

# THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBALT

## SPECIAL MEETING COBALT COMMUNITY HALL November 23, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. MINUTES

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### PRESENT:

**Mayor** George Othmer

**Councillors:** Pat Anderson  
Joe Dube  
Matthew Johnson  
Angela Adshead via zoom  
Bill Gabbari via zoom  
Doug Wilcox via zoom

**Staff:** Steve Dalley, Town Manager  
John Hodgson, Clerk-Treasurer Advisory via zoom  
Dale Taylor, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer  
Cassandra Beaudoin

**Planner** Jim Dymont via zoom

### Media Moderator

1. **Call to Order:**  
Mayor Othmer called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed Town Manager Steven Dalley.
2. **Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof**  
None
3. **Business**  
This is a Special Meeting of Council held under the provisions of Section 21 of the Planning Act. The Act requires Council to hold this Special Meeting to provide an opportunity for all property owners, residents, and business owners in Town an opportunity to speak directly to Council about the future of the community.

Mr. Jim Dymont, Municipal Planner provided a presentation on the status of the Draft Official Plan.

Mr. David Brydges, Cultural Entrepreneur, spoke on his vision of concepts for future possibilities. He envisions support for arts and culture mixed with history initiatives to grow tourism, house them in Town and build a residential quality of life community. A copy of the presentation is attached.

Mr. Dymont invited viewers/residents to submit any ideas, feedback or questions to him for a discussion. He is anticipating a 1<sup>st</sup> draft by the end of the first week of December and the next Public meeting in June of 2022.

4. **RESOLUTION No. 2021-198**  
**MOVED BY:** M. Johnson  
**SECONDED BY:** J. Dube

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** any or all comments and submissions will be accepted for consideration and that the presentation by the Consulting Planner be accepted.  
**CARRIED**

5. **Confirmation By-law**

**RESOLUTION No. 2021-199**  
**MOVED BY:** P. Anderson  
**SECONDED BY:** J. Dube

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** By-Law No. 2021-37 being a By-Law to confirm the proceedings of Council of the Corporation of the Town of Cobalt under Section 21 of the Planning Act, RSO 1990, c. 13 as amended be taken as read a first, second and third time and finally passed 23<sup>rd</sup> day of November 2021.

**AND FURTHER THAT** the said By-Law be signed by the Mayor and Clerk and recorded in the By-Law book.  
**CARRIED**

6. **Adjournment**

**RESOLUTION No. 2021-200**  
**MOVED BY:** M. Johnson  
**SECONDED BY:** P. Anderson

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Special Meeting of Council be adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

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Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk

# **Cobalt's Official Town Plan Presentation**

## **November 23/021**

At the first official plan workshop, there was support for arts and culture mixed with history initiatives to grow tourism, house them in town, and build a residential quality of life community. So, let's imagine some future possibilities.

The first PoeTrain tour in 2012 was a success earning the Temiskaming Shores & Area Chamber of Commerce Hospitality award. When the Northlander passenger train returned in 2024, Spring Pulse Poetry Festival leased a train car, picking up 30 poets and musicians in Toronto for another PoeTrain tour. This time there were options for staying in town.

Cobalt's mid-July summer streets have a hot vibe. Buskers play music as crowds pack the downtown core. A group riding rented e-bikes are off to see the Silver Trail. Local shops do a brisk business, setting up street stalls for those attending the *"Cobalt Rocks Music Festival."* Friday and Saturday afternoon, local musicians performed in the Dr. Pollard Poetry Park. Charlie Angus and Grievous Angels band headlines Friday night at the Miners Tavern. The festival ends Saturday night with a Classic Theatre sold-out concert featuring the Jerry Cans.

A trend began with the COVID- 19 pandemic when urbanites relocated north. Hundreds over the years relocated to Cobalt since the town plan was created, fortifying the town's tax base. Phenomena captured in author David Brydges's book *"The Rise of the Rural Creative Class"* where a whole chapter showcases the town's vibrant art/cultural community and its transplanted beauty prospectors of artists, musicians, writers, and filmmakers. In comparison, Cobalt's mining history and immense silver wealth are world-class and well-known. Its above-ground cultural tourism wealth attracted those who wished to experience this mining town's revitalized renaissance.

Cobalt had an artist in residence program to encourage the creation of new works of art, help organize events, do workshops, be social media active, and visit local schools. Several decided to stay after their residency had ended, making Cobalt their permanent home.

I've been recently contacted by the founder of the Ontario Poetry Society for the location of "*The Canadian Poetry Emporium.*" Cobalt "*Canada's Small Town Poetry Capital*" is being considered with some seed funding and a donation of a 3000-poetry book collection for a space for year-round literary events, workshops, library, and art gallery.

The Cobalt Train Station was sold, and a new café opened in the most elegant event space in Northern Ontario. Weddings, celebrations of life ceremonies, company parties, and small conferences enjoyed this Neo-gothic landmark's historic ambience.

Cobalt hosted the Global Mural Conference. Old murals were restored, and new ones were painted from Cobalt's vast heritage database. One paid homage to Group of 7 artists Franklin Carmichael and A. Y. Jackson, painting in the 1930s, plus friends Sir Frederick Banting, Yvonne McKague Housser, and several women friends. The above artists and locals were represented on ten historic art plaques, primarily downtown, making for a unique cultural infrastructure not seen elsewhere in the north.

Plans are for the most extensive retrospective of Canadian mining paintings using 15 venues in Cobalt and Haileybury. A week festival is celebrating Cobalt through the eyes of artists, with walking tours, lectures, and exhibitions.

The concrete wall across from the train station became a story map. The first mural with indigenous artists showed how 2 thousand years ago, silver was harvested and traded on Cobalt Lake, which initially had an Algonquin name called (Mesinochwanigwahghaning) translated as "*the lake with the soft rock which can be written upon.*" It was the first discovery of silver mined by Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Accommodation for residents and visitors was a key challenge. The town realized it needed to have some skin in the game. Bylaws were tweaked to allow more homestay alternatives.

A once seasonal camper trailer park was converted into a tiny home park beside the Cobalt Golden Age Club. The town collected rent and invested in two of their own that became tourist season options and later were rented to students at Northern College. Cobalt Public School property ownership was

finally resolved, and a local home building company developed it into a subdivision.

Empty home lots in town were given an incentive of receiving 90% of their purchase price if built within two years. Another northern town used this incentive as part of its community improvement plan. Several historic buildings were also repurposed for accommodation redevelopment and not torn down unless structurally unsafe.

In Cobalt, the future always has roots in the past. Here is an excerpt of a poem written by E. C. Hunter in the 1925 Rotarian Magazine.

### WHERE THE NORTH BEGINS

*The north is not a country  
Measured in terms of land,  
The Real North is a spirit,  
That you must understand*

We living in the north represent this understanding. Now it's time to share the story of how Cobalt, its first "silver city," played a pivotal role in developing the past north and today is passionately poised to welcome newcomers and visitors to mine a motherlode of creative opportunities to *"live a life and then some."*

David C. Brydges Cultural Entrepreneur