Township is currently advertising for a Deputy Treasurer, if one is hired, the appointment can be changed. Council agreed and it was

6. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by Brendan Rea

**THAT BY-LAW NUMBER 2024-16 BEING A BY-LAW TO APPOINT A DEPUTY CLERK-TREASURER FOR THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR BE PASSED AND ENTERED IN THE BY-LAW BOOK.**

Carried

One resolution for endorsement was read from the City of Belleville requesting support for family doctors and it was

7. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**THAT THE RESOLUTION FROM THE CITY OF BELLEVILLE REQUESTING THAT THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ENSURE FAMILY PHYSICIANS ARE PROPERLY COMPENSATED WITH IMMEDIATE FEE INCREASES AND THAT THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN NOW BEING EXPERIENCED BY FAMILY DOCTORS BE REDUCED SO THEY HAVE MORE TIME TO SEE THEIR PATIENTS BE ENDORSED.**

Carried

Correspondence was read as follows:

- a) VC3 regarding a Cybersecurity program. This company had a display at the recent Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) conference and are reaching out to offer their services. It was agreed not to move forward at this time as the new computer system is currently being setup with a new backup system and full protection will be confirmed. Council agreed that it could be reconsidered in the fall if administration feel there is a need.

The balance of the correspondence was passed around the table.

Under Old Business, Council discussed

- a) Tbaytel reply letter providing an update and response to Council's request on the fibre build in the Township of O'Connor. A map showing the rollout plan for the Township of O'Connor and bordering areas was included. The approximate work timeframe is broken into three quarts of 2025, with a small area of the Township being awarded to Bell and not Tbaytel. The Fleming Road area is being shown as being deployed in the first quarter of 2024. As fibre gets deployed in the outlined areas shown on the map, Tbaytel's marketing department will send out letters to notify the residents.
- b) Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry reply letter to Council's endorsed resolution supporting the Municipality of Calvin regarding the National Fire Fighting Strategy. As the natural hazard landscape continues to change, factors are resulting in increased demands to protect the public, communities, property, critical infrastructure, and businesses in Ontario. The Ministry has initiated a review to understand how best to modernize their wildland fire and other natural hazard programs that will result in improved outcomes to meet these heightened and changing demands. The Ontario FireSmart Program helps Canadians understand their wildland fire risk. Research indicates that the risk to communities can be substantially mitigated by conducting thorough wildland risk assessments and implementing FireSmart principles.

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- c) The Clerk-Treasurer provided an update on the insurance claim for the burnt compactor truck at the Disposal Site. The insurer has confirmed no causation and have asked for an appraisal on the value of the unit.
- d) Under Further Old Business, Councillor Sobolta provided an update on the Police Services Board.

Councillor Rea also asked the status on Council's decision regarding allowing Fire Cadets on the Fire Team. Council once again discussed the idea and expressed their concerns. It was agreed that if this was to move forward the youngest age would be 16 years old, and they would not be allowed to attend any calls. The concern of who would be responsible for these cadets was expressed. The question of whether or not they could participate as a student volunteer to get high school volunteer hours was also suggested. Council would like to have administration examine a couple more issues including if they would be covered under the insurance and WSIB as the cadet would be under 18 years of age. This will be brought back to Council at a later date.

Under New Business, Council discussed

- a) Westland Insurance Group Municipal Insurance Renewal. Council agreed that they will stay with Westland for the next term, however, would like clarification on a few of the values and what is included in the different categories coverage. The Clerk-Treasurer will reach out and bring back a reply with additional information at the next meeting. A proposal for Business Insurance Cyber coverage was also enclosed. Council discussed the risk, the cost, and deductible and at this time will not move forward with the cyber insurance.
- b) Rural 60 Plus letter requesting permission to sell lottery tickets in the Township of O'Connor. Council had no concerns and it was

- 8. Moved by Brendan Rea  
Seconded by A. Crane

**THAT THE RURAL 60 PLUS BE ALLOWED TO SELL QUILT RAFFLE TICKETS IN THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR FOR THEIR UPCOMING FUNDRAISER, LOTTERY LICENCE #M861943.**

Carried

- c) Discussion regarding December Council meetings was held. The Procedure By-law in Section 3.4 states that during the month of December, Council meetings will be held on the first and third Monday of the month. In 2023, due to budget restraints, Council agreed to have one meeting in December on the second Monday of the month. They also noted at that time that Council could then consider if there were no issues arising from this change that they consider making a change to the Procedural By-law at a later date. Council was asked whether or not they would like to change from two meetings to one meeting in the December. It was agreed to make the change to hold one meeting on the second Monday of the month. A revised By-law will be drafted for the next meeting for final approval.

