

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday January 13, 2026, 5:30pm
Council Chambers
Municipal Administration Building
285 Beech Hill Road
Beech Hill, NS B2G 0B4

Present were:

Deputy Warden John Dunbar
Councillor Mary MacLellan (by Zoom)
Councillor Adam Baden-Clay
Councillor Richelle MacLaughlin (by Zoom)
Councillor Shawn Brophy
Councillor Wayne Melanson
Councillor Gary Mattie
Councillor Sterling Garvie

Regrets:

Warden Nicholas MacInnis
Councillor Harris McNamara

Staff Present:

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Municipal Clerk
Allison Duggan, CFO
Tammy Feltmate, Director of Sustainable Communities
Meg MacInnis, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Others Present:

Gallery (online and in-person)
Kyle Musial, MNP

Call to Order- Deputy Warden Dunbar

Deputy Warden Dunbar called the meeting to order at 5:34pm.

Approval of Agenda

Deputy Warden Dunbar called for approval of the Committee of the Whole meeting agenda. Councillor Baden-Clay asked to add an item regarding a letter to Nova Scotia Power. Deputy Warden Dunbar looked to add the following items:

- Library funding next steps
- Question about the format of the minutes
- Discussion about meeting agendas

- Internet and Phone Reimbursement

Mrs. Donovan noted that there were several pieces of correspondence regarding the library funding on the Council agenda, which would lend itself to discussing the issue at that meeting.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as amended.

Motion Carried

Consideration of the December 9th, 2025 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Deputy Warden Dunbar called for any errors or omissions in the minutes of December 9th, 2025. Hearing none, the minutes were accepted as presented.

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

Delegations

Presentation of the Consolidated Financial Statements for 2024/2025

Mr. Musial from MNP presented the audit findings and financial statements for the year ending March 2025 for the municipality and the water utility. He walked through the report page by page for the committee, explaining the methods that were utilized for the tests that were conducted as part of the audit. He noted that in the draft management letter two recommendations were made: to undertake credit card reconciliations quicker, and to reconcile of key accounts take place on a more consistent/regular basis.

The floor was opened for questions from members of the committee. A question was asked about what could be done to support staff to complete the concerns raised in the management letter. Mrs. Duggan spoke to the reasons why delays with the delivery of invoices to the finance department could be resulting in delays, and noted that senior staff are working on creating an internal plan to address these management letter points.

Mr. Musial proceeded with reviewing the draft representation letters, which will be signed by the CAO, indicating that the auditor has been provided with all the required information that they had requested. He then presented the non-consolidated financial statements for the benefit of the committee, speaking to any major changes on the financial position of the operating fund, and reviewing the 2024 and 2025 actuals vs. 2025 budget amounts. Mr. Musial noted the trend over the past two years of using funds from the operating and capital reserves to pay for large capital projects, but no spending from the gas tax reserve. A question was asked regarding the transportation costs noted under transportation, and staff provided clarification.

Mr. Musial then reviewed the non-consolidated water utility statements. A question was asked regarding the long-term debt for the water utility, and Mr. Musial explained that several water utility projects have borrowed from the capital reserve and have a

payment schedule to repay that internal debt but are represented as one debt amount. A question was asked about how the depreciation on assets is calculated.

Mr. Musial then reviewed the consolidated statements, for the County as a whole, and are the statements that will be submitted to the Province. He spoke to surplus noted, explaining that the funding for capital grants is shown as a surplus to recognize that external money has been received for projects, but those funds have been spent on the capital projects that the funding was received for.

Deputy Warden Dunbar thanked Mr. Musial for his presentation, and thanked Mrs. Duggan and her Finance Team for the work that they did in assisting with the audit process. Past Council and staff were also acknowledged for the work done over the years to put the municipality in a good financial position.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approve the audited financial statements for 2024/2025 financial year.

Motion Carried

Continuing Business

There is no continuing business.

New Business

Policy Review – Proposed Repeal of the Policy Regarding the Handling of Tire Fluff

Ms. Schumacher provided an overview of the Policy Regarding the Handling of Tire Fluff and spoke to the reasons why staff has identified this policy as one that could be repealed. A question was asked about whether there is any tire fluff at the water transfer station, and staff noted that they understood that there is not. Another question was asked about whether there are other policies that cover the issues noted in the tire fluff policy, and staff noted that safety policies like the tire fluff policy could be contained in the OHS documents for the municipality. Staff will bring the proposed policy repeal back to the committee at the end of the month and invited members of the committee to provide any questions before then.

Assessment Update

Mrs. Duggan provided an overview of the preliminary assessment information for the municipality. Increases in the 2026 assessment amounts over 2025 were outlined, with estimates of what this could mean for tax revenue for the municipality. The anticipated impact for the different tax rates at the proposed assessments were reviewed. She shared the total levy revenue used to calculate the 3% to be allocated towards community grants to provide an idea of how much could be available for those grants when the time comes to review those applications. Mrs. Duggan also provided the committee with the anticipated sensitivity test of expenses linked to uniform assessment including education, RCMP, water and sewer operations, the planning commission, and the library that are anticipated for the upcoming fiscal year, which could be very close to the anticipated increase in tax revenue. A question was asked about the contribution given to the library each year, and staff provided an overview of the payments given.

