

MUNICIPALITY OF NORTHERN BRUCE PENINSULA

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES NO. 20-36  
(ELECTRONIC)

September 16, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. at the Tobermory Community Centre

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Milt McIver  
Deputy Mayor Debbie Myles  
Councillor James Mielhausen  
Councillor Megan Myles  
Councillor Laurie (Smokey) Golden

STAFF PRESENT:

Peggy Van Mierlo-West, Chief Administrative Officer  
Cathy Addison, Clerk  
Tessa Swanton, Deputy Clerk  
Wendy Elliott, Chief Building Official  
Troy Cameron, Public Works Manager  
Ryan Deska, Community Services Manager  
Teresa Shearer, Treasurer  
Carol Hopkins, Bylaw Enforcement Officer  
Wilf Barnes, Fire Chief

OTHERS PRESENT:

Peter Politis, Evergreen Innovative Strategies  
John Grandy, Bruce Trail  
Bill Sullivan, Regional Tourism Association 7 (RTO7)  
Ethan Meleg, Parks Canada  
Sean Liipere, Parks Canada  
Susan Schrempf, Owen Sound Transportation Company  
Scott Davidson, Ontario Parks  
Barb Fisher, Bruce Community Futures Development  
Paul McGrath, Bruce County

All members of Council and those listed under Others Present attended the meeting from the Tobermory Community Centre and the meeting was held via Zoom, an electronic platform, for members of the public to attend.

Peggy Van Mierlo-West, CAO, introduced the meeting and stakeholder workshop regarding traffic and tourism concerns and possible solutions.

Mayor McIver welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that the purpose of the meeting is to gather ideas and start the conversation. He said that the number of tourists this summer has been substantial, and the goal is to implement solutions prior to summer 2021.

Facilitator, Peter Politis, indicated that many other communities experienced busy times this year. He noted that issues presented this year included multiple general concerns, safety concerns and moving the problem to another area. He stated that long-term solutions need to be determined.

DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND GENERAL NATURE THEREOF

Mayor McIver called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and Council members were reminded to disclose any pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof that may arise during the course of the meeting.

## APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by J. Mielhausen  
Seconded by L. Golden

Resolution #36-01-2020

THAT the content of the agenda be approved as presented.

Carried

## DELEGATION/PRESENTATION

1. Overview of Traffic Management Issues by Peggy Van Mierlo-West, CAO of the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula  
Council/agencies will be participating in a Planning Workshop dealing with traffic management, facilitated by Peter Politis, Evergreen Innovative Strategies

The CAO welcomed members of the public who had joined the meeting via Zoom, and explained that due to social distancing guidelines, members of the public cannot attend the meeting in-person at this time.

Peggy Van Mierlo-West provided a brief PowerPoint presentation and the following was noted:

- Partnerships are the key to success;
- Partnerships will assist in the process of funding actionable sustainable recommendations;
- A public meeting will be held for the public to provide their comments;
- Covid-19 presented a variety of trends including an increase in road trips, RV travel, local trips, staycations, and visits to the National Park;
- The summer of 2020 had many tourists travelling to the area and resources were strained;
- Some overcrowded/over-visited areas included Little Cove Beach, Mermaids Cove, Lion's Head Provincial Nature Reserve, downtowns and the Bruce Trail;
- Approximately 175 emails were received regarding tourism concerns, parking, and the lack of social distancing, etc.;
- Parking concerns occurred in Lion's Head on Moore Street, the McCurdy Drive entrance and on the Bruce Trail entrance;
- As a result of parking concerns, no parking signs were posted on Moore Street and signage installed asking visitors to park in the Lion's Head Arena parking lot;
- Bylaw staff spent time directing traffic in various locations, this method generated a "cause and effect" pattern;
- Paid parking in Tobermory funds the tourism industry;
- Strong partnerships can be considered with Parks Canada;
- There was a reduced capacity in Parks Canada and other areas due to Covid-19;
- Daytrippers still ventured to Northern Bruce Peninsula (NBP) despite the pandemic, unprepared with limited knowledge of the area;
- Areas already had capacity issues prior to the pandemic;
- Determine how to best communicate with daytrippers and tourists regarding capacities;
- Bylaw staff closed roads, additional bylaw staff were hired, portable toilets placed and additional washroom cleaning and garbage collection took place;
- Suggestions provided by residents included a shuttle service, more washroom maintenance, more waste management, construction of new washroom facilities, close the Highway at Ferndale, creation of no parking areas and no foot traffic permitted on closed roads;
- Today's meeting is the start of the conversation, tourism is not a new concept to NBP;
- Tourism can be unsustainable and impact the environment, the Municipality needs to help both residents and tourists feel welcome;
- Partnerships and new ideas need to be developed;

