

**Village of Haines Junction
Regular Council Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2025**

Present:

Deputy Mayor Strand
Councillor Busche
Councillor Mackinnon (Remote)
Councillor McPhie

Absent:

CAO Fairbank, Recorder Ogden

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm

Acknowledgement of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Traditional Territory

Deputy Mayor Strand acknowledged that we are on the traditional territory of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations

Adoption of Agenda

#19-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT the agenda be adopted as presented.

Motion #19-25 was **CARRIED**.

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

Adoption of Minutes of Regular and Special Council Meetings

Council Meeting Minutes January 8, 2025

#20-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT the minutes of the regular Council meeting of January 8, 2025 be adopted as amended

- Page 4 – remove reference to Diane

Motion #20-25 was **CARRIED**.

Proclamations

Delegations

Request to Establish Free Store, Recycling and Composting Committee

Presentation: Cathy Mackinnon

- Requested Council consider establishing a community waste management committee by putting out a call for interest for community members.
- Committee would provide recommendations on recycling, composting etc.
- In the past this type of Committee would have included a Council member
- Policy #31-20 Donated Refundables – Request Council consider amending this policy to put donations towards recycling and free store as was done in the past.

Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival Request for Camping Permit

Presentation: Scott Wilson and John Faulkner

- KMBF presents to Council each year for consideration under the Overnight Camping on Municipal Property Bylaw #297-13.
- KMBF is seeking permission to allow overnight camping during the festival for self-contained units for 2 areas adjacent to the St. Elias Convention Centre. June 6-8, 2025. The exemption, if granted, would allow camping between noon on Friday to 6pm on Sunday.
- This exemption has been requested, and has been granted by Council, on an annual basis.
- Festival clean-up crew ensures area is left tidy following the festival.
- Not enough accommodation in town for all who attend festival – critical to have this space in town.
- This is the 20th anniversary of the festival. Would like to recognize the Junction and local First Nation who have allowed this to be hosted on the land, offering a 20% discount on weekend passes to all Haines Junction residents and Champagne Aishihik First Nations citizens this year. Limited to 2 tickets per individual who applies for them. To get the discount, email tickets@yukonbluegrass.com. Requested the Village’s assistance with getting this message out locally.

#21-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT the exemption be granted from Bylaw #297-13 to allow overnight camping from noon on Friday June 6, 2025 to 6pm on Sunday June 8, 2025 during the Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival at the designated locations at the St. Elias Convention Centre

Motion #21-25 was **CARRIED**.

- Village requested to send a written copy of the camping bylaw exemption to president@yukonbluegrass.com

Public Hearings and Public Input Sessions

Old Business

RTC: Pedal Junction Bike Skills Park

CAO Presentation:

- Prior Council passed motion directing staff to work with Pedal Junction and the Lands Branch on the development of a bike skills park within the community
- The area behind Otter Crescent was selected as the most suitable site.
- Lands Branch is willing to grant a lease; however, the land is not appropriately zoned. It is R-1 which does not allow for parks.
- The Lands Branch is requesting a letter from Council noting their intention to rezone the area to be able to move forward with the lease.

Discussion:

- Section 3.1.1 of the Bylaw notes that parks are permitted in all zones, so a rezoning may not be required.
- Was CAFN approached given proximity of the area to the CAFN Village?
 - CAFN Youth Centre provided a letter of support for this location due to its proximity to the youth centre and the community

#22-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT staff prepare a letter indicating Council's intention to rezone Location #5 if funding is found to develop the Bike Skills Park.

Motion #22-25 was **CARRIED**.

New Business

Accounts Payable to January 22, 2025

Discussion:

- Any update from ATCO regarding the previous billing?
 - No, it has been very difficult to get a hold of them

#23-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT the Municipal Accounts Payable to January 22, 2025 be approved as presented.

Motion #23-25 was **CARRIED**.

#24-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT a letter from Council be drafted to ATCO letter to inquire about the arena billing.

Motion #24-25 was **CARRIED**.

