

EAST HANTS

MUNICIPAL NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2012

easthants.ca
1-866-758-2299

WHAT IF NOBODY CAME?

When a call for help goes out in East Hants it is very likely that firefighters will be the first to respond. Whether it is a motor vehicle accident, structural fire or medical call, day or night, the volunteers of the East Hants Fire Service Association are ready, willing and able to help. What if there were no firefighters available?

Like other volunteer organizations, it is sometimes a challenge for fire departments to attract new members. Recruiting new members can be especially difficult for a rural department where there are fewer residents and often people work outside of their communities. A department with a small number of volunteer members may have fewer responders available, and that means relying on neighbouring departments to help out. The East Hants Fire Service Association recently signed a Mutual Aid Agreement which ensures that there is a response to every alarm or 9-1-1 call. The more volunteers there are, the more help there will be when it is needed.



Often when people think of firefighters, they think of men rushing into burning buildings; but that is not all a firefighter does. There are many other important jobs they perform - providing medical assistance, traffic control, operating equipment on the truck, providing support to those going in to fight a fire and various office jobs at the station. There is something for everyone. Traditionally, this had been considered a “man’s job”, but that’s no longer true; more and more women are becoming firefighters in our communities. If you are interested in becoming a member of a volunteer department, but are a little unsure, talk to a local firefighter or give it a try for a month.

The East Hants Fire Service Association is a volunteer organization. Joining your local fire department is a way to give back to the community and to help those in need, while learning new skills and becoming part of an important team. It’s exciting, it’s challenging, it’s rewarding and you will be providing a valuable service to your community who needs you. For more information on becoming a volunteer member, contact your local department.

DOG BY-LAW

The Municipality of East Hants recently amended By-Law 111, the Dog By-Law, to better serve dog owners and their neighbours. Through its Dog By-Law and the services of the By-law Enforcement Officer, the Municipality strives to obtain voluntary compliance primarily through education. When these efforts are not effective, enforcement measures for non-compliance are taken. Compliance with the standards for acceptable dog behaviour set out in the Dog By-Law enables the residents of East Hants to live in harmony with their neighbours who may or may not be dog owners.

Some of the changes made to the By-Law include the adoption of the Nova Scotia SPCA Standards of Care Guidelines for kennel operations; updated and clearly defined definitions regarding offences such as dog attacks; a requirement for service dogs to be registered; a duty to report suspected animal abuse to peace officers; and clarification that the Municipality does not subscribe to, nor endorse, breed specific legislation.

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DOG BY-LAW

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The number one complaint received from residents is for dogs running at large, with a corresponding high volume of calls reporting lost or found dogs. Under the Dog By-Law, every dog owner is required to register their dog with the Municipality on an annual basis. Every effort is made to reunite lost dogs with their owners; however, under the By-Law, dogs cannot be held by the Municipality for more than 72 hours. After this time has expired and it has not been possible to identify the dog's owner, all unclaimed dogs are turned over to the local SPCA for adoption. The best way to ensure your dog is returned to you if it should ever run away or become lost, is to register your dog with the Municipality and attach the municipal tag to the dog's collar. This enables the By-law Enforcement Officer to identify you as the owner and arrange for your dog to be returned to you.

The second most common complaint received is for barking dogs. The By-Law states it is an offence to own a dog which "persistently disturbs the quiet of the neighbourhood by barking, howling or otherwise". In dealing with the owners of dogs alleged to be barking excessively, and the persons filing the complaint, it is often an issue in which people may become extremely passionate. All dogs bark from time to time, especially when someone enters the yard or knocks on a door; however, a dog which barks persistently requires attention. Citizens reporting a barking dog may be requested to compile a "Barking Log" and, in extreme circumstances, may be required to testify in court in the event there is sufficient evidence to lay charges against the owner of the barking dog. In many cases the dog owner is not even aware their dog is creating a disturbance, and with some education on the By-Law and "no barking" training for the dog, the problem is resolved.

Should you require any assistance with dog related issues or require clarification on the By-Law, please do not hesitate to contact Tim Hamm, Dog Control/By-Law Enforcement Officer, 1-866-758-2299 ext. 207 or email thamm@easthants.ca.

The new By-Law is available for viewing on our website (<http://www.easthants.ca/content/by-law-no-111-dog-by-law/By-law%20111-A.pdf>).

MUNICIPAL POOL MARCH BREAK ACTIVITIES

FREE SWIMS



Sponsored by Milford and District Lions Club

2:00-4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday March 12-16, 2012

6:30-8:00 p.m. 2nd Friday of every month

Everyone Welcome!

Water Polo (Ages 8-15)

Come try out this exciting, challenging team sport!

Monday, March 12, 2012, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Cost \$7.00 per participant.

Junior Lifeguard Camp (Ages 8-15)

Join us for this 5-day camp, 3-5 p.m. daily, to have fun and learn the exciting skills of lifesaving.

Cost \$25.00 per participant.

Synchronized Swimming (Ages 8-15)

Swimmers will use skills they learn to create routines to music while improving strength, flexibility and body awareness in the water. Wednesday, March 14, 4:30- 5:30 p.m.

Cost \$7.00 per participant.

To register or for more information on any of our programs, call (902) 758-3467 or visit <http://www.easthants.ca/content/municipal-pool>.

Our swim schedule changes on April 1! Visit our website or like us on Facebook for up-to-date information & special events.

Check out the Department of Recreation & Culture on Facebook!
"Municipality of East Hants Department of Recreation & Culture"



Department of Recreation and Culture Summer Programs

Summer is quickly approaching. Be on the look out for program notices coming home from the schools the end April, first part of May.



2012 SPRING TAX BILLS

By early April, you should receive your 2012 interim tax bill in the mail. Payment is due by June 1st, 2012. This bill is calculated as one-half (1/2) of your 2011 final tax bill. There may be situations where your final tax bill will be significantly different from your interim bill due to changes in ownership; changes in assessment; if your home was built in 2011 and was not taxed during the year; you've made significant additions / renovations to your home; or you've opened or closed a business.

If you have any questions about your tax bill, please contact the Municipal Office at 902-758-2299 or visit our website (<http://www.easthants.ca/content/finance-and-tax-information>).

Questions regarding your property assessment must be directed to the Property Valuation Services Corporation at 1-800-380-7775 (toll-free); further information is available on the PVSC website at www.pvsc.ca.

If you have a mortgage on your home, you may be making payments toward your taxes along with each mortgage payment. Your financial institution holds these funds on your behalf and then transfers the required amount to the Municipality to pay your interim and final tax bills.

When you receive your tax bill, please take the time to verify that your correct financial institution and mortgage account number are noted on the tax bill. If the mortgage notification area on the tax bill is blank (or incorrect), your mortgage company will not be advised your tax bill that has been issued. Please contact your mortgage company to report any problems or discrepancies. They may also contact the Municipality directly to discuss your tax account.

WARDEN'S MESSAGE

Welcome to Spring! After an unpredictable winter, let us hope our spring and summer will be more settled. Council and staff have been working diligently through the budget process since the start of the new year with the goal of bringing residents a reasonable tax rate.

There are lots of exciting things happening throughout the Municipality this spring. To find out what's happening in your area visit our website (<http://www.easthants.ca/content/whats-up-east-hants/2nd%20edition%20what%27s%20up%20e.h..pdf>).

Although the Fall is several months away, I want to remind all of you that in October of this year, Municipal elections will be held. I encourage you to make yourselves aware of the issues and vote for the individual who will best represent you. Choose wisely – that person will be your representative for four years. The future of your community and the Municipality depends on your decision. Have a good summer, then VOTE.

John Patterson
Warden

COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

Regular Council meetings are scheduled for the following dates: March 28, April 25, May 23.

All meetings are open to the public, start at 7:00 pm and are held in the Council Chambers, Municipal Office, 2361 Hwy No. 2, Milford. For more information regarding Council meetings, contact the Municipal Clerk at 1-877-883-7098 Ext 215. Please check the Municipal website at <http://www.easthants.ca/content/council-calendar-for-agendas-and-cancellation-notice>.

MUNICIPAL TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 2012

In 2011, the East Hants Municipal Council made significant changes to the Municipal Tax Assistance Program (MTAP). The program provides residential property tax assistance to families in East Hants who may be struggling to pay their property taxes on an owner-occupied home. Assistance is dependent on the number of people in the family, and various income thresholds.

