

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF EAR FALLS

MINUTES of the Special Meeting of Ear Falls Council
Ear Falls Municipal Council Chambers
May 23rd, 2018 @ 6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kevin Kahoot called the Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Mayor Kevin Kahoot, Councillor Rob Eady, Councillor Jim Desmarais, Councillor Vic Robinson, Councillor Daniel Sutton, Clerk Treasurer Administrator Kimberly Ballance, Keewatin-Patricia District School Board (KPDSB) Director of Education Sean Montieth, KPDSB Trustee Gerald Kleist, Ear Falls Public Library Board Members: Karen Powell, Gord Ewald, Suzanne Chartier-White, Audrey Hazelwood, Susan Cullen, and Cheryl Betker, and Ear Falls Public Library CEO / Director Susan Carey.

3. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND THE GENERAL NATURE THEREOF

None Declared.

4. MATTERS FOR WHICH SPECIAL MEETING WAS CALLED

4.1 Community Hubs / Ear Falls Public School Library and Ear Falls Public Library

Mayor Kahoot welcomed everyone to the Meeting and provided a brief introduction to the Government of Ontario's concept of Community Hubs. In 2015/16 the Government of Ontario initiated a Community Hub Initiative to offset the cost of delivering public services by teaming up with other public service agencies. This initiative was designed to ensure that publically funded buildings, facilities, and services are being fully utilized by the public and shared between the broader public sector as appropriate.

In 2018 the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board (KPDSB) announced a major renovation to the Ear Falls Public School which made it a good time to consider a community hub with the consolidation of the Ear Falls Public School and the Ear Falls Public Library. This Meeting was set-up to discuss the idea in a public forum with input from the School Board, Township and Ear Falls Public Library. Council noted that the Ear Falls Public Library Board (EFPLB) has been doing a great job recently with the programs and services being offered at the Library and noted that the discussion around the proposed development of a community hub is not meant to diminish the excellent programming at the Library.

The ELPLB requested clarification on why the municipality would consider this project as the two Libraries have separate funding and

separate programming. Council identified that both the EFPL and the KPDSB Library are both funded through taxes which come from the public. Council is expected by taxpayers to review any opportunity for reducing or managing local taxation for the betterment of the community and residents.

Sean Montieth provided an overview of the Ear Falls Public School (EFPS) renovation project and the purpose of the renovation to improve the interior environment in the School. This \$4.36 Million project will retrofit the entire Public School and will improve the education environment, health and safety, HVAC systems, and potentially include the addition of a joint-use facility with the Township. At this point, the KPDSB is working on a draft Plan for the facility, but the design has not yet been finalized. The KPDSB is strongly in support of the concept of community hubs as these are positive enhancements to public services and effective use of public funds.

In 2014, all School Boards were provided with funding to support community hubs. The KPDSB was provided with \$485,000 to fund community hubs within the Board's jurisdiction. This was initially going to be spent on a variety of small projects but a majority was planned to be spent in Machin. This proposed project would have moved the Municipal Offices into the Lillian Berg School. This project will not proceed due to a local decision by the Council in Machin. If this money is not used by the KPDSB, it will have to be returned to the Ministry of Education. Mr. Montieth advised that he recognizes that the EFPS Library and EFPL are not one and the same since the services and programs that they offer are different. These types of joint services are negotiated through joint community-use agreements.

In order for this project to move forward, the KPDSB would need to have firm approval in the form of a financial commitment from the municipality to move forward. A Joint Community-Use Agreement would also speak to the financial costs, staffing and other operational terms. Due to the EFPS's renovation project timing, the partners would need to work quickly to develop a Plan and a commitment.

The EFPLB suggested that perhaps additional public consultation should be considered to ensure that the community was in favour of combining the facilities. Council identified that the timeline for this decision would be short, and that the responsibility for these types of decisions ultimately lies with Council. The EFPLB identified that the Ear Falls Government Building is already a hub of services for the community and is only six (6) years old. Concerns were identified about the detriment to taxpayers to move the EFPL again into a new Community Hub. The services offered by the Public Library are very different than those offered by the School Library and cannot be considered a duplication of services. Concerns were identified that the size of the Library in the EFPS would not meet the needs of the community and would not be as accessible to the public. The EFPL is situated to improve service delivery and increasingly become a

maker-space. It may be difficult to return \$485,000 to the Ministry of Education, however in this case it may be the right thing to do for the community of Ear Falls.

A Joint-Use Agreement would address the micro-level details including staffing, operational maintenance, and other logistics. At this point this is a macro-level discussion about the potential for coordination and cooperation between the KPDSB and the community. Ultimately the KPDSB is interested in working on this initiative and has committed financially to it, but Council needs to determine if this will be a good fit for the community.

Discussion regarding the provision of Adult Education services was identified as a need in the community and which may be supported in the School's Community Hub.

Council thanked the members of the Library Board for their passionate input into this discussion. The EFPLB's concerns about maintaining its staff, autonomy and momentum of its service delivery have been heard and will be taken into consideration during future deliberations. Council also requested additional consideration from the EFPL about this matter to identify any positive synergies that could result from this partnership. Council also noted that additional information will be needed and requested from the KPDSB including a draft Joint-Use Agreement. Council also requested additional information from Administration on the business case for this proposal in order to make a determination on this matter.

5. ADJOURNMENT

5.1 RESOLUTION NO. 119

Moved by Vic Robinson. Seconded by Daniel Sutton.

RESOLVED THAT this Special Meeting of Council adjourn at the hour of 7:15 p.m.

Carried.

Mayor

Clerk