RTC and Draft Policy – Acting Appointments

Policy/Communications Manager Presentation:

- This policy provides guidance on how to implement the requirements in the collective agreement around acting appointments by providing guidance on how acting appointments are designated and notified, what the responsibilities of an employee are while acting, and how acting pay is calculated
- This policy is based on Yukon government's approach to acting appointments
- This draft policy notes:
 - An employee's supervisor is responsible for designating someone to act for them
 - An email is required to communicate when someone is acting for someone else

Discussion:

- Section 4.1 explains who makes acting appointments and notes that the Manager of Public Works is responsible for making appointments for staff within the union. It is possible that we may have a union employee on staff that is not supervised by the Manager of Public Works. To avoid having to change the policy down the road, the wording in 4.1 should reflect this

#25-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT with the changes requested to item 4.1, Acting Appointments Policy #42-25 is adopted

Motion #25-25 was **CARRIED**.

RTC and Draft Policy – Vacant Land Tax

Policy/Communications Manager Presentation:

- This policy is not being brought forward tonight for approval; the intention is to share work that has been done to date on this policy.
- This policy was initiated by prior Council and their concern over the amount of un-developed and under-developed lots in town.
- In Haines Junction, there are more un/under-developed residential lots in town than are in the new subdivision that cost millions of dollars to develop.
- There are environmental and economic costs to un/under-development including urban sprawl and unused infrastructure that is associated with significant development costs.
- Last August, staff presented a report to prior Council on what other municipalities are doing to encourage the development or sale of un/under-developed lots. Creating a vacant land tax is one of the measures that municipalities use.
- At the last Council meeting, Council directed staff to continue work on the Vacant Lot tax because of the upcoming deadline of April 15th to set property taxes for 2025. Creating a vacant lot tax is something Council could do in the near future to encourage development.
- The other policy Council has directed staff to continue to work on is a broader policy to encourage the development of un/under-developed lots. Policy options include a moratorium on lot amalgamation (every residential lot that is amalgamated is one less

lot that is available for housing), creating incentives, digging into why (despite the terms and conditions of sale of lots from YG that require homes to have occupancy prior to title being granted) title has been granted to un/undeveloped lots.

- For context: Haines Junction has 483 lots of which 125 (26%) are considered un/underdeveloped. If un/underdeveloped is determined based on the number of lots that pay the minimum property tax of \$400:
 - 24% of the 54 residential lots in town are un/under-developed
 - 57% of the 23 industrial lots in town are un/under-developed
 - 52% of the 60 tourist commercial lots in town are un/under-developed
 - 46% of the mixed commercial lots in town are un/under-developed
 - This measure is not a perfect way to determine what lots are vacant – some lots may have an assessed value that results in taxes that are less than the minimum property tax, but may not be vacant
- The draft Vacant Tax policy is based on the policy that the City of Dawson has in place, the primary difference is that our policy includes commercial and industrial lots as well as residential lots. The addition of these zones is due to the high percentage of un/underdeveloped non-residential lots in our community.
- The City of Dawson charges a minimum property tax of \$1,600 on vacant residential lots and \$1,155 on non-residential lots (2023 rates), which is significantly higher than the minimum tax of \$400 levied in Haines Junction on both residential and non-residential lots.
- Low taxes on vacant lots incentivizes hanging onto lots as an investment. Some lots in town have been vacant for decades. This clearly has been an issue in other Yukon communities as well, and creating a vacant lot tax is one of the tools that municipal governments use to help encourage the development or sale of these lots.
- A vacant lot tax can be part of a suite of policy options to encourage the development or sale of un/under-developed lots. Council may want to take an approach that leans more heavily on carrots than sticks for example. Staff can develop more detailed reports on those policy options that Council directs us to continue working on.

Discussion:

- In addition to the City of Dawson, are other Yukon municipalities encouraging the development/sale of un/underdeveloped lots through a vacant lot tax?
 - Yes, Watson Lake has set their minimum residential lot tax at \$800, and vacant non-residential at \$1,100 (2023 rates).
 - Haines Junction has the lowest property tax rate, outside of Whitehorse, of all Yukon communities at 1.2%
- If we did adopt this policy, tax increases wouldn't take effect until next taxation year?
 - Section 4.3 addresses the determination of vacant lot status. Property owners will receive a notice of vacant land status mailed on or before December 31st prior to the year of taxation per the annual preliminary tax assessment roll.
 - Council could decide to have something in place for April 15th of this year and set timelines accordingly and then move forward on the schedule noted in the draft policy for subsequent years.

