

# **MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH**

## **Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, May 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  
Allison Duggan, Director of Finance  
Marlene Melanson, Director of Recreation  
Daryl Myers, Director of Public Works (by Zoom)  
Tammy Feltmate, Director of Sustainable Communities

**Others Present:**

Gallery (in person and online)  
Dr. John Chiasson, Keppoch  
Coline Morrow, Antigonish Art Fair / Arts House  
Aida Arnold, Antigonish Art Fair / Arts House  
Beth Latwaitis, Antigonish Art Fair / Arts House

### **Call to Order – Chair Warden Nicholas MacInnis**

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole was called to order by the Chair, Warden MacInnis, at 5:36pm.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Warden MacInnis called for any additions or deletions to the agenda. Additions requested were an item of new business to discuss the Strategic Priorities draft chart, and a community birthday announcement.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as amended.

**Motion Carried**

### **Approval of May 6, 2025 Committee of the Whole Minutes**

Warden MacInnis called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of May 6, 2025. Hearing none, the minutes were considered approved.

### **Business Arising from the Minutes**

There was no business arising from the minutes.

### **Delegations**

#### *Antigonish Art Fair / Art House*

Ms. Latwaitis spoke regarding the background of the Antigonish Art Fair, which was an idea of David Miller and first held in the community in 2012. The event takes place every two weeks during the summer months, outdoors when weather permitting, and features artists from the community. A number of volunteers support the event.

In order to try to make the event a year-round arts feature in the community, the Arts House was developed in the former Tourist Information Centre off Church Street in 2019. The features of this facility that are available for the community, and some participant numbers over the past year of programming were shared for the benefit of the committee. Members of the committee thanked Ms. Latwaitis for her presentation.

#### *Dr. John Chiasson, Keppoch*

Dr. Chaisson provided an update regarding the operations at the Keppoch, and gave an overview of a new program being launch at the facility targeting seniors in the community. He shared some statistics about residents in long term care and efforts to reduce loneliness and incorporate opportunities to have seniors get out and about including trips outdoors at the Keppoch.

General figures from the 2024 program were provided, and targets for program outreach for 2025 was outlined. Dr. Chaisson noted that the program is garnering interest from long term care homes throughout the county and in other communities.

Members of the committee expressed their support for the program and the Keppoch.

## **Continuing Business**

### **Discussion Regarding Noxious Weeds**

Councillor Brophy raised a concern that was brought to him by a concerned constituent regarding public awareness of wild parsnip and the danger that its sap can pose if individuals are exposed to it and then sunlight. He asked if information can be shared on the municipal website, through social media, and if information can be sent to the local schools so that their staff and students are aware.

Staff provided members of the committee with information handouts from provincial resources regarding wild parsnip, giant hogweed, and photographs of other plants that look similar. Staff was directed to share information from those resources for the benefit of the community.

## **New Business**

### **Low-Income Tax Exemption**

Mrs. Duggan spoke to the annual review of the Low-Income Tax Exemption that takes place as part of the budget program. Referring to the memo in the agenda package, staff undertook a review of adjacent municipalities to ensure that the county is within a consistent range. A recommendation is being put forward by staff to increase the family household threshold from \$36,000 to \$40,000 in the policy, and to maintain the reduction amount of \$300. Discussion followed regarding the thresholds of adjacent municipalities, and the other assistance programs that could be available to those applying for the program allowing for the stacking of reductions.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee of the Whole recommends that Municipal Council amends the *Tax Exemption Policy for Low-Income Tax Payers* by changing the combined household income threshold noted in clause 2.4 from \$36,000 to \$40,000.

**Motion Carried**

### **Recreation Budget Updates**

Ms. Melanson gave a high-level overview of the department's ongoing day-to-day operations and then reviewed different budget items that will be coming from the Recreation Department. Questions were asked regarding the recreation booking software discussed in the list of proposed projects, and Ms. Melanson provided an overview of the history of the different types of software utilized over the past decade. Further discussion took place regarding the different ways that the community centres could be supported as part of the review of the Moving and Mingling program. Ms. Melanson was thanked for her presentation.

### St. Joseph's Water Tower Discussion

Councillor MacLaughlin requested an update regarding the status of the water tower development in St. Josephs, as she has been asked by many residents in her district about it. Mr. Myers noted that mid-June is when it is hoped that the system will be online, as they are coordinating with several contractors. The SCADA monitoring system and delays with that software has been the hold-up. Staff is currently working with the company that built the tower to clean and fill the tower in the next few weeks.

Further questions were asked regarding the drainage of water used during the cleaning process, and what environmental reports were obtained regarding the well adjacent to the tower when the tower was being designed, to ensure that the well wouldn't be an impact to the existing water customers and adjacent wells. Councillor MacLaughlin also raised concerns with the communications process undertaken through when the project was considered to existing customers on the utility.

### Amendments to the Local Improvements By-law

Ms. Schumacher reviewed several housekeeping updates that are being proposed to the Local Improvements By-law to remove two PIDS from Schedule A, and to update the administrative guidelines in the by-law to provide more direction regarding the consultation process for a proposed project. The amendment to the administrative guidelines is intended to direct readers to consult the policy that speaks to local improvements. Ms. Schumacher noted that a complementary policy amendment is underway. Discussion followed regarding the consultation process used for past projects, and suggestions were made that could be incorporated into the policy amendment.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee of the Whole recommends that Municipal Council receives the proposed amendments to the By-law Respecting Local Improvements, for First Reading at their May 14, 2025 meeting.

**Motion Carried**

### Resident Fencing Concerns Between Nova Landing and Keating Court

Councillor Brophy spoke to a concern raised by residents in his district regarding residences on Keating Court backing onto a commercial development on Nova Landing. Councillor Brophy noted that the residents that had made the presentation in 2024 to discuss the fencing request were present in the gallery. Questions followed regarding buffering requirements in the planning documents, specifically regarding fencing. Staff was directed to provide further context from Planning, and councillors will coordinate regarding funding contributions.

**Adjournment**

In the interest of time, the Strategic Priorities discussion was referred to the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee of the Whole meeting adjourns at 7:52pm.

**Motion Carried**

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Warden Nicholas MacInnis

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Shirlyn Donovan, CAO

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