

THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF NEEBING

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

Held using GoToMeeting Web Conference System and in-person at Blake Hall

On Wednesday, June 28, 2023

PRESENT: Mayor Mark Thibert
Blake Councillor Katherine Hill
Councillor at Large Gordon Cuthbertson
Crooks Councillor Brian Wright
Pearson Councillor Gary Gardner
Pardee Councillor Curtis Coulson
Scoble Councillor Brian Kurikka

Erika Kromm, Clerk-Treasurer

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

Erwin Butikofer
Tracy Gardner

1. PRELIMINARY MATTERS:

- (a) Call to Order: Mayor Thibert called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- (b) Attendance: Attendance was recorded.
- (c) Declarations of Interest:

No declarations of pecuniary interests under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act were brought forward.

2. PUBLIC MEETING RELATING TO THE REVIEW OF COUNCIL COMPOSITION

2.1 Report from Clerk-Treasurer Regarding Council Composition

Members present reviewed the report.

2.2 Hear from Members of the Public Regarding Council Composition

Tracy Gardner was the first member of the public to speak. Mrs. Gardner does not like the idea of combining Pardee and Pearson. It would be too large an area for one Councillor to look after. Other councillors would have to take on additional work to cover the seats on all the boards that are currently covered. Councillors would want higher compensation for the extra work. Each area in Neebing is different and she wants her area reflected on council. She wants someone who understands the lifestyle and history of Pearson.

Councillor Wright disagreed that the change would mean losing their representation and he felt that the councillors would not be overworked.

Karen Coulson echoed some of what Mrs. Gardner said. She questioned what happens if a future council had more members that work full time. They may not have the time to attend all the committee meetings. There may not be enough manpower to cover everything.

Councillor Cuthbertson said that he encourages younger people to run for council but agreed that there are some activities that are difficult to attend if they work full time.

Erwin Butikofer stated that representation by population was started when Canada was forming. He understands the workload and feels it can be managed. There are municipalities with greater populations that have less councillors and they manage the workload. Not all the work done by our councillors is an obligation, they choose to do the work.

Councillor Coulson advised that his view has not changed and he wants to stay with seven councillors. It was implied at the amalgamation meetings that they would always have representation.

Mr. Butikofer stated there was nothing in writing that said they would always have representation in this composition.

Councillor Coulson said that there are five distinct townships that need representation. None of the councillors think of themselves as just councillors for their ward.

Mr. Butikofer stated others review ward boundaries periodically such as the federal government and Thunder Bay. Nothing is set in stone. It should be based on population, not for sentimental reasons.

Mrs. Coulson advised that she had read the promise of representation in a document somewhere before amalgamation occurred.

Mr. Butikofer suggested that everyone should look at the amalgamation documents to see what was promised.

Penny Shott stated that she likes the idea of representation from each township. She doesn't feel the savings will make much difference.

Mr. Butikofer stated that we should be saving every nickel we can.

Councillor Hill said that she feels having a diverse council helps to bring people together and participate in the community.

Mr. Butikofer said that if additional staff are needed, then the money saved could go towards those positions.

Mrs. Gardner said that the volunteering provided by the councillors is a benefit to the community and the money saved would soon be spent. She thinks it's good for councillors to volunteer their time, it brings people together.

Councillor Kurikka said that there are disadvantages and advantages to both sides. We could save some money but having seven councillors helps to spread out the work and diffuse hidden agendas of a smaller council.

Mr. Butikofer stated that Neebing is the outlier with seven councillors. Most small municipalities like Neebing only have five councillors.

Councillor Gardner stated he feels obligated to help as a councillor. If we hired someone, we would spend more than we saved. He feels that future councillors will want to be paid more for taking on more work.

Mr. Butikofer hopes that the NOHFC announcement will inspire people to start to help out.

Councillor Gardner said he has learned a lot about the people being a councillor. As a resident, he liked that he could call his neighbour.

2.3 Debate from Council

On consensus, it was determined to defer the debate until the July 19, 2023 regular council meeting.

Administration was directed to distribute documentation from the amalgamation with Pearson and Scoble to Council before the next meeting.

3. ADJOURN THE MEETING:

There being no further business to attend to, Mayor Thibert adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.


Mark Thibert
MAYOR

REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL


Erika Kromm
CLERK-TREASURER