- Different perspectives are needed, and success should be defined;
- It is important to consider how our actions will impact the community years from now, unintended consequences, enhanced service delivery, adequate human and financial resources, sustainability, engaging the community, improving accessibility, local character, inclusivity, other partners that have yet to be considered and previous experiences;

Peter Politis, Facilitator, welcomed members of the public listening via Zoom, the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation and Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON). He proceeded to provide an explanation of special council meetings, the role of elected council, and council structure. Peter Politis spoke on being a politician in a small town, provincial governments, and counties.

All participants introduced themselves by stating their name, organization, and perspective on today's meeting.

Peter Politis began conversation with the participants and the following was noted:

- Facilities are operating at half capacity;
- Is the 2020 season going to be different than years to come?;
- Over a quarter of the country's population is within driving distance of NBP;
- Residents are angry and frustrated;
- Increased tourism is impeding on the ability for residents to enjoy their cottages and villages;
- Too many people are in too small of an area;
- Trespassing has occurred;
- Numerous emails from cottage/homeowners have been recorded;
- Roads have been blocked off and visitors are walking kilometres to their destinations;
- Daytrippers are frustrated because the Chi-Cheemaun and National Park is operating at limited capacity;
- Daytrippers then visit any possible area, even private property;
- The business sector is frustrated as funding is being heavily capped and there are pressures to reopen;
- The funding would help businesses cope with losses as a result of Covid-19 and half capacity issues;
- An explosion of tourists occurred in 2020, however the over tourism concept has been an issue prior to 2020; and
- When the Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, all visitors came to NBP at once.

Discussion with respect to Parks Canada was as follows:

- Parks Canada has seen increasing visitation trends for many years and looked at visitation management and setting capacity limits;
- 25 million dollars has been invested into the Park in recent years and staffing has increased;
- Policies and processes have changed to reduce visitor frustration;
- The Grotto reservation system was introduced, 2020 saw more visitation than normal and more visitors were turned away than usual;
- Halfway Log Dump visitation increased by 125%;
- Parks Canada has worked with the CAO, Bylaw Officer and Public Works Manager this year to remedy traffic and parking issues;
- Most visitors are from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA);
- Daytripping is the emerging trend as visitation from the United States (US) has declined with Covid-19; and
- Quebec travellers are very popular to the area.

The following conversation was recorded regarding Ontario Parks:

- Ontario Parks is a Provincial Parks system;
- Lion's Head and Black Creek (Sandy Beach) Provincial Parks are considered non-operating parks as compared to other provincial parks where fees are collected and camping sites booked;
- Lion's Head and Black Creek experienced higher visitation levels in 2020;
- Overcrowding issues were found in Lion's Head and to mitigate that issue, increased staffing and patrol were dispatched;
- Moving forward, Ontario Parks will be considering opportunities to help mitigate over visitation and control how many visitors access the provincial parks;
- There is an agreement with the Municipality regarding maintaining the washroom facility at Black Creek; and
- There are jurisdictional challenges with visitors parking outside of the park at Black Creek, therefore a partnership is needed.