Discussion Regarding the Cellular Service Meeting

Mrs. Donovan noted that the meeting recap that was provided to Council and community is included in the agenda package. She provided an overview of the meeting that was held earlier in the month and gave an overview of the tower locations that are expected in the community, but noted that there are still major gaps, particularly in the eastern end of the county, in cellular service. She shared that during the meeting the decrease in cellular service is due to federal regulations restricting equipment resulting in new gaps in coverage. She recommended preparing a letter to send to Build Nova Scotia to thank them for coming to the meeting, and to ask for consideration for improved service in the eastern end of the county.

Members of the committee spoke to the concerns about the gaps in service on the TransCanada Highway and the safety issues that presents. Councillors noted that with ten years of advocacy on the matter, there is a concern that resident concerns are not being addressed when escalated to the authorities at the provincial and federal levels. A question was asked about whether something could be done to allow better roaming between towers for users of different providers to give better coverage in the community. Discussion followed. A suggestion was made to include information about the cellular service advocacy work being done by the municipality in the spring edition of the County Connect.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council send a letter to Build Nova Scotia thanking them for the meeting regarding cellular service in the Municipality, and to request that the eastern part of the county is included in the phase two of the cellular network project to improve service coverage in that area, and to request exploration of further methods to address safety concerns resulting from the reduced cellular network, copied to Ministers Tilley, Thompson, and Morrow.

Motion Carried

Antigonish Affordable Housing Letter Request

Ms. Schumacher spoke to a request received from Antigonish Affordable Housing (AAHS) for a general letter of support for their application to the Build Canada Homes Funding Program. She noted that the letter requested is to express general support for their application, based on clarification received from representatives from AAHS.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council provide a letter to support to Antigonish Affordable Housing for their application Build Canada Homes Funding Program.

Motion Carried

Discussion Regarding the Municipality's Dog Control By-law

Councillor Garvie spoke to the recent fatal dog attack in Shelburne County, expressing his condolences to those involved, and asked some questions about the by-laws pertaining to dogs in the municipality. Ms. Schumacher provided the

committee with a brief overview of the requirements of the By-law Respecting the Responsible Ownership of Dogs, particularly with respect to keeping dogs on leash when they are not on the property of their owner. Questions were asked about breed-specific restrictions, and Ms. Schumacher noted that those were removed from the by-law when it was reviewed in 2019. She noted that the by-law could be reviewed if the committee felt it was necessary. Discussion followed.

Additions to the Agenda

Letter to Premier Houston about Nova Scotia Power

Councillor Baden-Clay spoke to a concern raised online regarding the application by Nova Scotia Power to increase power rates to consumers at the same time as there being concerns with the reliability of service and the customer service that customers are receiving. He asked for consideration of sending a letter to the Premier to request consideration of a five-year rate freeze, and to look at returning Nova Scotia Power to public ownership. A question was asked about whether there was any discussion about this concern at the NSFM board, to ask if they would lobby on behalf of constituents and municipalities across the province.

Moved and Seconded

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council a letter to Premier Houston regarding the Nova Scotia Power rate increase request, asking for consideration of a five-year rate freeze and to investigate Nova Scotia Power being returned to public ownership, copied to NSFM and all municipalities in the province.

Motion Carried.

The committee of the whole meeting was recessed at 7:37pm.

Deputy Warden Dubar called the meeting back to order at 8:52.

Discussion about Minutes

Deputy Warden Dunbar spoke to the format of the titles used in the minutes, and asked whether staff should be referred by their titles or their names. Staff noted that full names and titles of those in attendance are provided at the beginning of each document, and surnames are noted throughout. A suggestion was made to look at minutes in other municipalities for examples.

Agenda Formats

Deputy Warden Dunbar shared thoughts regarding the agendas and expressed that he felt that meetings should start on time and end at 9:30pm and if there are additional items on the agenda, additional meetings should be scheduled. There was concern that meetings are running long and items are being rushed. He expressed that the public hearings should be separate meetings, due to the amount of time that they take. Deputy Warden Dunbar noted his concern with the rezoning process, and expressed that delegations should be of importance to the municipality.

Members of the committee expressed agreement with setting a time limit on the length of meetings. A suggestion was made regarding utilizing Robert's Rules to

make meetings more efficient. Mrs. Donovan noted that she has submitted a request to the Province for a training refresher on Robert's Rules.

Internet and Phone Stipend

Deputy Warden Dunbar noted that internet and phone reimbursements have not been updated and asked if this could be reviewed for the upcoming budget. Staff noted that options would be explored and brought forward to the committee for discussion.

Community Events

- Councillor MacLaughlin shared that a casserole supper is taking place in Lochaber on January 14th. A breakfast is planned in St. Joseph's on Sunday, and the 20th anniversary of the St. Joseph's community centre is approaching.
- Councillor Mattie shared that on January 14th there will be bingo at the Tracadie Fire Hall.
- Deputy Warden Dunbar attended the Heatherton Christmas Concert on Dec 14th. On Friday Jan 16th there will be a social night at the Heatherton Community Centre, with a Club 500 draw.

In-Camera Items

There were no in-camera items.

Adjournment

Moved and Seconded

That Committee of the Whole meeting adjourn at 9:12 pm.

Motion Carried

Deputy Warden John Dunbar

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO