



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Organizational change –
Facilities and Water maintenance

Date: November 16,2020

VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

Background:

The Municipality has seen some sharp changes in workloads during the past year and a half, with the Public Works Department experiencing the largest impact. Some of the workload increases are by design, with the addition of the Wedgeport Wastewater project, and the installation (after the completion of the second phase) of about 90 new septic systems in the community. Also, after Brad Fulton's retirement as Senior Planner (shared with Yarmouth Municipality), the Public Works Department saw the addition of Alix d'Entremont as our mapping/GIS specialist, increasing the workload on this department with the elimination of the District Planning Commission.

Most workload increases are externally driven, mostly by changes in legislation. To cite examples, MODA is in the process of training a fire inspector internally, as we cannot rely solely on the services of the Barrington fire inspector who has been very helpful but cannot do all inspections. Second, changes to building inspection regulations requires additional time and energy on every callout, reducing the amount of inspections one can accomplish in the run of a week. Combined with a sharp increase in development over the past couple of years, we are pushing the work limits of a single person, who is also responsible for development permits and subdivision. The three duties are not typically held by one person.

Amendments to our Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw will increase the work requirements of the department. We now require a development permit for any work on the property, whereas in the past we did not. The change was to bring us closer to other municipalities and to improve our collection of data. An example recently cited by our Director of PW is one of sheds, our land use and unsightly bylaws would discourage multiple sheds on a property. Before, sheds could be added without our knowledge. Now, a development permit would be required. So, in instances where there are 5-6 sheds on a property, that would and could not be addressed.

The addition of a new public road, and a new administrative building will surely increase maintenance needs, the leadership of which was previously shared with PW and Recreation. A larger focus on land development in Tusket will engage the skills of our PW Director, CAO, Community Development officer etc.. In short, by constructing infrastructure we are adding to the workload of the municipality.

By law enforcement:

Our bylaw enforcement complaints have sharply increased in 2020 but have been on the steady rise in recent years. We are not well equipped for major increases in complaints. As indicated in council orientation, dangerous or unsightly calls, along with noise complaints, can take considerable resources. Currently our Director of PW is handling these complaints due to the complex nature of the situations presented. That takes the Director away from Wastewater, asset management and other projects that fall under his responsibility.

Succession planning:

We are anticipating retirements in the near future. Our building inspector seeks to retire at the end of December of 2021, and one wastewater and one facility maintenance person are each in the age range that could suggest retirement in the near future, though we have not received any formal announcement. Our efforts to replace our building inspector internally, with Louis Boudreau, were discontinued, due to many factors, but COVID-19 training cancellations had a considerable impact. The replacement of trained building officials is a significant issue across Nova Scotia. We will be advertising the position to replace John in January 2021, but we recognize it could take some time before we fill the position with a qualified inspector. To train a new inspector, it can take up to 3 years, and it takes at least 2. Furthermore, a qualified inspector is unlikely to possess the skills required for subdivision and development permits, though it is possible. Our hope is that we would hire a fully trained Building inspector.

Based on these challenges, CAO Muise along with Hans Pfeil and the department have had numerous conversations on what potential options we have moving forward. Our focus was to use the strengths, training and interests of our staff and align those best with the work. Second, to identify training and staff gaps and make changes to fulfill community expectations and assure safe and healthy residents. Finally, to reduce burnout from a department that has experienced lots of change.

Summary of Issues and opportunities identified based on internal work are as follows:

Facilities maintenance could have better alignment. The facilities crew reports to Recreation, and the wastewater crew reports to Public Works – BUT the work is often done as a team of one, supporting and helping each other where needed.

PW Director cannot enforce, manage wastewater/facilities, and co-manage multiple capital projects with current resources.

Change of plans for the replacement of the building inspector opens up an opportunity for Louis to take a supervisory role off of the PW Director's plate and is qualified to do so.

Fire inspection is falling behind, as we cannot solely rely on our Barrington resource. Tara Owen currently manages the list of required inspections and expressed interest for the work.

Resignation of our Building Official in 2021 requires a replacement – Sullivan has agreed to continue to do subdivision work on a part time basis – likely by contract – after retirement.

Suggested course of action

Train Tara Owen for Fire Inspection – she will be able to perform smaller inspections and allow us to catch up after appropriate training. **Ongoing**

Shift Louis in a supervisory role for all maintenance, create a new department named Facility and Water, and shift all maintenance work under Louis, create new Job Descriptions and contracts etc. **Complete - Seeking Council to confirm**

With wastewater and maintenance now the responsibility of Boudreau, ensure that Development permits can be issued by our PW Director, focus PW Director on Asset Management, procurement, development, not on maintenance. Enforcement remains for now. **Complete - Seeking Council to confirm**

Advertise for the building official position **January 2021**

Re-evaluate workloads, after these changes, consider additional clerical/support from the Office of the CAO to support the Facility/Waste and Public Works Departments. **February/March 2021**

Enclosed you will find the organizational chart, before and after, that illustrates my recommended changes.

MGA considerations:

Public works, wastewater systems and facility maintenance are all eligible expenses under the MGA section 65. The reorganization of staff and their function is stated in the MGA as the responsibility of the CAO. However, as this position could be considered a ‘new’ position, I am requesting a council motion to confirm, in abundance of caution.

CAO’s Recommendation:

Recommend Council endorse the new position and title for Louis Boudreau, being the Facility and Water Supervisor. All other changes included in this report are the responsibility of the CAO and do not require council approval, but I have illustrated all of it to provide proper context for Council.

Suggested motion:

Move that the Department of Facilities and Water, as recommended by the CAO, along with its supervisory position, be endorsed by Council.