

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday January 28, 2025, following Asset Management Committee
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 Harris McNamara (by Zoom)
Councillor Sterling Garvie

Regrets: Councillor Gary Mattie

Staff Present: Shirlyn Donovan, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk
Megan MacInnis, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator
Tammy Feltmate, Director of Sustainable Communities
Allison Duggan, Director of Finance

Others Present: Gallery (by Zoom)

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 7:01pm.

Approval of Agenda

Warden MacInnis called for any additions or deletions to the agenda. The delegation was removed from the agenda.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as amended.

Motion Carried

In-Camera Business

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee move into an in-camera session to discuss Personnel Matters and the Acquisition, Sale, Lease, and Security of Municipal Property at 7:02pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee adjourns the in-camera session at 7:27pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council appoint Rozalyn Tobin to the R.K. MacDonald Board as the County representative for a three-year term.

Motion Carried

Approval of January 14, 2025 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden MacInnis called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of January 14, 2025. 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

Hospitality and Expense Policy Updates

Ms. Schumacher provided an update on the exercise of reviewing the Expense and Hospitality policies as required by the Municipal Government Act (MGA), specifically with respect to the request from the committee at their January 14th meeting for staff to review the per diems noted in the policy. Ms. Schumacher noted that amounts from a preliminary scan of provincial and municipal sources was listed in the staff memo, but that a suggestion had come from senior staff to defer making any updates to these figures until they have been reviewed as part of the compensation review that is currently underway. Staff is therefore recommending that the policies be re-adopted as-is, and that the motion include direction for further updates if the compensation review identifies that they are necessary.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council re-adopt the Policy on Municipal Council and CAO Expense Reimbursement and the Municipal Hospitality Policy as required by Section 23(7) of the Municipal Government Act, subject to the per diem information in the Policy on Municipal Council and CAO Expense Reimbursement being updated, if necessary, following the completion of the compensation review currently underway.

Motion Carried

Off-Highway Vehicles

Mrs. Donovan provided a summary of information collected since direction was received at the January 14th meeting regarding off-highway vehicles and road trails designations in Richmond and Inverness Counties. Mrs. Donovan noted that after speaking with the CAOs from those municipalities, the road trails designations had been coordinated between the off-highway vehicle groups and the province, and that the municipalities had not been involved. She shared that information was included in the agenda package for councillors to share with riders in their community if they are interested in pursuing similar road trails designations. Discussion followed regarding the role of the municipality to write letters of support for those applications to the province.

New Business

Write-Off of Inactive Accounts

Mrs. Duggan provided an overview of the process of identifying non-collectable accounts, and some of the reasons why an account may not be collectable. Staff is currently recommending the write-off of three accounts, for a total of \$1,831.51.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approve write-offs in the amount of \$1,831.51.

Motion Carried

Council Special District Grants

Mrs. Donovan offered to the committee to put on an information session for Council to provide them with information about all the different funding streams available to councillors and the community through the municipality. Councillor MacLellan noted a concern that some councillors are using their Special District Grants up each year, while others are not spending theirs and have amassed large balances.

Mrs. Duggan provided some background on the trends in grant spending over the history of their availability, and what some of the grant funds have been spent on in the past. Discussion followed.

Concerns were raised about funds being saved up over several years and then spent immediately prior to the mandatory hiatus before an election. Concerns were also raised about post-election balances, where some councillors were left with no Special District Grant funds until the fiscal year ends. A suggestion was made to look at limiting how large the grant pools can be, through an amendment to the policy. A policy change could also address the concern about balances being fully depleted before an election.

A suggestion was made to give the issue at least a year and revisit the topic and look at any potential policy updates then after councillors have had an opportunity to go through at least one annual cycle of business. The information session about other funding streams could also take place in that time. A concern was raised with the structure of the grants giving the perception of the grant funding coming from the district councillor, particularly right before an election.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council direct staff to undertake a review of the Council Special District Grants and provide a presentation to the Committee in early 2027.

Motion Carried

(8 in favour, 1 opposed)

Introduction and Overview to Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Plan for the Municipality of the County of Antigonish

Ms. Feltmate provided the committee with an overview of the provincial requirement to have Equity, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Hate Plan in place before April 1, 2025. Ms. Feltmate noted that work is already underway to develop this plan, and additional information will be coming forward, including conversations to facilitate plan development, in the coming months. Engagement and accessibility of the process of creating the plan was emphasized. Discussion followed.

Community Events

- Councillor Melanson shared that every Wednesday in Pomquet there is card play. Pomquet Volunteer Fire Department recruited three new members on January 27th.
- Councillor MacLaughlin shared that Lochaber has regular card play on Monday nights and runs a breakfast every second Sunday of the month.
- Councillor Brophy shared that a pancake breakfast will take place at the Lions Club on the fourth Sunday of the month.
- Warden MacInnis shared that the St. Andrew's off-highway vehicle club will be meeting on Sunday February 2nd.

Reports from Inter-Municipal Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Heritage Museum

- Next meeting will be on Monday February 3rd.

Antigonish Arena Association

- Next meeting will be on March 4th.

Eastern District Planning Commission

- No further updates.

Eastern Regional Solid Waste Management

- Next meeting will be later in the month.

Pictou Antigonish Regional Library

- No meeting this month.

RK MacDonald Nursing Home

- Next meeting will be on January 30th.

County Paqtnkek Joint Steering Committee

- Nothing to report.

Community Navigation & Physician Retention Services Association

- Nothing to report.

Staff was asked to add updates from the PARC committee as a standing update to this list.

Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

Adjournment

Moved

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned at 8:36pm.

Motion Carried

Warden Nicholas MacInnis

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO