



The Village of
PORT CLEMENTS
"Gateway to the Wilderness"

36 Cedar Avenue West
PO Box 198
Port Clements, BC
V0T1R0
OFFICE: 250-557-4295
Public Works: 250-557-4295
FAX: 250-557-4568
Email: office@portclements.ca
Web: www.portclements.ca

7:00 PM, Monday, May 8th, 2023
Committee of the Whole Minutes

PRESENT:

Mayor Scott Cabianna
Councillor Brigid Cumming (via conference)
Councillor Kazamir Falconbridge (via conference)
Councillor Dennis Reindl

NOT PRESENT:

Councillor Wayne Nicol

CAO Marjorie Dobson
Deputy CAO Elizabeth Cumming

Members of the Public: Marilyn Bliss and Maureen Bailey.

Committee of the Whole Meeting Called to Order at 7:01 PM

Mayor Scott Cabianna: I call to order the committee of the whole meeting of the Village of Port Clements being held on the traditional territory of the Haida People.

1. ADOPT AGENDA

2023-05-113—Moved by Councillor Reindl,
THAT the Committee adopts the May 8th, 2023, Committee of the Whole Agenda as presented.
CARRIED

2. REPORTS & DISCUSSIONS

D-1-Municipal Capacity

- Opening consideration that identified in the staff report is the fact that the Village has slightly less capacity compared with other communities of the same size, and quite a bit less capacity compared to the other municipalities on Island, while there has been a general push from residents and Council alike to do more than what the Village already does. It brings the question, "Do we have enough capacity to do what we need and want to do?" and requires Council to decide on how to move forward. Council has a responsibility to consider staff capacity and the issues that can arise when things are operating under capacity or when asking for more than current capacity can manage – overworking, overloading staff. Council needs to have a conversation on if they are going to increase staff capacity by providing extra funding for operational needs and how to find that funding (such as for ongoing maintenance after infrastructure is built, which is not typically eligible for grant funding). In addition, Council needs to figure out how to afford to do what they want to do.
- In terms of staff capacity, there are two different departments: administration and public works. Council asked if staff present at the meeting could identify their capacity concerns. The CAO identified that there has been an ongoing report to Council from public works over the last year on the lack of capacity and their concerns. While there is no excess capacity in administrative, there is an extreme lack of capacity in public works. It has often been brought up that years ago they did not need so much staff and there is a perspective that the Village is overstaffed as it is, however, there has been significant legislative changes over the years with additional legislative requirements that have to be met that put the same burdens of large communities onto small

communities that cannot be side-stepped. Public works is particularly burdened by these legislative demands. While it would be good if the office could get a summer student to do some minor things, the crucial area is Public Works. The Deputy CAO also echoed this assessment, identifying that public works is in a critical situation where it easily needs 1-2 additional positions to maintain and catch up with the demands of what we currently have operational, let alone additional things (infrastructure, services, etc). Currently administration can manage, though it would be nice to have additional capacity there too such as front desk personnel. The CAO identified that Public Works Superintendent was in favour of increasing public works capacity by adding a third permanent position.

- There are 2 full-time permanent public works positions, and typically there are 8-10 weeks in the summer when there is a youth worker. 60% of the public works capacity, 1.2 people, goes to attending to the sewer and water system from standard day-in-day-out maintenance and operational requirements. That leaves only 40% of their time available for everything else. Mid-May to mid-September, mowing the lawns and looking after various parks grounds take .8 of a person, so in that period between water, sewer, and mowing there is no capacity left over for anything else except for the two months where there is a youth worker. Then from November - March dealing with snow and ice utilizes the remaining 40%. Last year public works spent 14% of their time working on grant projects, where we put bids out to tender and had no contractor who was interested, or available so public works had to attend to it.
- It was discussed that historically prior to c. 2005 there was only one permanent full-time public works position, and afterwards they increased to 2 permanent positions. Roughly in 2008 this expanded to seasonally having a youth summer worker. It was suggested that communities like Granisle should be reached out to inquire if they feel pressure to increase their current capacity from the 10 that they have, as we are already in a position where we are playing catch-up compared to the other municipalities.
- The discussion generally resolved that there was a need to hire a third permanent public works position. Council has already accounted for the cost of hiring a full-time permanent position into this year's annual budget. If we increase our public works to three, we can see how it goes from there. It was discussed that in addition to a permanent third position, additional short-term solutions could also be looked at separately, such as hiring someone just to cut grass for the summer.
- It was brought up that the need for the third person is not just for current public works capacity issues, but an important consideration for succession planning for staff. There is the potential for people to move on or retire, or situations where there may be illness or even disability. It takes time to properly train someone to get the water/sewer tickets to operate those systems and other skills that public works utilizes, so it needs to be considered in advance of need. It was suggested that it would be good to get someone local who was in their 20s/30s looking for a career as it can be difficult to retain someone coming in from off-island.
- It was strongly recommended in the discussion that whatever decision Council makes, they should include public works in that decision and communicate the decision to the public beforehand. Concern expressed that without proper communication there may be negative backlash on staff, especially public works, from the public. They have experienced it in the past, in addition to it generally being a bit of a thankless job and underpaid.
- Contracting was brought up frequently in the discussion as a suggestion. Hiring contractors for things like ditching that may only need to be done once or twice a year in town, or like the painting/washing of Rainbow Wharf. Caution identified with this approach as Council has relied on the assumption of availability of contractors over the last few years with projects when contractors have either not been available or interested in undertaking the work. Often with grant projects the unavailability of contractors has resulted in aspects of grant projects being shifted onto public works, which has increased the workload and demands on staff to meet grant deadlines. Additionally, at times the cost of contracting out a service or maintenance aspect has been very expensive and is not affordable in the long-term. For example, when