- Ideally it is best to provide as much notice as possible.
- In section 2.0, the policy says that the CAO may deem a property with a nil improvement value to be in use. What is an example of this?
 - An example is when an industrial lot is used as an equipment laydown area and does not inquire improvements that would register on the assessment roll
 - Another example is when the assessed value of a residence does not raise the total assessed value above the minimum tax levy
- Prior council made it very clear that they did not want to be punishing people for not having fancy homes or living beyond their means and wanted to exempt folks who reside in homes that don't hit the property taxation minimum – to ensure that these lots weren't assessed as vacant on that basis.
- This is why notification of vacant lot status is included in the draft bylaw – so people can challenge a vacant lot assessment if the lot is occupied.
- Properties must be vacant for 5 years or more since time of final subdivision to be considered vacant. Properties that were previously determined to be vacant, if amalgamated, subdivided etc. in a way that has not materially changed the vacant nature of the properties does not change the vacant status of the lot at the discretion of the CAO.
 - Somebody at sometime likely tried to amalgamate or subdivide a lot to reset the clock as a workaround to prevent a lot from being considered vacant. Say for example someone wants to hold onto say five lots for 10 or 15 years, it would be a lot cheaper for them to pay a vacant lot tax on one amalgamated lot than on five. The desire of this clause is to prevent this.
 - If for example someone is working to increase density and build 3.5 homes on a lot, but it was hung up in the courts for awhile, the CAO would be able to say the lot won't be considered vacant for another year.
- The draft policy notes that the vacant lands tax rate will revert back to the regular tax rate when the land is no longer considered to be vacant as evident by an occupancy permit being granted. The tax rate will not revert back to regular rate when the property owner is issued a development permit or when the property is sold, or when the title is transferred to a new owner.
 - Many Yukon communities face challenges with enforcement of the 5-year build requirement. For example, someone gets a home to 60% completion at the 5-year date which doesn't meet build requirements, but since an investment has been made into the property title is granted. And once title is granted, the work stops leaving a partially developed / underdeveloped lot.
- Ultimately this policy is about encouraging lots to be developed. We are in the midst of a housing crisis, and it may be more important to Council to discourage vacant residential lots to be held onto indefinitely as investment properties.
- How will we know if improvements on a lot are demolished or removed in order to start the clock on a lot's vacant status? Say for example someone brings in a tiny home and then removes it? Some work could be done to clarify this.
- The document references both the CAO and Development Officer – should be revised to reflect that we have one individual in both roles.

- Action: Council would like to schedule a CoW to discuss this further

#26-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT staff prepare for a Committee of the Whole meeting devoted to Land Taxation 101 and to support ongoing discussions on a Vacant Land Tax

Motion #26-25 was **CARRIED**.

Councillor Sidney Mackinnon joined the meeting by Zoom at 8:00pm

RTC Tipping Fees Public Meeting Review and Tipping Fees Community Comparison

CAO Presentation:

- More than 90 residents attended community meeting on January 13, 2025
- The meeting provided information to the public on why Tipping Fees are being implemented, and also sought the public's input and advice on how we could improve the Tipping Fees bylaw.
- A "dot-mocracy" process was used to identify which suggestions were ranked the highest. The top-voted suggestions were:
 - Free days
 - Composting
 - Tracking tourist-generated waste
 - Waste management committee
 - Use donated refundables to fund the free store
 - Annual fee for all users
 - Improved communication on recycling
 - Free store relocation and accessibility
 - Contracts with YG departments
 - Designated free store hours
 - Salvage credit system

Discussion:

- Free days
 - Free days undermine the goal of trying to encourage recycling and waste diversion. The heavy workload on these days may also require additional staffing for such days to occur safely.
 - Perhaps this is something that could be considered after the new system is underway for a period of time and people learn how to recycle and reduce their waste and are used to the new system.
 - Are other municipalities with tipping fees offering free days?
 - Free days could be a good opportunity to host an outreach event e.g. a barbeque with provide education and training on recycling.
- Composting
 - There is a desire to implement a unit similar to the one YG has funded for Carmacks and Mt. Lorne. Timeline and costs remain uncertain.

