

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 20, 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
Marlene Melanson, Director of Recreation (by Zoom)
Tammy Feltmate, Director of Sustainable Communities

Others Present:

Gallery (online)

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 5:37pm.

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 May 14, 2025 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Warden MacInnis called for any errors or omissions in the Committee of the Whole minutes of May 14, 2025. Hearing none, the minutes were considered approved.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Councillor McNamara asked to revisit the amounts that were being allocated to the Keppoch and the Arts House, following their presentations. Mrs. Donovan reviewed the amounts requested and recommended for each of those organizations via the community partnership grants program. Councillor McNamara asked if additional funds could be provided to these two organizations to provide them with their full requested amounts. Discussion followed. A suggestion was made by the committee for councillors to consider utilizing their special district grants, where the funds set aside in the budget were fully allocated for the community partnership grants.

Delegations

There were no scheduled delegations.

Continuing Business

There is no continuing business.

New Business

Strategic Priorities Discussion

Mrs. Donovan noted that the draft strategic priorities chart and report that were prepared following the workshop done by Council in February. She noted that typically staff provided quarterly updates on the work being done on the identified priorities. She also noted that the priorities chart is included in the Committee of the Whole agenda package for each meeting as a reminder of the priorities. Staff is suggesting incorporating the strategic priorities into the staff reports that are provided at the first meeting each month, and to continue with the quarterly updates.

Councillor Baden-Clay asked that staff reports make specific references to the item in the strategic priorities chart and asked to have the priorities posted in a location in Chambers for Council's reference.

Mrs. Donovan provided a general update for the committee regarding the council priorities "now" list included in the agenda package. In discussing the servicing items, Councillor McNamara made a suggestion to look at long-term planning for services based on anticipated growth and capacity.

Councillor MacLellan joined the meeting at 6:05pm.

Councillor Baden-Clay asked if an online version of the chart and plans could be made available to the committee for real-time updates. Councillor McNamara flagged the terminology used in identifying a needs assessment as a feasibility study for Action Plan item 17 in the document, and staff noted that terminology would be updated.

Budget Deliberations

Mrs. Donovan began with a review of the proposed 2025/26 Capital Plan, discussing items that had not yet been given consensus by a committee for inclusion in the current budget.

Florence Circle Active Transportation Connector

Ms. Melanson was able to provide the committee with updates on the proposed active transportation connector between Florence Circle and the Post Road and noted that the amount given in the budget was a budget quote, and a formal quote would be sought once the item was approved to proceed. Mrs. Donovan noted that staff was exploring the possibility of using funds from the HAF to construct the pathway.

Mini Pitch Concrete Slab

In reviewing the other recreation projects, a suggestion was made to look at future recreation developments in districts throughout the county. Through discussion, it was noted that the process of a recreation needs assessment would help councillors and their communities identify opportunities for projects needed or wanted in their districts. A suggestion was made to defer the project to allow for grants to be sought, and to look at a partnership with the Town, given the proximity of the location to the town. Consensus to defer the project to a future budget year to be informed by a recreation needs assessment.

The conversation that followed regarding the capital planning process, with Councillor Baden-Clay asking for more details about how the capital numbers fit into the overall budget. The utilization of a visual representation of the budget was suggested, and staff brought up the pie chart that is published with the budget announcement each year for information.

Mini Pitch Washroom

Ms. Melanson was asked several questions about the maintenance and security of the washrooms that are planned. Further discussion regarding the mini pitch took place.

Bay Street Municipal Service Upgrades

The County's share of the sewer line upgrades was provided based on the updated figures. Consensus was given to proceed with that amount.

Town Sewer Treatment Plant Maintenance

Consensus was given to proceed with the \$675,000 identified for that project.

Intermunicipal Service Agreement for the Sewer Treatment Plant

Staff explained that the amount shown in the capital budget is an estimate to cover the expense of consultants to prepare the agreement. Applications for funding have been made to support this expenditure, which could reduce the cost to the County. Consensus was given to proceed.

I.N.I. Flow Study with the Town

Mrs. Donovan noted that the estimate identified in the budget for this project is to undertake upgrades identified in the study done by the Town to improve capacity in the system. Funding has also been applied for through the PCAP project.

Municipal Office Front Door / Washroom Accessibility Upgrades

A question was asked about whether first voice experience and needs for accessibility upgrades, and Ms. Feltmate provided an overview. Consensus to proceed.

Municipal Office Painting and Window Replacement

Ms. Feltmate provided further information about the proposed window replacements, and how they tie into the energy management plan for the building. Consensus was provided to proceed.

Sidewalks

Mrs. Donovan noted that the cost estimates for many of the sidewalk projects were handed out for the committee's information.

Brierly Brook / MacDougall Street

Staff is recommending deferral of the three sidewalks that were requested to be priced at the last Asset Management meeting. The estimates totalled \$621,000. Consensus was given to defer.

Catherine Drive

Staff is recommending deferral of this sidewalk until a connecting sidewalk between Catherine Drive and the roundabout on Beech Hill Road can be planned for. Consensus was given to defer.

Mount Cameron Sidewalks, Smith Way Sidewalks

Both of these sidewalks were approved by the previous council by motion in October 2024. Mrs. Donovan noted that with the NS Department of Public Works doing work on Highway 337, it would be a good time to be doing road work in the area. Staff is

recommending proceeding with these sidewalks in this budget. Consensus was given to proceed with those two sidewalks.

Beech Hill & South River Road Sidewalks

Mrs. Donovan noted that this is an old quote (from 2022), and staff is recommending deferring this sidewalk project from this budget year. She noted that with the new collaborative care clinic being developed on the Sears Ross Road, a redesign of the sidewalks to provide access to that facility should be considered.

St. FX Intern Proposal

Mrs. Donovan noted that staff was contacted late last week by representatives at St. FX looking for a placement of a governance and policy student for the summer and asked for Council's consensus to add that expense to the budget. Consensus was given to proceed.

Daily Per Diem for the F2025/26 Budget

Mrs. Donovan reviewed a memo prepared by Mrs. Duggan recommending a revision to the per diem allowances to raise the dinner allowance by \$4 and the lunch allowance by \$5. Deputy Warden Dunbar suggested dropping the per diem for incidentals and felt that the existing allowances were adequate and did not need to be raised. Discussion followed. Consensus was given to make the proposed increase to the per diems.

Councillor Mattie asked if consideration could be given to looking at providing provisions to those councillors needing medical assistance to be reimbursed travel costs for those caregivers. Staff noted that could certainly be accommodated. A suggestion was to look at noting that in policy for future reference. A suggestion was also made to encourage NSFM and FCM to look better at accessibility when planning their events, given past experiences at events where the hotel accommodations were not accessible.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council send a letter to NSFM, FCM, and AMANS will all municipalities in Nova Scotia copied, advocating for more consideration being given to accessibility when planning conferences, including the selection of a facility.

Motion Carried

In-Camera Items

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee move into an in-camera session to discuss the Personnel Matters at 7:58 pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee adjourns the in-camera session at 9:39pm.

Motion Carried

Adjournment

There being no further business, the Committee of the Whole meeting was adjourned at 9:40pm.

Warden Nicholas MacInnis

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO

DRAFT