Discussion continued as follows:

- Success looks like safe, vibrant and positive visitor experiences, well informed visitors, clear and enforced capacities, and clear roles and responsibilities;
- A new management plan from Ontario Parks is long overdue;
- Fill by-law positions;
- Maintaining a healthy environment including clean waters;
- Three main points include a good quality of life for local residents, good visitor experience and maintaining a healthy environment;
- Who is going to take on tasks, fund projects and what can be done as a team?;
- Whether tourism is good or bad depends on one's perspective;
- There is a division amongst people;
- The Municipality is responding to these concerns as they are the last level of government;
- The Municipality needs providers and partners willing to assist financially;
- The Municipality cannot place a limit on those entering similar to Parks Canada;
- The Municipality needs to find a balance like Parks Canada, as the Municipality's mandate is to protect the environment;
- Limits can be placed by Ontario Parks based on destruction that is occurring;
- The Lion's Head lookout path has been destroyed and will take decades to return to its original state;
- When Parks Canada places limits on visitation, people come to other areas of the Municipality;
- The Bruce Trail is a volunteer organization with few staff, volunteers are maintaining the trail and they do their best to educate hikers on fires, camping, etc.
- A barrier to the Bruce Trail is that the organization does not own the land where the issues are happening, therefore are constrained;
- There are major problems occurring on federal and provincial land;
- Seasonality is present in the community, balance is needed, there has been growth in visitors from Quebec, levels of government need to give support; and
- The Indigenous communities in the areas need to be present for these discussions in the future;

There was a break in the meeting at 10:33 a.m.

The meeting reconvened at 10:56 a.m.

Discussion shifted to addressing potential "bridges" or solutions to the "barriers" or problems:

- Circulate positive messages welcoming visitors and how they can have a safe visit;

- Electronic communication, such as websites and Facebook;
- Parks Canada maintains an active website and billboards on highways throughout the region;
- Parks Canada's Facebook and Twitter pages are popular with around 20,000 followers, they have also entertained paid campaigns;
- Notifying visitors when Parks Canada is full is portrayed through social media and a link to the online reservation system is on their website;
- Visitors are encouraged to check availability before visiting Parks Canada;
- Ontario Parks has been limiting the amount of advertising and has reduced social media feeds, particularly for Lion's Head Provincial Park;
- There has been an influx in people visiting the Lion's Head Provincial Park with no parking available;
- Other provincial parks with less visitation are currently being promoted;
- Instagram is a popular channel that can be used to capture visitors before they begin travelling;
- Bruce County launched Explore the Bruce, a program to disperse visitors to different areas of the County;
- Bruce County website visits were 24,000 this year compared to 15,000 in 2019; and
- There was a 178% increase in visits to the Lion's Head lookout page compared to 2019.

Members of the public tuning into the meeting via Zoom offered the following questions and comments:

- Concern with employees working in local businesses dealing with the rudeness of tourists;
- Ensure the best social media platforms are being used to communicate, has Tik Tok and Instagram been considered?;
- Promote the area responsibly, beautiful images attract people; and
- Balance is key, consider the impact on the environment.

The meeting continued as follows:

- Continue working with Safe Communities to make Highway 6 safer, there have been 205 drivers charged with stunt driving on Highway 6 to date and no fatalities recorded;
- As visitors are welcomed to the region, we expect them to act a certain way, make visitors aware of what we expect;
- Strongest aspect is a partner base;
- There was a Manifesto document created by RTO7, Parks Canada, with valuable contributions from the Bruce Peninsula Environment Group, Tobermory Chamber of Commerce, the St. Edmunds Property Owners and the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, in 2017 regarding sustainable tourism, which was discussed by Megan Myles who was a member of the Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee;
- The Manifesto included concepts like, "protect today to share with tomorrow";
- The Manifesto was distributed as rack cards and other formats to businesses, such as bed and breakfast establishments;
- Other Manifesto ideas included attracting high positive impact visitors, the project was done through a volunteer base as there is no tourism manager in the local area;
- The Manifesto was a sustainable tourism action plan that outlined direction on how to move forward with tourism in the Bruce Peninsula;
- Parks Canada previously hosted great interpretive programs for youth, such as using "Fluffy the Rattlesnake" as an educational resource;
- The Parks Canada programs have changed this year, no guided hikes are available, people are being educated when they arrive on preparedness for their trip, and staff monitor Flowerpot Island to prevent graffiti and educate the public;