Applicants meeting the program requirements are eligible to receive a credit applied directly to their residential tax account of \$203.45 or up to 20% of their annual tax bill, whichever is the greater amount. Please note that you must re-apply each year and are required to provide a copy of your 2011 *Notice of Assessment* and 2011 *Notice of Child Tax Benefit* (if applicable).

MTAP application forms will be mailed with the spring tax bill in early April. Information and forms will also be available on the Municipal website (<http://www.easthants.ca/content/general-exemption-and-who-qualifies>).

Questions can be directed to the attention of Margaret Lambe, Tax Administrator, via phone at 902-758-1800 ext 227 (toll-free 1-866-758-2299 or email to mlambe@easthants.ca)

VILLAGE CORE STUDY

In 2010 the Municipality engaged Ekistics to complete a Village Core Study. One aspect of this study was a review of the existing Design Standards, included as Appendix E of the Land Use By-Law which applies to all lands and buildings within the Village Core (C6) Zone, Community Core (C6A) Zone and the Neighbourhood Core (C7) Zone. These design standards set out architectural and site design guidelines to ensure new development is compatible in scale and character with surrounding developments, maintains and reflects the traditional architectural character of the existing streetscape, is based on sound architectural and landscape architecture principles and encourages a pedestrian accessible environment.

Ekistics have recommended some fairly significant changes to the design requirements. They suggest that the existing design regulations are overly complicated and have attempted to deal with this with their recommended changes. They suggest that instead of being specific about meeting roof, window, door and other 'component' standards, the proposed guidelines require the new building to be designed in an architectural style that is consistent with others in the village core. Amongst other changes, the proposed design requirements require the owner or the representative to select an architectural style that is consistent with others in the village core, community core and neighbourhood core areas.

Planning Advisory Committee and Council have begun reviewing the design requirement recommendations made by Ekistics. The next step is to seek comments from the public on amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law that are needed to implement the changes to the design requirements. In early 2012 a public information meeting will be organized to seek feedback.

For further details on the proposed amendments please contact Rachel Gilbert, Senior Planner at 798-1800 ext 122.



ROAD ACCESS GUIDELINES

In December, East Hants Council approved Road Access Guidelines that apply to Municipal roads. The Guidelines do not apply to Provincial roads which have their own regulations. If you're not sure whether your road is Municipal or Provincial, please check the East Hants Roads list posted on the Municipal website (<http://www.easthants.ca/content/east-hants-roads/All%20Roads%20List%20Own%20Website2012.pdf>). If your road is a Provincial road, access questions should be directed to the local office of Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal at 1-888-432-3233.

The Road Access Guidelines specify requirements for residential driveways including a minimum width of 3 metres and a maximum width of 7 metres or half of the property frontage, whichever is less. The Guidelines also specify a minimum clearance of 3 metres from a side lot line. For roads with ditches, the Guidelines specify minimum culvert size and acceptable materials for both culverts and headwalls. Infilling of ditches is not permitted on Municipal roads. For the complete Road Access Guidelines, please refer to the Municipal web site (<http://www.easthants.ca/content/road-access-guidelines/Road%20Access%20Guidelines.pdf>).

The Road Access Guidelines require that anyone proposing to construct or alter an access to a Municipal road must submit a permit application. The application is available on the Municipal web site or at the Municipal offices in Milford or Elmsdale. The completed application form can be dropped off at either office or mailed to the attention of the Civil Engineering Technologist. Applicants will be advised of permit approval or otherwise.

Municipal Council also passed a policy dealing with existing non-conforming driveways and ditch infilling. Homeowners whose installations are deemed to fall into this category will receive a letter advising them of the Municipal policy with respect to their situation. Some installations such as shared semi-detached driveways will be exempted. Any questions in this regard can be directed to the Civil Engineering Technologist at 758-1800, Ext. 103.

Homeowners are reminded that the ownership and maintenance of driveways remains the responsibility of the property owner. Residents are responsible to ensure that their culverts remain open and free flowing at all times.

We appreciate your cooperation in helping us promote good drainage practices for the benefit of everyone.