- Can compost be collected and stockpiled in anticipation of the arrival of this unit?
- The regulatory regime for running a compost facility has a lot of requirements; almost requiring an FTE.
- Are the regulatory requirements for producing sell-able compost the same as producing compost that will be landfilled? Composting reduces the volume of food waste by 90% and reduces release of methane gas – which would be an improvement on the current situation.
- Tracking tourist-generated waste
 - How much garbage does tourism generates would be difficult to determine as some would come from Parks or Highways bins, others through gas stations or hotels – all of which also collect garbage from local users.
 - A tipping fee will be paid from all of these sources of garbage.
 - Will the amount of garbage from tourism increase relative to local garbage, as locals will have greater incentives to divert waste?
 - A concern has to do with the grates that have been put on garbage bins around town that reduce the size of bag that can be thrown away which will make it harder for tourists to throw out a big bag of garbage and may incentivize illegal dumping.
 - Garbage bins with grates have been installed across Canada, and it is to ensure that they are used for occasional litter instead of bags of garbage that should be taken to the landfill.
 - Local businesses are concerned about getting more garbage from locals who are avoiding paying tipping fees
- Waste management committee
 - Could provide recommendations to Council on tipping fees, recycling, free store, etc.
- Fund free store through donated refundables
 - There are other options for funding and/or staffing the free store
 - Part- or full-time staff? Honoraria for volunteers? Or some combination of staff and volunteers?
- Annual fee for all users
 - Implementing a flat fee disincentivizes waste reduction, and disproportionately affects small households and lower income residents
 - There may be some variation on this that is worth exploring
- Improve communications on recycling
 - Some efforts have been made on this front already
 - What is recyclable is in constant flux – some of the dynamics are the result of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation. Also commodity prices affect what is recyclable, this is why metals aren't as lucrative as they once were.
- Relocate free store
 - Current location is suboptimal.
 - A new building that would warehouse both the recycling centre and the free store (to replace the existing building) would cost a minimum of \$3 million.

- A new building that would replace the recycling centre, refundables area, and the free store (to replace the existing old building) would cost a minimum of \$3 million.
- Staff could explore options for a standalone facility, which could also be expensive.
- Contracts with YG departments
 - It would be good to have more feedback from the roundtable that discussed this issue to better understand what was proposed.
 - YG will have the same tipping fees as everyone else.
- Designated free store hours
 - Restricted hours of operation for free store could be considered in order to have free store staff/volunteers on site when free store is open
- Salvage credit system
 - Could look into what other communities are doing and see if there is some sort of system that isn't too onerous.
 - Concern from staff that this would be problematic to run and onerous.
- Action: Council would like to look at the raw data
- Action: Council would like to add considerations for seniors and low-income residents e.g. a rebate
- Action: Organize meeting with seniors to seek further input on solutions for low-income residents+
- Action: Council would like to schedule a CoW to discuss this further

#27-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT a CoW be scheduled to review the feedback from the public meeting on tipping fees

Motion #27-25 was **CARRIED**.

Tipping Fee Community Comparison

CAO Presentation

- This is a simplified version to what was previously shared on our website in advance of the September 2024 public meeting. The desire was to make our earlier version easier to read while also maintaining the accuracy of the community comparison.
- This version is more comprehensive than the selective comparison that was shared by a concerned citizen at the public meeting.
- While the work that the public did to share a tipping fees comparison is appreciated, in the interest of accuracy, the document that staff prepared is good for Council to reference.

Discussion

- The comparison is difficult to read because of the small font size.

- Every community is different so it is hard to make a direct comparison. There are many nuances between communities.
- Overall, our fee structure is average – a few things are higher, like end-of-life vehicles (which is based on the actual cost)
- The rates for YG landfills for unincorporated communities will increase April 1 – a regulatory change is in place. They are increasing their rates to be in keeping with Whitehorse, who is increasing their rates.
- AYC has a resolution into YG seeking support with end-of-life vehicles.
- Having data from the first year will help us reassess fees.
- Construction at front of house was completed in October – getting electricity to the gate still needs to be done. ATCO was unable to install electricity before winter. VHJ installed a backup generator last week which immediately blew a gasket; staff are working on getting another backup generator. This delay is impacting getting the gatehouse operational. Original desire to have gate attendant in place for a month to provide education – this window of time is no longer available with start date of February 1.
- Request to defer implementation of tipping fees to March 5th, February the gate attendant will be in the gatehouse to provide education to landfill users

#28-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT the initiation of tipping fees at the landfill be delayed from February 1 to March 5th.

Motion #28-25 was **CARRIED**.

Bylaws – Reports, Readings and Adoption

Correspondence

Letter from Sally Hogan – Request to establish Haines Junction Cemetery Committee

Discussion:

- Two large rocks were placed at the cemetery so plaques could be drilled into these rocks.
- Ms. Hogan wrote to previous Council. Was this request not already passed along to, and actioned by, the Lions?
- Ms. Hogan may not have been informed about the work that was done by the Lions.

#29-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT staff look into what was done on previous request and get in touch with Ms. Hogan with an update.

Motion #29-25 was **CARRIED**.

- This is expected to have a significant impact on businesses in Haines Junction.
- CAO and Deputy Mayor will be joining Chamber of Commerce in meeting with MP Handley tomorrow.
- Would Council like to send a letter to the MP and our Premier?
- Council would like more information on the impact of the cancellation of this program and for this information be used to strengthen a letter, if sent, to the MP and Premier.
- Council asked staff asked to follow up with Roxy Mason who sent in a request for a letter of support.

#30-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT staff provide Council with more information on the Nominee program along with a draft letter

Motion #30-25 was **CARRIED**.

Haines Junction Health Centre Newsletter January 2025

Discussion:

#31-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT the Haines Junction Health Centre Newsletter be received and filed.

Motion #31-25 was **CARRIED**.

Local Food Infrastructure Fund accepting applications

Discussion:

- Staff asked to share this with the local food bank association

#32-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT this information be received and filed

Motion #32-25 was **CARRIED**.

Council Reports and Notice of Motions

Councillor McPhie

- Attended Seniors and Elders Health and Wellness Fair was held this week. Over 100 in attendance.

Councillor Busche

- Attended Ranger parade and medal ceremony. Senator Pat Duncan presented Wade Istchenko and Marcel Dulac with the King's Coronation Medal

- Attended January 13 public meeting on tipping fees, and the meeting with contractors on January 14 to discuss tipping fees associated with grubbing and stripping.

#33-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT staff prepare a letter of congratulations to Wade Istchenko and Marcel Dulac on receiving the King's Coronation Medal.

Motion #33-25 was **CARRIED**.

Councillor Mackinnon

- Attended January 13 public meeting on tipping fees
- Attended Mayoral Candidates forum on January 20

Deputy Mayor Strand

- Notice of a motion on the Food Cycler – would like to learn more about what their next steps would be, what the costs would be to launch another program.

#34-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT staff prepare a RTC with more information from the Food Cycler program on next steps.

Motion #34-25 was **CARRIED**.

Questions from the Public

- Comment: Sally Hogan donated the block of land on which the St Elias Convention Centre sits for the community to be built, it was donated with the caveat that it be used for youth recreational facilities
- Comment: Tourist garbage was a concern from local businesses who will now have to pay for tourist garbage that is dropped off at their businesses.
- Comment: Free store should not cost \$3million to replace. This does not have to be fancy. Nothing will happen at this price.
 - This quote was not for just the free store, it was for a new recycling centre and free store to replace the current building.
- Comment: It was a great meeting on the 13th, people felt heard and positive that their input was being sought, would be great to continue this momentum
- Question: Council was thanked for holding the meeting on the 13th. Would like to attend the Committee of the Whole discussion – when and how will this be advertised?
- Question: Has Council had a chance to review/discuss the suggestion to put council meeting recordings on the website?
- Question: Is the Village Council supportive of the Land Treatment Facility (LTF) being established in the Nygren subdivision?

- Can't answer yes or no, Council hasn't discussed whether they support this location as a whole. Individual Council members may have their own opinion.
- Council has only indicated that it supports a LTF in the region, did not say specifically where it should be located.
- This location is outside the municipal boundary so not in Council's mandate to comment.
- Question: Did the letter from Council go directly to Castle Rock, who had a proposal in for this location? Should Council not have the specifics of a location in-hand before providing a letter of support?
 - At the time Council wrote the letter, Castle Rock had not identified what area they were proposing to develop.
 - YESAB's mandate is to look at potential impact of a project. The letter of support from the Village has no impact on the outcome of the YESAB process because it is a political statement that Council supports the development of a LTF in the region.

#35-25 It was moved and seconded

THAT the meeting be extended past 9:00 pm.

Motion #35-25 was **CARRIED**.

- Comment: Granting permission for the Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival (KMBF) has impacts on those who live nearby. Please ask Kluane Mountain Bluegrass festival to tell campers that fires are not permitted on the Convention Centre property. In addition, dogs are not to be left in hot cars all day and let out to run free and poop on nearby yards. Would like Council to consider asking KMBF to monitor these issues as campers get very confrontational when asked to not let dogs run onto homeowners' properties. In previous years people double parked in front of driveways. The festival shuts down at 11pm but the music continues outside on the grounds of the convention centre.
 - Council wasn't aware that this was an issue. Appreciate this being brought to Council's attention. These requests will be included in a letter with their permit.
- Question: Accounts payable – Council-Staff Lunch for \$830.55 – how many lunches was this? This seems expensive.
 - Prior Mayor had requested a lunch with new Council and staff
- Comment Intent of Free Day recommendation may have been misinterpreted in the RTC. The discussion was more about possibly having a day where brush is picked up around town for those who don't have a truck to bring it to the dump, or possibly a free car day, or more free hazardous waste days. It wasn't about all waste being free.
 - A committee could help to share information in a more open way, clarify feedback
- Question: Why is the RCMP report in-camera? Was it not public?
 - The report notes it is for Mayor/Chiefs, previously it had been incorrectly shared.

Motion to Close Meeting to the Public

#36-25 It was moved and seconded
THAT the meeting be closed to the public at 9:15 pm.

Motion #36-25 was **CARRIED**.

Motion to Reopen Meeting to the Public

#37-25 It was moved and seconded
THAT the meeting be reopened to the public at 10:13 pm

Motion #37-25 was **CARRIED**.

#38-25 It was moved and seconded
THAT Angie Charlebois and Mark Nassiopoulos be removed from the CAFN-VHJ Intergovernmental Working Group, and Diane Strand and Rob McPhie be added as the new representatives.

Motion # was **CARRIED**.

#39-25 It was moved and seconded
THAT staff bring forward the proclamation of Indigenous Survivor Day to Council for consideration after their Strategic Plan has been developed.

Motion #39-25 was **CARRIED**.

#40-25 It was moved and seconded
THAT the Tax Lien summary report be received and filed.

Motion #40-25 was **CARRIED**.

#41-25 It was moved and seconded
THAT the Mayor and Chief's Report from the RCMP be received and filed.

Motion #41-25 was **CARRIED**.

Adjournment


#42-25 It was moved and seconded
THAT the meeting be adjourned.

Motion #42-25 was **CARRIED**

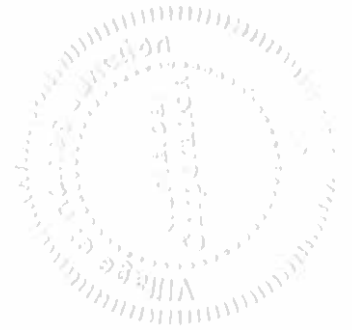
Meeting adjourned at 10:15.



Deputy Mayor Diane Strand



CAO David Fairbank



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