Under Further New Business Mayor Vezina informed Council that he is now the co-chair of the Energy Task Force. The Task Force is back to being a committee of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) and the Common Voice Northwest has now been discontinued.

The OMERS non-full-time (NFT) firefighters and paramedics was discussed. Upon review under the questions to consider, how much the person is paid is a factor. It was agreed that the stipend paid to the Township volunteers signals that the individuals are not considered an employee. The Clerk-Treasurer will submit the Attestation in this regard and OMERS will not be offered to the Fire Department members.

Issues brought forward or letters received after agenda was mailed were read as follows:

- a) CUPE Local 87-04 regarding Notice to Bargain. As one of the Union employees has just started his employment and is still on probation it was recommended that the Township request to meeting following the end of probation period. A date will be

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discussed following this time.

- b) ALS Environmental regarding changes to payment requirements for cash sale workorders were discussed. The Township of O'Connor is currently required to test the drinking water in the public buildings regularly. In the past, the cost was just under \$50 per test, three times a year. A letter dated May 13, 2024, from ALS, stating that as a part of the 2024 pricing, they are transitioning to requiring payment up front and a minimum \$350 charge for all cash status submissions. Council discussed this significant increase of 300% and feel that it would be much cheaper to supply bottled water to those using the Community Centre. This will be investigated further.

For information purposes, one building permit was approved for a new home on Earl Road.

It was

9. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE NEXT PORTION OF THE MEETING BE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC IN ORDER TO DISCUSS LABOUR RELATIONS OR EMPLOYEE NEGOTIATIONS; PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION 239(2)(D) OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT, 2001; AND TO DISCUSS LITIGATION OR POTENTIAL LITIGATION, INCLUDING MATTERS BEFORE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNALS, AFFECTING THE MUNICIPALITY OR LOCAL BOARD; PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION 239(2)(E) OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT, 2001.**

**TIME BEING: 10:25 P.M.**

Carried

During the closed portion of the meeting Council discussed a possible litigation or potential litigation matter affecting the Township, discussed employee negotiations regarding the Deputy Clerk-Treasurer position and the Chief Building Official position.

10. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by Brendan Rea

**TIME BEING: 10:30 P.M. THAT THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING CONTINUE.**

Carried

11. Moved by Carly Torkkeli  
Seconded by J. Sobolta

**TIME BEING: 10:48 P.M.**

**THAT WE NOW MOVE TO OPEN MEETING.**

Carried

The application of Mr. John Ostrowski was accepted for the position of Chief Building Official and it was

12. Moved by Brendan Rea  
Seconded by A. Crane

**THAT BY-LAW NUMBER 2024-17 BEING A BY-LAW RESPECTING THE CHIEF BUILDING OFFICIAL BE PASSED AND ENTERED IN THE BY-LAW BOOK.**

Carried

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As a result of the retirement of Linda Racicot, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer and Council decision to appoint Erin Laforest as the Deputy Clerk-Treasurer the wage for her new position was discussed in closed and it was

- 13. Moved by J. Sobolta  
Seconded by Carly Torkkeli

**THAT THE WAGE FOR ERIN LAFOREST IN THE POSITION OF DEPUTY CLERK-TREASURER FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR, EFFECTIVE JUNE 1, 2024 BE SET AT \$ [REDACTED] PER HOUR.**

Carried

- 14. Moved by A. Crane  
Seconded by Brendan Rea

**THAT THE COUNCIL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2024 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE O'CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.**

**TIME BEING: 10:50 P.M.**

Carried

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk-Treasurer