

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday April 8, 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 (by Zoom)
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
Meg MacInnis, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Others Present: Stephanie Cooper, PARC
Paul Curry, PARC
Deirdre Smythe
Gallery (in person and 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 5:30pm.

Approval of Agenda

Warden MacInnis called for any additions or deletions to the agenda. Mrs. Donovan asked to have the in-camera item moved to take place during the Council meeting.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as amended.

Motion Carried

Approval of March 25, 2025 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden MacInnis called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of March 25, 2025. Hearing none, the minutes were considered approved.

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

Delegations

Stephanie Cooper and Paul Curry – PARC – Request for a Recreation Needs Assessment

Ms. Cooper and Mr. Curry provided members of the Committee with an overview of the actions that led to the establishment of PARC, the actions that have been undertaken by the group since they last presented to the Committee, and provided an overview of the request being put forward regarding a recreation needs assessment.

Two options were presented, with a proposal to have a Town and County steering committee facilitating the work. The first option would be to undertake a needs assessment, looking at facilities, community input, gap identification, and prioritization of needs. The estimated expense of this option is approximately \$75,000. The second option would be to undertake a feasibility study, with an estimated expense of approximately \$200,000. More details were shared regarding what a recreation needs assessment would entail.

A request was made to the committee for a contribution of \$25,000 towards a recreation needs assessment to be supported by Town and County staff in collaboration with PARC in the 2025/26 fiscal budget. The same request is being made of the Town of Antigonish, and the remainder would be sought through different grants.

The floor was opened for questions from the Committee. Questions were asked regarding the timelines of the assessment relative to the timeline of any development of facilities, comments were shared regarding challenges experienced with access to the school gyms on weekends, and a discussion followed regarding the investment of municipal staff time in their involvement with the exercise.

Further discussion followed regarding registration status of PARC, options for funding, and communication with organizations such as the school board and St. FX. A question was asked about how the \$75,000 figure was determined, and Ms. Cooper provided an overview of the examples from different Nova Scotian municipalities that they had looked into as part of their project research.

Warden MacInnis thanked Ms. Cooper and Mr. Curry for their presentation.

Deirdre Smythe – Proposal to Prohibit Gas Powered Leaf Blowers via the Noise By-law

Ms. Smythe spoke to the committee regarding the harmful effects of gas-powered gardening tools, particularly leaf blowers. She provided her personal reasons for making her request to the committee for their consideration of amendments to the noise by-law to prohibit specific gas-powered machines for lawn care. She then provided an overview of the mechanical specifics of leaf blowers, their environmental impacts, and the health impacts of their operation.

The floor was opened to the committee for questions and comments. Councillor Mattie noted that many of the machines now are battery-run instead of gas-powered. Ms. Smythe noted that there may be a desire to have a deferred introduction of a prohibition to provide those who have invested in gas-powered machinery to change over to battery-operated machines. A comment was shared about the challenge with imposing such a prohibition across the County in response to a single complaint. Discussion regarding the differences in the suburban areas of the municipality vs. in the rural areas of the County with respect to the impact of sound. A suggestion was made to look at the concern in a future discussion of the committee regarding the by-law when it comes up for review.

Warden MacInnis thanked Ms. Smythe for her presentation and noted that her concern would be taken under consideration.

Continuing Business

Climate Risk Assessment Update

Mrs. Donovan provided an overview of the funding opportunity and summarized the presentation that was provided by Mr. MacAllister at the previous Committee of the Whole meeting. She provided mention of the staff members identified to assist with the project, as well as the other in-kind services that could be provided by the municipality, such as advertising and the provision of meeting space.

The floor was then opened for questions from the committee. A question of clarification was asked about the cost and the capacity of staff to be able to contribute to the project. The in-kind contribution would be spread over the 18-month timeline of the project. Discussion followed regarding the importance of community-driven consultation processes, and concerns were raised as to whether risks being identified in the plan could create a liability for the municipality. A suggestion was made to talk

further with staff regarding the project and having a broader discussion about the topic before committing to the specific funding application. Staff was asked to reschedule the item on the April 22, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting for further discussion.