Council was quoted for snow removal from contractors the cost was very high and thus Council ended up utilizing Public Works to provide the service.

- General acknowledgement and discussion that over the last 10-20 years there has been an increase in the community's infrastructure. The trails, benches, gazebos, outhouses, biomass plant, etc. After being built they all need to be maintained and that impacts capacity. If the community wants to continue to have its infrastructure – Rainbow Wharf, Small Craft Harbour, Community Hall, Parks, Water System, Sewer System – then it must maintain them. As infrastructure ages, the maintenance burdens increases, and this has been highlighted in particular with the water and sewer systems which are aged. A significant amount of staff time is spent attending to this infrastructure now compared to when it was first built, and it should be reviewed to see if it should be replaced rather than just repaired. Potentially the water system will be the next big project for the community. There was some consideration that some infrastructure may not have been properly built in the first place, which has later impacted the ability to maintain it as it ages (ex. trails). If things are going to be built, they should be built with the end product in mind and staff trained on how to maintain it.
- Mowing was brought up as a frequent point of discussion. Mowing takes up a significant portion of public works capacity at the current frequency it normally occurs between May to September. Some suggest that there is too much mowing and that it could be left for longer periods between mowing. It was also countered that the current mowing frequency is because if it left to grow longer it becomes more time consuming to mow (mowing goes slower to get through the buildup). Suggested that things can be tested by letting things go a bit longer and then evaluate the results. Council could also consider contracting out mowing, with the suggestion that someone should be available to mow the lawn for less than the current operational cost of mowing activities. Council could also potentially look at replacing the grass with something else – letting it grow wild/natural, putting clover/other ground cover that does not require mowing, or requires less mowing.
- An idea was brought up that the Village should consider utilizing some of the funds that it has in reserves to potentially tap into, for the short term, to build capacity for maintenance and attend to these needs. Caution to this idea as those reserves as grant projects often require the Village to commit its own funds to projects, and usually when these projects have cost overruns the Village is responsible for paying those costs. We may need the money we have in reserves for major projects (sewer lagoon, well #3, etc). There are also many aspects to projects that happen before a grant application is submitted that are not grant funded. There may be also situations where grant funding for a project cannot be obtained or is denied, but the Village still wants to persist with the project. In addition, some of the money we receive now from the provincial or federal government, we may not continue to receive in the future, so having the cash reserves helps buffer the Village in such a situation. Council needs to carefully consider all the projects it wants to invest in first and see if spending the money is worthwhile/feasible to move ahead with these projects – this can be explored more in strategic planning.
- It was also brought up in discussion that there is the potential to explore other sources of external capacity for projects. For example, at the North Coast Regional District there was a presentation by the Mountain Biking Association (a non-profit society) for the constructing pump tracks. This society is looking for communities that are interested and can partner with them - they are looking for people from the community to join the association to help raise the funds to help fund and build the projects. There may be other societies that have similar focuses to assist communities to realize projects.

2023-05-114—Moved by Mayor Cabianca

THAT the Committee recommends to Council at the next Regular Council Meeting to find a means of financing or arranging a third full-time permanent Public Works position.

CARRIED

2023-05-115 – Moved by Councillor Reindl

THAT the Committee recommends to Council at the next Regular Council Meeting to look into the cost of using staff for mowing and make some determination of whether it is the financially responsible way to continue with mowing or an alternative measure (contracting) to be pursued.

CARRIED

2023-05-116—Moved by Mayor Cabianga,

THAT the Committee recommends to Council at the next Regular Council Meeting to consider a reduction in mowing frequency.

CARRIED

Meeting end at 8:17 PM



Mayor Scott Cabianga



CAO Marjorie Dobson