

Activities Report, August 2023

Anna Keenan, CAO, Rural Municipality of Victoria

Overall: Having had a 'five Mondays' month last month, followed by a one-week deferral of our scheduled Council meeting, it has now been 6 weeks since our last Council meeting and my last report. And it has been a busy period, covering the height of summer! I was grateful to take 1 week of vacation to enjoy the season.

A full week of this reporting period was unexpectedly spent following up after the discovery of the sewage leak from the Wharf, which resulted in Victoria Beach being closed for 4 days. The event also highlighted a number of necessary changes in operations, policy and infrastructure, and significantly rearranged my priorities for both the short and medium term: as my highest priority, I have been pressing our engineering consultants to deliver the required stamped reports, to move those Wharf, Causeway, and pumphouse Generator projects toward completion as soon as possible.

The two maintenance staff onboarded in the last reporting period have been working very effectively over the summer and we have received a lot of positive feedback on their work, and the general state of the village properties.

Once again, I am yet to complete my own quarterly self-evaluation as requested by the mayors in early June, but will do so when it is able to reach the top of my priority list.

Reporting on progress made by Marsha and myself, against the 11 work areas. In this report:

- [1 - Supporting Council governance](#)
- [2 - Planning & Development](#)
- [3 - Fire department](#)
- [4 - Emergency Measures Plan](#)
- [5 - Overseeing approved Capital projects](#)
- [6 - The Future of Victoria Park \(& the Amar proposal\)](#)
- [7 - Municipal Sustainability - policy](#)
- [8 - Municipal Sustainability - operations](#)
- [9 - Community Building](#)
- [10 - Maintenance & services](#)
- [11 - Forward Capital Project Planning](#)

1 - Supporting Council governance

- Prepared agendas and materials for 1 Planning Board meeting, 1 Water & Sewer Commission meeting, and this Council meeting
- Discussed requested amendments to the draft audited financial statements, from Council and the Water & Sewer Commission, with the auditor

2 - Planning & Development

- Supported the Planning Board in their ongoing review of legal advice on the 2022 Draft Official Plan & Development Bylaw
- Gathered information pertinent to 2 current IRAC appeals.
- Worked closely with the Development Officer on a number of current open permit decisions, and liaised with applicants
- There are many land transactions in the works in Victoria: I have been approached by 3 separate potential buyers/developers for the 3 large properties in the municipality that are currently owned by the MacDonald family, requesting information about zoning and other restrictions on these properties, and the processes for permitting, and in some cases rezoning, that are defined in our bylaws. There have been similar requests for information about the rules pertaining to other smaller properties which are changing hands. I have provided that information, or am in the process of doing so. Council and the public will, of course, be informed if and when we receive rezoning or development permit applications.

3 - Fire department

- The Fire Department leadership has changed. It is public knowledge, through court records and stories in local media, that the Fire Chief Dale MacDonald was convicted on a drunk driving charge. In speaking with the Deputy Fire Chief, James Boulter, he informed me that Dale has stepped back from the role of Fire Chief - although I'm not clear on whether this is a resignation or a leave-of-absence - and that therefore James is now Acting Fire Chief. Allan Marshall remains as 1st captain and is the presumptive Deputy of the Department.
 - I have wished Dale MacDonald well during what is undoubtedly a stressful time for him.
- I have met once with Fire Chief Boulter, and have expressed that I would prefer a direct line of communication with him to continue our work on normalising the relations between the municipality and the department, rather than appointing a new liaison person.
- At my last report, I had hoped to have the Fire Department asset inventory 75% complete by this meeting. I am told that further progress on an asset inventory for the department has been worked on by a Department member, but I have not received information resulting from this progress.
- We received the happy news in the last week that the provincial Community Revitalization Program grant funding was approved, which includes the installation of Heat Pumps at the Fire Hall (in addition to Heat Pumps at the Community Hall, and exterior painting of the Community Hall). Marsha is pursuing the implementation of this project.

4 - Emergency Measures Plan

- While I attempted to schedule a meeting with Eric and Tom to advance work on this file, I was not yet able to find a time to make the meeting happen.
- I have very briefly reviewed the files that the municipality has on record pertaining to Emergency Management. Without yet being able to take a 'deep dive' into these files,

it is clear that both our bylaw (from 2016, the pre-MGA era!), and our Emergency Plan (last updated 2019), need to be updated.

- There is a template Emergency Measures Bylaw from the province, that they recommend Municipalities adapt and adopt, and I think it will be suitable to Victoria's needs, but need more time to review it before being able to propose a new bylaw to Council, and even then, it would take at least 2 months (2 successive Council meetings), to have that bylaw approved.
- **However, hurricane season is approaching** (Dorian was Sep 6, Fiona Sep 25), and while we do have a municipal contact list, **we don't have an active plan**, nor do we have the clear relationships established between all the potential actors who would help the Village manage in an emergency scenario.
 - *I believe there is an urgent need, right now, for a plan that "lives in people's minds and in the community", rather than putting effort into first creating a plan that would live on paper in a filing cabinet!*
- **Therefore, I propose that the most pragmatic course of action would be for me to facilitate an evening Emergency Planning Workshop as soon as possible, to create a '2023-24 fall and winter' Interim Emergency Plan**, with all the people who would be operationally involved in the event of an extended power outage or local flooding, and to also contact provincial EMO to invite their attendance, and I seek Council's guidance on this idea, at this meeting.
 - **I am currently looking at the date of Tuesday, September 5th, for this meeting, and welcome Council feedback on the same.** I have chosen a Tuesday as this is usually the night of the week that the Fire Department meets.
 - For this workshop, I would design and facilitate a process with the aim of co-creating a plan in which everyone knows the role that they would play in a local emergency, has had the opportunity to meet others and understand their respective roles, and in which we can co-create key resources. I feel confident in designing this process, and have reached out to provincial EMO, to see if they can offer any assistance.
- **People who I would invite to attend (approximately 22 people)**
 - Fire Dept executive.
 - Preston as Water & Sewer Operator
 - Phil as village Maintenance for September
 - Myself and Marsha
 - Former CAOs who have information about infrastructure.
 - Trusted tradespeople who have worked for the village before (Particularly an electrician, a plumber.)
 - Richard Boulter, as neighbour to the Schoolhouse, which would be used as an emergency gathering point and potential shelter.
 - Richard van Buskirk as Wharf Manager, and any fishers who would wish to be involved.
 - Restaurant owners/managers, given the significant food/water resources they have present in the town.
 - The Playhouse, who have deep knowledge of our largest heritage building, the Community Hall.
 - Mayor and Councillors - should you wish to take on leadership roles in the event of an emergency, which is something I would encourage. Check-ons.
 - Any other experienced people in the municipality who Council advises should be invited to attend.

- Following the creation of an Interim Emergency Plan, over the subsequent months, we should work toward a fully updated Emergency Management Bylaw, and should formalise the results of our workshop into a formal, written plan, in a format that can be accepted by the province.
- Having a formal plan also makes us eligible for funding that we are not currently able to access: for example, there is a provincial program that offers funding for generators for a designated reception centre, but the outdated-ness of our current plans means we are not currently eligible.

5 - Overseeing approved Capital projects

- **Causeway project** - Island Coastal's bid was approved by the Commission, and Stantec has contacted Island Coastal to begin the work. They have begun procurement. Once they have procured the materials, they will inform us of the potential dates for the work, and we will have a kick-off meeting.
- **Generators** - I am still waiting on the electrical engineer's report. He had last stated that he would get me a report by Friday August 18. We will follow up urgently on Monday. An electrical engineer's stamp is required before the province will approve changes to the Water & Sewer system.
 - Additionally, last week I learned that our Wellfield Protection Plan requires that any backup generator at the pumphouse/schoolhouse location must be propane, rather than diesel, as a diesel spill would risk contamination of the village's water supply.
- **Wharf project** - last week, Stantec provided the engineering package to DFO, and we are awaiting DFO's approval, before it can be put out to tender. DFO is aware of the urgency of the project. CAO is following up on this project daily
- **Community Hall heat pumps** - Community Revitalization Programme grant was approved. Marsha is now investigating new quotes so that this funding can be directed towards a central/ducted heat pump unit to replace the oil furnace, rather than in-wall heat pumps. This may be a few thousand dollars more than the \$20k funding available through the grant, but will be well worth it, if we are able to remove the oil furnace and therefore cease paying for oil heating costs, as well as repair/maintenance of that furnace, which is now rusted out.

6 - The Future of Victoria Park (& the Amar proposal)

- As per last Council meeting: municipal staff are not taking further action on this file until/unless we receive a formal application for rezoning & development, or if we hear from the province that they have decided not to support such an application.
- Ross Dwyer, of the Canadian Centre for Climate Change & Adaptation at UPEI, visited the site, and indicated his willingness to share the results of their assessments of the success of various shoreline protection strategies around the island, either:
 - when the time comes for the Municipality to assess proposals, or
 - if, independent of the Amar proposal, the municipality embarks on a shoreline protection project
- Ross encouraged me to contact the Municipality of Souris, where [the Breakwater project](#) has been successful, in protecting the causeway from erosion. Shelley LaVie, the CAO for Souris, shared the following information, which indicate a positive direction that Victoria could follow:

- “The intertidal reefs along our causeway were actually a project undertaken by the Provincial Department of Transportation in an effort to slow erosion and protect the highway coming into Souris. So, there was no cost to our municipality. I do know it was a challenge to obtain permits through Environment. Environmental impact was a big consideration.
- We just met yesterday with various partners to talk about further action that could be taken towards the west of the causeway. The intertidal reefs we have now certainly made a difference in a positive way for us. Sand is being formed directly behind them. Our current reefs were built with Island sandstone to provide a more natural solution. Over time the sandstone will erode and will need to be replenished.
- Further action may involve both sandstone and armour stone as well as bringing in sand and natural grass plantings to restore sections of the beach and dunes.
- These efforts are being taken by Souris and Area Wildlife Association with support from Provincial Government.”

7 - Municipal Sustainability - policy

- [Same as last 2 months, was unable to complete yet:] Intending to propose increases to the Schedule of Fees, to bring to a future Council meeting, but have not yet been able to prioritise this task.
- After significant reflection, I have written an attached note on the deep un-sustainability of the role of CAO, including a recommendation that **Victoria strike a committee to explore the possibility of restructuring the municipality under the MGA.** Please refer to that note for details. I welcome questions.

8 - Municipal Sustainability - operations

- Monitored, tracked and reported on municipal income and expenses as required.
- Met with ‘GrantMatch’, a company that supports municipalities to apply for grants, on a ‘pay if successful’ basis. They have worked with West River in the past, and I will be reaching out to West River to hear about their experience.
 - Given the constraints on staff capacity, and the ease with which ‘grant applications’ is pushed off the priority list by more ‘urgent’ tasks, I feel that this will likely be a good direction for the municipality to pursue.
 - However, I want to be cautious, because while this may result in securing more capital funding, payments for the service would come from the operational budget, which is currently quite finely balanced.

9 - Community Building

- Composed and sent the July edition of the Victoria Municipal News e-newsletter, as well as multiple ‘mid month’ updates, including a significant report to the community on the followup from the sewage leak incident.

10 - Maintenance & services

- Worked with maintenance staff as needed
 - Unfortunately, the bathrooms at Victoria Park have backed up 5 times in the last 4 weeks. The first time, we had a septic company come in and pump out the tanks. Once, our maintenance staffer was able to clear the blockage himself. The remaining 3 times, we've had to call out a plumber to come and clear the lines. The concern seems to be the public flushing non-biodegradable products down the toilet. The cost was not budgeted for, but is a real cost of using an old building badly in need of repair or reconstruction, to provide a service to the public.
 - On the last visit, the plumbers also sent a camera down the lines to see if there were any physical problems with the plumbing. It appeared in good order (no burrs, holes or breaks), and they made a minor adjustment to the pipes to help keep the level lower.
 - We had planned to close the Victoria Park washrooms at the end of August, but if the lines continue to clog, we may make the decision to close them earlier, especially if cooler/wetter weather dampens the number of beachgoers on the remaining few weekends of school holidays.
- Worked with the W&S Operator, as needed, particularly on the Action Plan items following up on the wharf sewage leak. (See attached report summarising the Action Plan progress)
- Liaised with Canada Post, about their decision for location of Community Mailboxes. No-one in the community came forward on time for Canada Post to consider maintaining a similar service to what Sabine offered in the glass shop. The Municipal office has offered to Canada Post to sell stamps and offer parcel pickup, and we will be following up with them about this in the coming month. Residents can expect direct communication from Canada Post about the upcoming changes of address.
- We have signed a buffer zone permit application from the SSWA to the province, which, if approved, will allow the SSWA to do a small Living Shorelines project at Rovis/Crescent beach. We are looking forward to hearing when the project will begin. In addition, we requested that they expand their project so that it can cover the planting of shrubs/native roses in the currently-grassed space between the Rovis Beach parking lot and the seawall boardwalk, and the SSWA agreed.
- We were contacted by the Central Coastal Tourism Partnership, who have offered to relocate a small dock from another beach, to Victoria, and to maintain it for the next 2 years. After assessing potential locations, we have suggested the Westmoreland River beach, at the end of Lyman Street. We were also contacted by a local resident who has been mowing an access path there (on municipal land) for some time, and we agreed that the municipality should take over that responsibility, which will be an expense of \$200 for the remainder of this season. We can make decisions about ongoing mowing at that site in next year's budget.

11 - Forward Capital Project Planning

- [As reported last 2 months] Am [still] waiting on the Dept of Infrastructure and Transport to schedule a meeting on site, to explore options for future capital projects relating to parking and traffic.

- I am ready to begin researching grant applications for the Active Transportation Fund, which could enable this project to take wings in 2024-25, and will pursue this as soon as other priorities allow.