New Business

Tourism Strategy Overview and Updates

Ms. MacInnis provided the committee with an overview of the Tourism Strategy. A number of recommendations that were put forward to support strategic directions listed in the document were outlined. An overview of actions taken over the past year, including budget amounts, the development of a working group, the hiring of a consultant, and work done on the Antigonish Tourism Association structure to revise their by-laws and implement a board of directors.

Ms. MacInnis outlined the recommendations being put forward by staff, which included drafting a partnership agreement with the Antigonish Tourism Association, advertising and hiring a full-time Tourism Director, and increasing the municipality's annual budget contribution to the Tourism Strategy from \$50,000 to \$70,000 for the next four years.

The floor was then opened for questions from the committee. A statement was made about how the County's contribution would be coming out of the general operating, while the Town and St. FX contributions would be coming from their marketing levy collections, and a concern was raised about the budget increase request. Mrs. Donovan provided some clarification regarding how the budget figures that were used in the County's contribution towards tourism initiatives in 2024/2025 were determined, and why those numbers are looking different for 2025/2026. Discussion followed.

A suggestion was made to have ATA provide feedback regarding their representation and the measures taken to ensure that it is representative of the community with County representation in advance of committing budget funds.

Recess of Committee of the Whole

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole meeting recess for the Municipal Council meeting at 7:29pm.

Motion Carried

Call to Order – Warden Nicholas MacInnis

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole was called back to order by the Chair, Warden MacInnis, at 8:51pm.

New Business Continued

Code of Conduct Investigator Selection

Ms. MacInnis provided the committee with an overview of the recommendation being put forward by staff for the selection of an Investigator. A question was asked regarding the payment structure of the retention of the firm for the purpose of acting as an Investigator.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council appoint Burchell Wickwire Bryson LLP as their Investigator under subsection 23C(1) of the Municipal Government Act to receive and investigate complaints received under the Municipal Code of Conduct for Elected Officials Policy.

**Motion Carried
(8 in favour, 2 opposed)**

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole adjourn to an in-camera session to discuss Contract Negotiations at 9:04 pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the in-camera session adjourns at 9:08 pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

The Committee rescinds the motion recommending that Municipal Council appoint Burchell Wickwire Bryson LLP as their Investigator under subsection 23C(1) of the Municipal Government Act to receive and investigate complaints received under the Municipal Code of Conduct for Elected Officials Policy.

Motion Carried

EDPC Appointments

Mrs. Donovan noted that this item was a standard annual process to appoint the EDPC staff members to specific positions acting on behalf of the municipality. Mrs. Donovan read through the list of EDPC staff appointments provided by Mr. Bain.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves the annual appointments of Eastern District Planning Commission staff to Municipal positions, as proposed.

Motion Carried

Councillor Baden Clay was absent for the vote

A Roof Over Your Head Request for Board Representation from Council

Mrs. Donovan spoke to a request received from a Roof Over Your Head for a representative from Council to their board, outlining the information shared by the organization to address the municipality's policy regarding external boards. Mrs. Donovan noted that legal is reviewing the request in the scope of the questions raised from the Code of Conduct legislation recently passed with respect to Councillors on external boards, as raised by Chester to the Province earlier in the year. Discussion followed. A majority of the group expressed a desire to wait until the information noted by Mrs. Donovan was available to facilitate further discussion on the matter.

Antigonish Jr. B Bulldogs Request for Funding

Mrs. Donovan reviewed a request that was sent to Councillors requesting funds to assist with the team going to the Atlantic Canadian Championship in New Brunswick. Discussion regarding the amount of the donation followed. Staff is recommending a donation of \$1000, to keep in line with the amounts provided to youth travel sports teams.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves a contribution in the amount of \$1,000 to the Antigonish Jr. B Bulldogs team to assist with their travel to the Atlantic Canadian Championships, Don Johnston Cup, in New Brunswick.

Motion Carried

Policy Review

A request was made to defer this item to the April 22nd Committee of Whole meeting.

Staff Reports

Mrs. Donovan noted that the staff reports were included in the agenda package.

Community Events

This item was deferred, where similar updates had just been provided at the Council meeting.

Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

Adjournment

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned at 9:41pm.

Motion Carried

Warden Nicholas MacInnis

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO

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