

THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF KILLARNEY

Public Meeting of Council

Veterans' Memorial Hall
September 16th, 2015
6:30 P.M.

PRESENT: MAYOR: Virginia Rook
COUNCILLORS: Debbie Burant Pierre Paquette Jim Rook
Eileen Lewis
ABSENT: COUNCILLOR: Nancy Wirtz
DISCLOSURE: Nil
STAFF: Deputy Clerk-Treasurer – Gilles Legault
Tax/Utility Clerk – Julie Solomon
Clerical Assistant – Amanda Tyson
Project Manager – Adele Loosemore
MEMBERS OF PUBLIC: 22

Mayor Rook called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm.

The Mayor welcomed all in attendance and explained that the meeting is to update the public regarding the Wiikwemkoong Islands Boundary Claim. The Mayor read the meeting procedures and rules. The Mayor stated that the Municipality has received an extension for input, with a new deadline date of October 16th, 2015. Also, the Mayor, one Councillor, and a staff member will be meeting with the Wiikwemkoong Chief and two Band members to discuss the Claim. The Mayor then stated that Council would like to hear from the public their concerns about the Islands Claim. She then opened the floor to questions.

Question / Comment

At the OMAA (Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs) meeting, reference was made to a prior agreement between Killarney and Wiikwemkoong regarding leaving George Island out of the Land Claim. Was there such an agreement?

Mayor Rook

There has been no agreement found in the municipal files, and I can assure you that when I have asked for information in the past, the Clerk-Treasurer has been extremely thorough about searching for that information. It just is not there.

Question / Comment

Has Wiikwemkoong indicated how they are going to use the land? I have experience dealing with two Bands in B.C., and they were very open to a partnership with the municipality. Is there any indication of that? Generally the Bands are good for the community.

Mayor Rook

During previous discussions with Wiikwemkoong Band members, they expressed interest in partnering with the municipality on economic development projects.

Councillor Jim Rook

Wiikwemkoong has said that they will ask for a partnership with the Municipality to maintain the George Island hiking trail, which they said would also be open to the general public.

Question / Comment

How long has the land claim been in progress?

Adele Loosemore

In 1984, a specific claim to 41 islands was submitted, and in 1990 a court case was filed for the original reserve of 23,000 islands.

Question / Comment

Philip Edward Island is unspoiled and pristine land, and was made part of the Heritage Coast to protect it. A large number of kayakers use that island. A professor from McMaster University has written to the OMAA to say leave that island as is – it is one of the last untouched areas in Georgian Bay. We could be killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Please ask for the public's use of X number of feet of shoreline on that Island. Killarney should have a seat at the table in the finalization of the agreement. [Ontario's] proposed settlement is due to Fitzwilliam Island not being able to be returned. And note that there will be no taxes paid to the Municipality if it goes to Wiikwemkoong – no development that can be taxed. There are many risks but not much opportunities for successful ventures.

Question / Comment

I am on the board of the NGBA (Northern Georgian Bay Association) and a seasonal resident. Our objective is to protect the unique use and atmosphere of PEI (Philip Edward Island) and George and other islands. We have met with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (OMAA) and with Wiikwemkoong. Wiikwemkoong people are fine people and seem to have good plans, but they said the community has to approve their plans. The Wiikwemkoong Chief was quoted in the Toronto Star saying final access has not been decided, and it will be up to the Band members to decide that. Regarding George Island, trail improvements need to be made, and the Municipality might have other plans, such as the development of the six lots on George Island. Taxes could be collected on that for revenue instead of going to Wiikwemkoong. You have a limited tax base now and it will get smaller. Tourist traffic will go down because campers will want free space for camp sites before they will pay for camp sites.

Question / Comment

Camp sites that are now free of charge are better, since charging will reduce the amount of visitors and affect local businesses.

Question / Comment

I own a cottage in Beaverstone Bay and I am concerned that one party is going to really lose out. Look at the bigger picture – the overall claim. I have environmental concerns because they don't have to comply with the same rules that we do for septic systems. What is the value of PEI and what is the value of Fitzwilliam? We need to look at what we are losing.

Question / Comment

The Province is looking at acreage only, not value. They are both approximately 17,000 acres.

Question / Comment

Fitzwilliam was closer to them, that's why they wanted it. When they couldn't have it, they pursued PEI. Propose to OMAA that they find something other than PEI. Really push that. The Town can work to have the time frame extended for comments to be able to do a proper study. Try to keep the current agreement from happening and then work out an agreement that will not hurt the village. Twenty associations think it is a bad idea.

Question / Comment

We need to look at the entire claim picture for Wiikwemkoong as this is just a precedent.

Question / Comment

Propose to the Ministry using the south side of Highway 637. The part that includes Chikanishing Creek. The Park is only using the boat launch ramp in that area. It would be a lot easier to develop because it has road access, and it is beautiful as well.

Question / Comment

I am expressing issues on behalf of other cottagers. Things will probably change over time, as Wiikwemkoong is not required to follow the same regulations as municipalities.

Question / Comment

Wiikwemkoong has lawyers with an agenda and it is not similar to the Municipality's plans. Nothing is being talked about at this meeting from the legal side. Has the Municipality obtained legal representation? Get legal advice on blocking the claim or stopping it.

Question / Comment

Lawyers are important. The claim is much bigger than what we are talking about. The town needs to fight it too. Get legal advice on legal points and you will have a better chance of success. The Province knows nothing about PEI. The first people on PEI were white people, not Natives. The Natives weren't even around here then.

