



MINUTES

CITY OF MERRITT

FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

12:00 P.M.

Held online due to social distancing requirements
Public access link published on City website
& social media accounts

PRESENT:

Mayor L. Brown
Councillor A. Etchart
Councillor T. Luck

Mr. S. Smith, Director of Corporate Services
Mr G. Lowis, Deputy Corporate Officer
Ms. S. Thiessen, Director of Finance & IT
Mr. S. Hildebrand, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. W. Anderson, Financial Services Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Call to Order

Mayor Brown, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12.05 p.m.

2. PUBLIC INPUT

Nil.

3. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

3.1 Finance and Audit Committee Meeting Minutes - February 25th 2020

Recommendation:

THAT the Minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee Meeting held on February 25th, 2020 be adopted.

4. **GENERAL MATTERS - Delegations & Recognitions**

Nil.

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

6.1 Alternative Tax Collection Schemes

Ms Thiessen introduced the report, and explained that there is a need to decide deadlines in order to order pre-printed tax forms.

She noted Merritt is losing some revenue due to closure of recreation facilities, but not as much as municipalities running airports, casinos, etc. Merritt normally follows the General tax scheme under s234 of the *Community Charter*, and thus has July 2nd as the due date. The City can instead operate an Alternative Tax Scheme under s235. All taxpayers could elect to use either scheme if we establish a different one. She explained the regulations as they apply to the General scheme, and to an alternate scheme.

Finally, she noted the City will still have to pay school taxes within 5 business days of the due date, whatever the penalty regulation. TNRD expect money by beginning of August no matter if or when we collect.

Councillors discussed issues around TNRD, Hospitals, and School Boards expecting money, and the potential for staggering dates & administrative difficulties this would cause. The City expects people who can pay as normal to do so, but sought to reduce penalties to avoiding causing hardship for people who cannot.

It was explained that for late payments, a penalty is applied to outstanding balance at penalty time, not the full amount on bill.

Would normally be doing utility billing now, discussion that more reductions on that would help people more, eg renters, and seniors with grant.

Councillors discussed whether or not the deadline and penalty dates should be the same, and the need to promote deferral programs.

Recommendation:

THAT the Committee recommend to Council that the City utilize Section 235 of the Community Charter to set an alternative penalty structure for 2020; 10% to be applied September 4, 2020.

Moved, Seconded, CARRIED

Recommendation:

THAT the committee recommend to Council an alternate tax scheme with the following parameters:

July 2nd deadline, penalty dates & amounts of July 2nd (2%), Sept 18th (1%), December 31st(2%)

Moved, Seconded, CARRIED

6.2 Tax Rate Guidance

Committee discussion re: tax rates in light of COVID-19

The committee discussed tax rates, and the need to recommend to Council a reduced rate, in order to compensate for increased Provincial assessment values.

6.3 Utility Payments

Committee discussion re: utility payment schedules

The committee discussed utility payment schedules, and the possibility of increasing the discount for making early payments. This discount is normally 10%. The committee discussed increasing the discount to 17% for both residential and commercial customers, and pushing back the date due for residential customers.

Recommendation:

THAT the committee recommend to Council an increased discount of 17% for residential & commercial customers, and new payment date of July 31st for residential customers.

Moved, Seconded, CARRIED

7. CLOSED SESSION

Recommendation:

THAT the Committee close this meeting, pursuant to section 90(l) of the Community Charter, "discussions with municipal officers and employees respecting municipal objectives, measures and progress reports for the purposes of preparing an annual report under section 98 [annual municipal report]"

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Moved, Seconded, CARRIED

**7.1 Finance and Audit Committee Meeting Closed Session Minutes -
February 25, 2020**

8. TERMINATION OF MEETING

Mayor Brown, Chair, declared the meeting closed at 1.46pm

Corporate Officer

Sean Smith

Mayor

Linda Brown