- Paid parking generates a large amount of funds, the Municipality is working on short term accommodation requirements, Ryan Deska was recently hired with a portion of his position dedicated to economic development;
- Communication levels with all stakeholders have improved;
- Paid parking was implemented and decided that the generated funds would be allocated to projects in downtown Tobermory;
- Do we want our limited real estate in Tobermory to be dedicated to creating parking lots?; and
- Partner with private boat operators for a shuttle service.

The following was noted from members of the public participating via Zoom:

- Determine the number of drivers that came to NBP this summer;
- Create bicycle lanes;
- Thank you to bylaw officers for their service;
- How are climbers being heard?;
- Climbing is very popular in NBP;
- Do not add more parking and set limits; and
- Stunt driving.

The following was mentioned regarding parking:

- The largest number of visitors to the area was during the August long weekend;
- Covid-19 travel restrictions flooded the area with people;
- The Municipality worked with Parks Canada on Little Cove Road, barricades were placed to reduce the number of people entering the road, which created a problem by pushing parking and visitors to other areas;
- The CAO developed the “know before you go” media release that was an effective means of communication;
- Once parking was reduced on Moore Street, visitors parked in the body of Lion’s Head, then Moore Street parking was closed completely and parking was advertised at the Lion’s Head Arena parking lot; and
- Visitors do not understand that parking can be full as they intend to spend the day sight-seeing.

A member of the public joining the meeting via Zoom and commented that daytrippers bring “x” amount of money and cause “y” amount of damage.

Conversation continued and the following was documented:

- We should build parking lots and charge for parking;
- NBP is down to one gas station operating only;
- Bruce County completed an Economic Impact of Tourism study for the past 2 years that looked at how tourists spend their money in our areas and on-location interviews were conducted with visitors;
- Municipal students have had to increase their rounds for garbage collection this year;
- Daytrippers enjoy free amenities which increases costs to ratepayers;
- Paid parking is a way to achieve some wealth from visitors and allows you to manage traffic flow and mitigate effects on residents;
- On Labour Day, there were no parking spots available for boaters who paid for a slip as visitors parking were using the area for free;
- Bruce County saw an increase in food consumption;
- The Tourism Innovation Lab is a resource;
- Parking lots can be created as the Municipality owns property;
- Traffic counts are helpful;
- Different intensities for parking;
- Cottage-style roads were not designed for parking on the side of the roads as that may create safety hazards;

- The Municipality is doing their best with a very small staff;
- Create a Tourism Advisory Group and meet monthly; and
- The concept of a paid shuttle service with parking at the Lion's Head Arena where the shuttle would pick up passengers every half hour and drop off passengers at the Bruce Trail entrance.

Members of the public presented questions/comments via Zoom as follows:

- Is the meeting being recorded for viewing afterwards and are the comments being saved? The CAO confirmed that the meeting is being recorded as well as the comments and the video recording will be made available after the meeting with a link to the video posted on the website;
- How do we cope with bus tours?;
- Have businesses collected postal codes?;
- The price of accommodation is too high;
- If we do not set limits, then people will set their own limits; and
- Keep the environment in mind when making decisions.

There was a break in the meeting at 11:58 a.m.

The meeting reconvened at 12:38 p.m.

Discussion resumed and the following was noted:

- Concerns with visitor safety on long weekends, speak with MTO and determine if it is legally possible to close Highway 6;
- Investigate the use of toll booths;
- Look at alternatives to user fees, such as other ways of monetizing to create a better visitor experience;
- There is a lack of young people starting businesses in the area;
- Consider online reservations for paid parking in Tobermory where visitors can view a map online and corresponding capacity limits;
- Supply and demand pricing for paid parking, busy vs. shoulder season rates;
- Visitors want access to the waterfront and hiking trails, we are not providing the venues that people want, therefore they venture to lands unfamiliar lands, sometimes private properties;
- There are plenty of trails, further dispersing people may create problems, licenced guides may be an idea and other areas can open in a controlled fashion; and
- Offer additional resources as the few areas that are available are experience overcapacity constraints.

Participants on Zoom commented the following:

- Framing this as anti-tourism is unfair, the Facilitator clarified that it was mentioned earlier in the meeting that there are some people in the community who want NBP to stay small and some want it large, and the solutions need to recognize both sides and opinions;
- Open the area for permits to be obtained for climbers and hikers;
- Cannot enjoy the area where we live;
- Look at Europe and other countries where there is a model that you can only access the area with permits;
- Human resources are needed to support these projects, unable to recruit workers as there are no living accommodations;
- Lack of staff housing;
- Attainable housing affects if a community can grow socially and have a high quality of life;
- The Municipality is working on a staff report for Council on an affordable housing committee or the hiring of a consultant;

- Capture wealth from tourism to benefit the broader community;
- Limited activities available in the winter;
- With limited municipal staff, there is only so much that can be completed;
- A report was prepared by the Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee, which Megan Myles was a member, on how to make the area more sustainable, financially and environmentally, it is a guiding principle that can be used internally;
- The Community Services Manager, a newly developed position, is the product of that report, as the position encompasses a variety of other tasks, it has been challenging to produce projects;
- If a Tourism Advisory Group is established, who needs to be present?; and
- The Municipality should not be managing tourism, the ratepayers should not be hiring someone to manage tourism.

Comments/questions from members of the public tuning in via Zoom were noted:

- Appreciation for the event and councillors attempting to find a solution; and
- Were posters advertised promoting the NBP? The Owen Sound Transportation Company (OSTC) clarified that posters were advertised for 2-3 seasons advertising the ferry only.

The following discussion ensued:

- The Chi-Cheemaun is seeing a decrease in visitors spending the night in Tobermory, then taking the ferry, now they drive straight to Tobermory and catch the ferry;
- Most municipalities employ an Economic Development Officer and NBP's economic development is mainly driven by tourism;
- The Municipality should not solely manage tourism, but rather be a partner in the project;
- The Municipality may host some workshops for young entrepreneurs who wish to start a business and work with the agricultural community regarding "farm to table" marketing;
- The Municipality can enact a municipal accommodation tax; and
- The Municipality needs co-leaders as staff are maxed out and financial assistance is needed.

Conversation from the public via Zoom was recorded:

- The Ontario Alliance of Climbers would be receptive in assisting/participating in initiatives;
- Consider partnering with eco-tourism businesses; and
- Who is suggested as a tourism manager?

The following concluding comments were documented:

- Tourism needs to be managed appropriately;
- The Strategic Plan is currently being reviewed;
- Work on the Sustainable Tourism Plan;
- Need to move forward as a group to address these issues and determine how to manage tourism;
- Parks Canada would be interested in participating in a Tourism Advisory Group; and
- Ontario Parks will report back regarding future participation.

## OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Other Business for Special Council Meeting No. 20-36, September 16, 2020.



READING OF BY-LAWS

Moved by M. Myles  
Seconded by J. Mielhausen

Resolution #36-02-2020

THAT the following listed by-laws be given 1st, 2nd and 3rd reading and enacted:

2020-88                    BEING A BY-LAW TO CONFIRM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING OF THE CORPORATION OF THE  
MUNICIPALITY OF NORTHERN BRUCE PENINSULA HELD  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

Carried


ADJOURNMENT

Moved by D. Myles  
Seconded by L. Golden

Resolution #36-03-2020

THAT the meeting adjourns at 1:42 p.m.

Carried

  
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Mayor – Milt McIver

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk – Cathy Addison

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