

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday January 14, 2025, 5:30pm
Council Chambers
Municipal Administration Building
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

Present were: Warden Nicholas MacInnis
Deputy Warden John Dunbar
Councillor Mary MacLellan
Councillor Adam Baden-Clay
Councillor Richelle MacLaughlin
Councillor Shawn Brophy
Councillor Wayne Melanson
Councillor Gary Mattie
Councillor Harris McNamara
Councillor Sterling Garvie

Regrets: None

Staff Present: Shirlyn Donovan, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk
Megan MacInnis, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Others Present: Gallery

Call to Order – Chairman, Warden Nicholas MacInnis

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole was called to order by the Chair, Warden MacInnis, at 5:31 pm.

Approval of Agenda

Warden MacInnis called for any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as presented.

Motion Carried

Approval of December 10, 2024 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden MacInnis called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of December 10, 2024. Hearing none, the minutes were considered approved.

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

Delegations

There were no delegations.

Continuing Business

There was no continuing business.

New Business

Seabright Road

Mrs. Donovan spoke to the staff memo that was prepared to provide an overview of the history of the requests of residents on Seabright Road to have the section of the roadway not listed by the Nova Scotia Department of Public Works (NSDPW) assumed by the Municipality and maintained. Mrs. Donovan noted that following a presentation at Council in 2024, residents upgraded the roadway to bring it to a public standard to align with the municipal policy. Staff met with representatives from the NSDPW to negotiate maintenance of the roadway if it was taken over by the Municipality, and it was agreed upon that they would provide summer and winter maintenance to the roadway and bill the Municipality if the 900m section of the roadway were transferred to the ownership of the Municipality.

Discussion followed, and it was noted that many of the residents of the roadway were in attendance in the gallery.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council take over ownership of a 900m portion of Seabright Road and develop a maintenance agreement with the Nova Scotia Department of Public Works for ongoing winter and summer maintenance.

Motion Carried

Community Partnership Grants

Mrs. Donovan spoke to the annual community partnership grant process, which usually opens at the end of January. Staff usually recommends 3% of the tax revenue to be assigned for grants, which will include the special district grants. Mrs. Donovan noted that the policies were included in the agenda package for information. She also

provided an overview of the grants that were provided in the current fiscal year. Consensus was provided to proceed with 3% of the tax revenue for the grants.

2025 Boundary Review

Ms. Schumacher provided the Committee with an overview of the boundary review process undertaken in 2023/24. She also provided the Committee members with copies of the June 21, 2024 decision of the UARB, reviewing the write-up and noting the direction for the Municipality to conduct a study after the October 2024 municipal election into the appropriate number of councillors and polling districts, and the fairness and reasonableness of the district boundaries, and to file its study and an application on later than December 31, 2025.

Ms. Schumacher noted two options available for moving forward with the required study. The Municipality could utilize a consultant again to do the study, or have staff do the work with the caveat that support for mapping services would be required. The floor was then opened to the Committee for discussion and feedback.

Members of the Committee expressed that they wanted a process where they could have more input on the proposed boundary adjustments, acknowledging that boundaries would need to be moved to bring the districts into parity. Discussion followed regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using a consultant, whether the question of the number of districts should be reviewed again, and the timing and quantity of open houses utilized for public consultation.

Staff was directed to prepare a full information package for the Committee with copies of reports and studies from previous boundary reviews, as well as some preliminary timelines and costs, for further discussion prior to a decision being made.

Hospitality and Expense Policy Updates

Ms. Schumacher noted that the Expense and Hospitality policies were included in the agenda package and as discussed at previous meetings, were under consideration by Council for amendment or approval as required under Section 23(7) of the Municipal Government Act. Key sections of the policies were reviewed for the committee's information. Members of the committee were asked to provide staff with their input on any possible revisions, and that the policies would be back in front of the committee with a staff memo

Off Highway Vehicle Discussion

Warden MacInnis shared feedback from residents in his district from off-highway vehicle groups that are looking for connections between trails and resources in their districts. He noted that Richmond and Inverness counties have both passed new policy for roads to connect trails, working in conjunction with the province. Councillors shared the off-highway vehicle usage in their communities and desire of residents to be able to access

other resources without breaking the law by travelling on the roadway. Those who were in attendance when the provincial representatives presented on the subject in April 2024 provided feedback on their presentation, with examples such as signage.