Question / Comment

I apologize for the shaking in my voice, but I am upset. I don't like the "us" against "them" tone of this meeting. I want to work with the Wiikwemkoong people. I am the Church administrator and I work with the Church records. I can tell you that there is plenty of evidence that Native people were on PEI long before white people. This village of Native people is one of the oldest permanent settlements of Natives in North America. They were here first.

Question / Comment

I agree with you. If we start the "us" and "them", it will polarize the situation and we don't need that. I would like to know what your vision is for PEI. We don't want a densely populated island or see the pristine area ruined. What are the rest of the people thinking? I want to hear about that.

Mayor Rook

I was recently at a workshop about First Nation-Municipal partnerships and I really enjoyed it. People learned a lot from each other about how their governments work and we are wanting to work together. I don't want aggression. I believe in discussion and working together is where I want to go. We want to maintain what we have and possibly make some improvements.

Question / Comment

I like what I'm hearing about collaboration.

Question / Comment

When I was on Council, we had two court cases with the Ombudsman over closed meetings, and we won both of them. But those cases cost the taxpayers a mint in legal fees. Getting lawyers involved is too expensive. When Morgan and I talked to Wiikwemkoong about PEI, they wanted to put camp sites and user fees in place. And I said "What are you going to do with your garbage?" and they said "Bring it here", and we said "Oh no you're not".

Mayor Rook

We are gathering information and Council members will be speaking to the Chief soon to open a discussion about the claim. The Municipality has not obtained legal representation as it is a bit premature, since we have not had our meeting with the Chief yet. It is to take place on September 30th.

Question / Comment

I want to be at that meeting. Will the public be allowed at the meeting? Because I've had trouble in the past getting information about what went on at a closed meeting...

Mayor Rook

No, we will not be having it as an open meeting. We want to speak to him informally, in a friendly conversation, and see if they are open to discussing the claim and future partnerships. There will be three of us -- Nancy Wirtz and I and Adele will attend to take notes.

Question / Comment

You said three at the meeting – is that not a Council meeting?

Mayor Rook

No, there are three people, but only two Council members. Adele will be there to take the minutes. And in our case, a quorum is four, not three, because we have six Councillors.

Question / Comment

Is it a closed or open meeting? Will we get to see the minutes?

Mayor Rook

Yes, the minutes will be available to the public.

Question / Comment

When specifics are discussed, would there be input from residents by representatives – can residents provide specific ideas to Council?

Mayor Rook

That would be possible.

Question / Comment

Is anybody else concerned that this claim is cut and dried and over with? [Several others answered “Yes” and someone said “We need lawyers.”]

Question / Comment

The negotiations are not open to other groups. It is only the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Wiikwemkoong.

Question / Comment

It seems to be moving very fast. I was taken aback by the short period for consultation.

Question / Comment

I have a cottage at Mill Lake, and I agree about working together, but I am also advising get a lawyer and see what your rights are. Negotiating about where camp sites should go will go nowhere. Access issues are very important. The best way to attack the issues is through environmental concerns and legal issues.

Question / Comment

I know the owner of Fitzwilliam Island personally and my feeling is he would take the money if the price was right.

Councillor Burant

Addressed a member of the public if the business you worked for have to resort to a lawyer to get what they wanted?

Question / Comment

No. They had a use agreement ready for us to sign that had great benefits for us and we found it was all very professional and easy.

Councillor Burant

Killarney’s history shows a high population of shared ancestors and Wiikwemkoong in the past has been very interested in partnerships and I think they will work with us. Many of their Band members are municipal residents. Our rights have to be protected and if it is a done deal, then we have to move forward with what we have to work with for the best of the Municipality. What I wanted out of this meeting is a clear overview of what the people in general want and what concerns you.

Question / Comment

I do not want an “us” against “them” situation either, but at this point, we have no guarantees. Why are only the Province and the Band negotiating? Landowners should be represented. We want to be at the table but we don’t have time to prepare or understand what is happening.

Question / Comment

If it is a done deal and they are good people, then maybe they will be open to committing to actions that will protect PEI environmentally.

Mayor Rook

I will ask Richard Aniol if we can be at the table with the Province and Wiikwemkoong to negotiate.

Question / Comment

October 23rd and 24th are the next meetings for the Ministry and Wiikwemkoong.

Councillor Rook

We can put forth our points and the Mayor will try to get a seat at the negotiation table.

Question / Comment

Can you ask for a seat at the table for us, too? (NGBA) Make our arguments when you meet with Wiikwemkoong.

Question / Comment

[One person presented statistical information regarding monies being paid to First Nations, his opinions regarding the economic development activities of Wiikwemkoong Band members, and a statement about the population of First Nations people in Killarney village.]

Question / Comment

The townspeople don't know what is going on. Is there another way to inform people about the effect the Land Claim could have on the Municipality?

Julie Solomon

The public was informed about the public meeting. It was posted on the Municipal website, a mail-out was completed and was also posted on the bulletin boards in the Municipal building.

Question / Comment

The OMAA informed us that they were working with the Municipality regarding contacting stakeholders.

Julie Solomon

Staff provided the Ministry with the information that they requested. They provided a list of names and asked us to confirm contact information for the names on that list.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 P. M.

15-366 BY PIERRE PAQUETTE - EILEEN LEWIS

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Public Meeting held September 16th, 2015 to discuss the Wiikwemkoong Islands Boundary Claim be adjourned at 8:17 P. M.

CARRIED



Virginia Rook, Mayor



Gilles G. Legault, Deputy-Clerk Treasurer