



Huron County Council

Minutes - September 5, 2012

Public Meeting

GODERICH, ONTARIO



PUBLIC MEETING HURON COUNTY COUNCIL

Goderich, Ontario
September 5th, 2012

Warden B. MacLellan acted as Chair for this Public Meeting and called the Public Meeting to order at 9:20 a.m.

All members of Council were present.

Chair MacLellan advised the purpose of the Public Meeting was for the Council of the County of Huron to consider changing the composition of Huron County Council.

Declarations of Pecuniary Conflict of Interest:

There were no declarations of pecuniary conflict of interest stated.

Acting CAO M. Heather Adams reviewed the proposed By-law No. 46-2012; being a By-law of the Corporation of the County of Huron to establish the composition of the Council of the Corporation of the County of Huron.

Chair MacLellan requested anyone present from the public in favour of the proposed By-law No. 46-2012; to step to the lectern and state their name; and provide their comments to Council for the record.

Chair MacLellan requested anyone present from the public opposed to the proposed By-law No. 46-2012; step to the lectern and state their name; and provide their comments to Council for the record.

Brian Barnim, opposed to this By-law, expressed concern that there was no opportunity to present alternatives. Council agreed to hear his presentation. Mr. Barnim's alternative provided that the head of the lower tier municipalities would come to County Council and the second position to come to County Council (based on only those municipalities who currently have a second position) would be elected at large for that specific purpose.

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Cindy Moyer, President of the Huron Perth Landowners Association, noted that she supports Mr. Barnim's option. She sees a level of government that is duplicating services with lower tiers and that redundancy is costing money to the electorate.

Shawn Drennan supports Mr. Barnim's option. He does not know how County Council got to this point and feels he has no say here or at ACW.

Jim Donnelly, Reeve in 1958 and 1959 Town of Goderich, Member of Goderich Council, indicated he wanted to know the reasons County Council chose 15 members. He noted that government should be about the good of the people.

Dave Hemmingway of Central Huron, spoke to the elements of truth and transparency, numbers and trust. He noted his concern when the issue of wind turbines is up for discussion and the members of Council declare a conflict of interest.

Larry McCabe, CAO for the Town of Goderich, noted he was not opposed but supported clarifying the process.

Members of Huron County Council were given an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

Councillor Robertson agreed with the by-law; Councillor Dowson agreed with the by-law; Councillor Van Diepenbeek supported the 15 option noting that there was no option for 9; Councillor Klopp agreed with the by-law; Councillor Grace clarified Goderich's decision to wait for the Cuff report.

Councillor Ginn expressed concern about the workload to do the work obligated to do. His concern is if you go down to 9 members with the current format there would be more meetings for the 9 remaining to attend and this may turn this into a job that a person with a full time job could not do. This would not be democratic to restrict those who can run based on having a full time job. A larger council spreading the work over more members allows younger people with other commitments to participate.

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Councillor Steffler noted he supported 9 at County Council and at the Huron East Council meetings. Maybe it should be 15 or 30 but County Council has been debating this for years. If it is not correct then every 4 years there is a chance for a report card during the election. He will be supporting the by-law for 15 now.

Councillor Grace supports the two previous speakers and indicated he could support 9. However the workload including Committee work and representation on outside committees and organizations indicates that the County will need 15 members to do the work. He supports Councillor Ginn in that a larger number allows younger people to participate in this level of government.

Councillor Klopp noted that in the discussion at Bluewater they did not accept the argument by Goderich Council. He supports more than one member per municipality, it is not about me it is about everyone, there is more than one interest in a municipality, and the more people from your area on this Council then more views can be put forward. If you do not do the job as Mayor or Deputy Mayor or your job as County Councillor it gets noted by the electors.

Councillor Rintoul noted that he gave a lot of thought concerning 9 members and noted that for example people like to take holidays in the winter time and could result in having too many absent for a meeting. He will support 15.

Councillor Hessel noted that Bluewater met the By-law in 1999 based on population; it is a valid by-law. He supports the current Bluewater structure as they do have a large population and assessment and so pay a fair amount of taxes to the County. Bluewater is one of the few municipalities that are growing and if others grow they deserve more representation so he still supports the 1999 By-law.

Councillor Dowson noted that all suggestions have been well discussed; that we have a By-law in place that has been proven in courts; it is a good by-law that has worked for 10 years. He has no problem continuing on with the By-law that is in place and see what happens in another 4 years.

Councillor Jewitt noted that the Cuff report recommended 9 members but that there is no right number based on the obligations of Council it should be 15 or 16. Council needs to set the governance structure, undertake a long term strategic plan and determine where we want to be in 15 or 20 years. Then in future maybe 9 would be appropriate. He supports the 15 at this time.

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Councillor Robertson noted that his Council debated this and noted that 9 is only a recommendation. He notes that 9 is not enough to prevent it from being a full time job and eliminating people may do this. The decision should not be made for the money. His Council supported the 15 and he will be supporting that.

Councillor Van Diepenbeek noted that going back to 1999 the number was reduced from 20 to 16. There were two court challenges. MPAC election numbers are what they are on Election Day. 15 is a workable number. He will support 15. Regarding declaring conflicts in various issues, we are all landowners you will never eliminate that, we do declare a conflict when we are required to.

Councillor Vincent noted that he will be respecting his Council in voting against this by-law. Personally he has enjoyed the debate and notes that most members ran for heads of lower tier but also stated what we wanted the County to do. They were not running for one position under old by-law. He notes that population is a misnomer it is based on the number of registered electors on election night. He will be voting against the By-law.

Councillor Shewfelt noted that he has seen 26 municipalities in the County with 46 members on County Council and since then there has been various sizes of Council. He noted that Wellington County changed to a process similar to that presented by Mr. Barnim and elected members at large. He found out in talking to some of them that two elections ago they changed it, as electing someone at large didn't work. He wonders how Bruce Council works with 8 as there are a lot of things you have to attend. When he is acting as the Mayor of Goderich he tries to do what is best for community, when he is at County Council he puts on his County hat and does what is best for the County. He notes that he hears the majority thinking that 9 won't work and he supports 15. We need to move ahead.

Warden MacLellan notes that the comments raised by the public regarding conflict of interest can be a slippery slope. If you elect people based on whether or not they have a conflict of interest in their term of office, then does that mean that we don't want anyone who is employed with school boards County Council because of their occupation. He advises to put the people who are working hard for you on Council, if someone is absent from a meeting they don't get walked on by the rest of Council. He noted that everyone does try to do what is best for County Council and that some things move quicker. He noted

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that he is not convinced 9 is the right number; that Mr. Cuff put it in his report because County Council had discussed 9 at one time and that is why the number came out as a recommendation. There needs to be at least one member from the Lower Tier; all taxes are collected at the lower tiers, when upset people call your local council. It is up to County Council to move through this and notes that there is a year to finalize something; it is not being rammed down anyone's throat. He hopes we get it right; if we don't there will be an opportunity to get it right in the future.

Clerk Barbara L. Wilson reviewed the correspondence that was received in the Clerk's office prior to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday September 4th, 2012.

The following correspondence was received:

- Received on the 16th of August, 2012; The Township of the Howick supports the proposed By-law No. 46-2012; to establish the composition of the Council of the Corporation of the County of Huron.
- Received on the 16th of August, 2012; The Town of Goderich requests an explanation as to why the recommendations in the Cuff Report were not implemented with regards to Council composition.
- Received on the 16th of August, 2012; The Municipality of Morris-Turnberry requests an explanation as to why the recommendations in the Cuff Report were not implemented with regards to Council composition.
- Received the 22nd of August, 2012; The Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh agrees to support that the composition of County Council shall be fifteen (15) members.

With no further comments forthcoming, Warden MacLellan asked for a Motion to adjourn this Public Meeting.

MOTION: #248-12

Moved by: Councillor J. Grace and Seconded by: Councillor A. Versteeg:

THAT:

The Public Meeting to consider changing the composition of Huron County Council adjourn at 10:27 a.m.

CARRIED

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Warden Bernie MacLellan

County Clerk Barbara L. Wilson