Warden MacInnis noted that the off-highway group forming in his district will be meeting on February 2nd St. Andrews Community Centre at 1pm. Staff was directed to create a summary of the experiences in other municipalities.

Street Light Requests

Bayfield Summerside Road

Deputy Warden Dunbar noted that at the intersection of Bayfield Road and Summerside Road would benefit from a streetlight for safety reasons. He noted that the visibility at that location can vary given the weather conditions and would benefit from the lighting.

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves the installation of a streetlight at the intersection of Bayfield Road and Summerside Road.

Motion Carried.

Intersection of Pomquet Monkshead Road and Pomquet River Road at Highway 104

Councillor Melanson noted that a streetlight at a busy intersection on Highway 104 that was damaged in an accident several months ago has yet to be replaced, creating a safety concern in that location. Staff will follow-up with Department of Highways about the timing of the reinstallation of the damaged light at this intersection with the streetlight.

Pleasant Valley Road and Murphy Road

Councillor MacLellan noted that she was asked for a streetlight to be installed at the intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and Murphy Road.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves the installation of a streetlight at the intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and Murphy Road.

Motion Carried.

Discussion followed. Members of the Committee felt that it would be worthwhile to look at reviewing the Streetlight Policy, as it has not been updated since 2001.

Municipal Transfer Station Hours of Operation Discussion

Deputy Warden Dunbar brought forward a suggestion he had received from constituents and saw discussed online requesting consideration of an extension of

operating hours at the transfer station on Saturdays. Currently, the hours of operation on Saturdays are from 8am – noon. He suggested consideration of an extension to a later time such as 3pm.

Mrs. Donovan noted that she had talked with the Director of Public Works, and he had not received requests from the public to consider an extension of those hours. Mrs. Donovan reviewed the current operating hours of the transfer station. Councillor Garvie shared that many residents along the Beech Hill Road wait until after the transfer station has closed to go out walking on the roadway, due to the volume of traffic along Beech Hill Road when the transfer station is open. Councillor Baden-Clay expressed concerns about extending staff hours further into the weekend.

Community Events

- Deputy Warden Dunbar shared that over the holidays there was the mural unveiling in District 7, as well as holiday events in Heatherton including a tree lighting and Christmas concert.
- Councillor MacLellan noted that floor curling and yoga, as well as bridge and pickleball, are underway in the community centres in her district.
- Councillor McNamara shared that a number of four-wheelers attended a rally in District 9 as part of a fundraiser. The Fire Department is holding a fundraising breakfast every 3rd Sunday of the month to raise money for a new truck. Card plays are underway, and a concert is held on the last Sunday of every month.
- Councillor Melanson shared that he attended a concert in his district on December 23rd. A dance was held on December 28th by the fire department, and it was sold out. Planning is underway for the Pomquet Winter Carnival in February.
- Councillor Garvie attended the L'Arche fundraising dinner. He shared that he attended several minor hockey games and encouraged members of Council to attend and support the youth playing hockey in the community.
- Councillor MacLaughlin shared that she attended the Levy hosted at the Legion. Lochaber community centre hosted a breakfast last weekend, and a skating rink has been created on the tennis courts at the community centre. In St. Joseph's, a breakfast is being planned for the upcoming weekend. The breakfasts are important fundraisers for the community centres, supported by the volunteers in the community.
- Councillor Brophy attended the Lights of Love event at the RK MacDonald Nursing Home. The Lions Club is hosting a pancake breakfast as a fundraiser.
- Warden MacInnis noted he attended the New Years Levy. He noted that he is meeting with Allison White of the Rivers Association, who received funding from

the Federal Department of Environment and also hosted a successful fundraiser in the fall.

Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda

In-Camera Business

There was no in-camera business.

Adjournment

Moved

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned at 7:24pm.

Motion Carried

Warden Nicholas MacInnis

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO