

COUNCIL PRIORITIES (FEBRUARY 2026)	
<p><u>NOW</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TOWN/COUNTY UTILITY 2. 5 YEAR CAPITAL PLAN 3. BOUNDARY REVIEW 4. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 5. HOUSING: HAF 	<p><u>Next</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POLICY REVIEW POLICY: Ongoing • SOURCE WATER • RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT • ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION • LONG TERM SEWER STRATEGY • MUNICIPAL PLAN: Six MPS Review
<p><u>ADVOCACY</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communication Tower: Installation (BNS)</i> • <i>Communication Towers: Dead Zones (BNS)</i> • <i>ATV Corridors: Map (ATV Club)</i> 	<p><u>PARTNERS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Housing Needs: Status (AAHS)</i> • <i>PFN Collaboration: Meeting</i> • <i>Shelter Providers: Forum</i>
Guiding Principles	
<p>Maximize Community Engagement & Communication Ensure Fiscal Responsibility & Sustainability Realize Collaboration with Town</p>	<p>Pursue Partnerships with Local & External Organizations Enhance Livable Community Opportunities Preserve an Accessible, Inclusive & Safe Place to Live</p>
Strategic Themes	
RELIABLE UTILITIES - INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY- COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS – STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP	
OPERATIONAL INITIATIVES	
<p><u>CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TOWN/COUNTY UTILITY 2. HOUSING: HAF Action Plan Review 3. Town/County Relations: Ongoing /Bi-weekly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bylaw Enforcement Proposal 	<p><u>COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accessibility Plan: Review 2. Equity/Anti-Racism: Action Plan 3. Net Zero: Building Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Resilience Plan (HAF initiative) • Source Water Planning & Protection: (HAF initiative)
<p><u>FINANCE</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5 YEAR CAPITAL PLAN 2. 2026-27 BUDGET <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Rate Study • 2025 -2026 Audit 	<p><u>PUBLIC WORKS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. County Water I & I: Ongoing 2. Source Water: (HAF initiative) 3. EPR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management
<p><u>ADMINISTRATION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. BOUNDARY REVIEW 2. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POLICY REVIEW POLICY • Gateway Signage • Tourism Strategy 	<p><u>COMMUNITY PLANNING</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eastern Antigonish MPS 2. Density Review: (HAF initiative) 3. MUNICIPAL PLAN: Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subdivision Bylaw: Scope
<p><u>RECREATION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION 2. Recreation Management Software 3. Mini-Pitch Phase II: Accessible Washrooms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RECREATION NEED ASSESSMENT: RFP Community Use of Schools & Facility Allocation Policy 	
<p><u>CODES:</u> BOLD CAPITALS = NOW PRIORITIES; CAPITALS = NEXT Priorities; Italics = Advocacy; Regular Title Case = Operational Strategies</p>	

NOW

Town/County Utility

The Municipality was successful in receiving \$50,000 grant from the PCAP (Provincial Capital Assistance Program) to go towards work related to Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) in the sanitary sewer. Municipal Council also budgeted \$50,000 for I&I work to be conducted. This work will continue into next year and has been approved by the province to carry over the funding. This will take large strides in addressing the I&I and will help bring back some physical capacity to the Town's Sewer Treatment Plant.

The County has also committed \$900,000 toward the upgrades to the Town Sewer Treatment Plant. The update on that project is as follows:

- \$5.4M overall project, provincially funded at 50%, remainder cost shared between Town and County as per agreements.
- Project is to install a new front-end screening system at the plant, to bring it to the same standard as the rest of the province. In addition, new front-end aeration and provision for future upgrades (bypass, etc) are being built into the work.
- Tendered and installed new aeration chains with triple capacity of the old units.
- Next Step: Tender building construction, obtain permits (NSDOE)

Source Water – Town Engineer updated Joint Council that the test well drilling that was completed in December 2025 was successful and the yields were larger than expected. The final report from the consultants is due at the end of February and will determine next steps.

Intermunicipal Sewer Agreement

- Contract awarded to RVA in partnership with BioMaxx Environmental
- Scope:
 - Sewage flow monitoring across Town / County common sanitary system
 - Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) assessment
 - Expanded to include manhole survey
- Schedule:
 - Flow monitors were installed in early October and have been collecting data. We are expecting an interim report in April.
- Next Steps:
 - Data Collection and Analysis
 - Ongoing analysis and reporting to support system planning and Intermunicipal Agreement update.

5 Year Capital Plan

Staff held a planning session on October 1, 2025, to work on identifying capital priorities in the short, medium and long term. The 5-year capital plan was presented at the last Asset Management Meeting on January 28, 2026. The plan was reviewed by Shirlyn, Daryl and Allison prior to its presentation to Council.

Next Steps:

- Finalize the F26/27 capital project list for inclusion in the upcoming budget during the next Asset Management meetings.
- Continue reviewing and adjusting the remaining four years of the five-year capital plan at each monthly Asset Management meeting, as required. Updates will reflect evolving infrastructure priorities, legislative requirements, local improvement requests, funding opportunities, and the outcomes of grant applications.
- **Note:** The 5-year capital asset plan is a living document and should be reviewed and evaluated as a point-in-time plan, recognizing that municipal needs, expectations, and external factors may change and require timely adjustments.

Boundary Review

In 2025, staff, under Council's direction, completed a review of municipal electoral district boundaries using 2024 election voter data. Adjustments were made to balance the number of electors across districts while respecting community connections. The process included Council presentations, individual meetings with Councillors, and public open houses held between October 20 and November 10. Following a summary of public feedback and proposed revisions, Council approved the final boundary map on December 9, 2025.

The approved map was submitted to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) on December 16, 2025. On February 4, 2026, the Board scheduled a hearing for June 3, 2026, to be held in Council Chambers at the Municipal Office (285 Beech Hill Road). Public notice of the hearing is being published in The Casket, Guysborough Journal, and The Reporter. Staff are also posting the notice on the municipal website and social media channels, and making the application available for public review at the Municipal Office.

Next Steps: NSUARB Hearing scheduled for June 3, 2026.

Communication Strategy

Council approved the Communications Strategy, implementation plan, and Social Media Guidelines in November 2025. Staff are working with Simply Ducky on the development of a new municipal website. The updated site will improve accessibility, enhance user experience, and provide more timely and centralized access to municipal information and services.

Next Steps:

- Confirm departmental representatives for the Communications Committee to support coordinated information sharing and content development.
- Begin collecting email addresses to support the launch of a bi-monthly municipal e-newsletter (target launch: Fall 2026).

Housing

Housing Forum

- Held on **Thursday, November 13, 2025** the Housing Forum brought together government members and agencies and organizations within the housing sector. The purpose of the forum was to educate Council on the roles, responsibilities, and challenges faced by housing partners, strengthen collaboration, and support informed decision-making to address housing needs within the Municipality. This project is considered complete.

Housing accelerator Fund (HAF): HAF Action Plan

- Council will receive an update on the County's HAF initiatives from Denise Dunn, Town and County's HAF Coordinator.

NEXT

Policy Review

Following discussion after the Strategic Priorities update in September 2025, staff developed a new Policy Review Policy. The policy was reviewed by Senior Leadership and approved by Council on December 9, 2025.

In accordance with the new policy, Senior Leadership has established a plan to review all existing Council policies. As part of this process, the Policy Regarding the Handling of Tire Fluff was recommended for repeal and was officially repealed by Council on January 28, 2026.

Next Steps: Senior staff continues to meet on a regular basis to review policies, with work currently underway to review Policy 5 – the Human Resources Administrative Manual for Employees.

Source Water

Council will receive an update on the County's HAF initiatives from Denise Dunn, Town and County's HAF Coordinator.

Recreation Needs Assessment

In partnership with the Town of Antigonish, the Rec Needs Assessment engagement activities will soon be launched, including public and organizational surveys, public engagement sessions, focus groups and stakeholder interviews and pop-up engagements at community events.

Next Steps: The public survey is expected to launch February 20 and will remain open until late March. Engagement sessions will take place in March.

Active Transportation

- **Church Street Round About:** Construction of the Church St. Roundabout was completed in December 2025. The next stages of the project which is the construction of a multi-use path between Church St. and Beech Hill roundabouts as well the replacement of the bridge will begin this spring.
- **Phase 4 of the AT Corridor:** (James St. to Addington Forks) construction designs are nearly complete.
- **Florence Circle Connector:** An RFQ is being developed which will seek consultants to provide a design for the construction of a MUP in the area.
- Signage and enhancements to the AT Corridor and other areas continue. We are currently creating a “family” of signs to be manufactured and installed along the Corridor.

Long Term Sewer Strategy

Staff are working on the feasibility for a County owned Sewer Treatment Plant. Discussion is ongoing with Strait Engineering and the next meeting is scheduled for early March.

Municipal Plan Review

EDPC staff has prepared presentations for each of the Antigonish Plan Areas and will be presented to Council.

Update: Still to be scheduled.

ADVOCACY

Cellular Update

On January 5, 2026, Municipal Council met with representatives from Build Nova Scotia and provincial officials to receive updates and discuss residents’ concerns regarding cellular service across Antigonish County. Build NS confirmed that Antigonish is scheduled to get three new towers, one in Arisaig, Malignant Cove and North Lochaber. The construction of these towers is scheduled to begin in Fall 2026.

Build NS also confirmed that the Phase 2 is still in procurement. This phase will expand coverage in unserved areas by adding cellular infrastructure to the 27 new towers and constructing additional carrier-owned towers. Staff followed up the meeting with a letter requesting that Eastern Antigonish be considered for Phase 2.

ATV Corridors

Received Road/Trail Policy and Application Form from Department of Natural Resources. Prepared to support in case of inquiries. **(Ongoing)**

Additional Updates on Operational Initiatives

These initiatives, not listed under Now, Next and Advocacy, are listed under Operational Initiatives and should be included, as there are updates to report.

Town & County Relations

Town and County CAO's have been meeting regularly and keeping lines of communication open in regards to joint projects and initiatives.

By-law Enforcement Proposal

Work is underway to examine the opportunities available to address by-law enforcement needs for the municipality. This exercise is being combined with a review of the Noise By-law, which staff was directed by Council to review earlier in the fall of 2025. A preliminary discussion was held at the Committee of the Whole on January 28, 2026. The draft Noise By-law is currently undergoing internal review.

Next Steps:

- Staff consulting with various parties regarding options for by-law enforcement (Feb 2026)
- Conclude internal review of Noise By-law and present preliminary draft to Committee of the Whole (Feb 2026).

Accessibility Plan Review

Staff is currently developing MCA specific guidelines for Accessibility based on Universal design and provincial standards. An example will be available on Councillors desks for review.

Continuing to work on plain language applications to policies and public documents. Supporting website redesign and comms as needed for accessibility.

Equity/Anti-Racism: Action Plan

Staff is developing an implementation plan for the Nalikitquniejik Antigonish Equity, Anti-hate, Anti-racism Plan by meeting with Town staff to identify areas to work together for 2026-27.

Next steps: Interest and Priority engagement survey coming out to all of Council and staff Friday February 20th, 2026.

ICIP Net Zero Community Building Project

In its final administrative and support phase, staff is currently meeting with community representatives to troubleshoot production and reconciliation challenges with NSP.

Next steps: Develop a support, educational and maintenance program for 2026-2028 for centres regarding energy management.

Source Water Protection

Source Water Protection Plans are being reviewed and updated, this exercise is ongoing, but a complete review will be completed by fall 2026 to ensure compliance. Community education via mail outs, posts and community pop ups coming late spring early summer. This engagement is to ensure community members are thinking about how to preserve and conserve our water sources.

2025-26 Audit

Presented and Approved by Council on January 13, 2026.

Water Rate Study

Finding a consultant to conduct a water rate study was a challenge. Documents are being prepared to send to the consultant. There is no time-line available at this point in time as the consultant could not provide one. Water capital needs will need to be determined for the water rate study (if water capital is to be included in the rates).

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

The program launched December 1, 2025 and, following some initial transition challenges, is now operating more smoothly. Staff have adapted to the reporting requirements and the first reimbursement for December has been received.

The Waste Sorting Guide was mailed out County-wide outlining permitted blue bag materials and depot items. Staff continue to work with Eastern Region Solid Waste Management to ensure consistent messaging, including operator training and public outreach sessions. Social media and radio advertising are also supporting public awareness and education efforts. ERSWM regional coordinator and educator went to the Farmers Market twice to engage with residents.

Gateway Signage

Signage will be installed after the ground thaws.

Tourism Strategy

Lynne Delorey has been hired by the Antigonish Tourism Association (ATA) as its inaugural Director of Tourism. She began her role on January 5, 2026, and is expected to present to Council this spring.

Asset Management Program:

With funding support from the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF), the municipal asset inventory continues to be updated and refined. The program was approved by Council in 2026.

Next Steps:

- A workshop for Council on lifecycle analysis and climate lens asset management is being developed and is anticipated for March 2026 (date to be confirmed).
- Staff are also awaiting an update from the Province on the beta release of IRMA, which is currently expected in late spring or early summer. Once released, Council will participate in a session to explore the program and review the associated maps and data to further build familiarity with municipal and community assets.

Recreation Management Software

Following and procurement process the County & Town awarded the contract for the provision of a recreation management software to PlayFinder Inc. An introductory letter and flyer will be sent the week of February 16 to community organizations and centres offering them free access to PlayFinder. The PlayFinder platform will give organizations access to practical tools to manage program registration, online payments, facility and equipment bookings, scheduling and communication, and real-time insights to support planning and growth.

Mini-Pitch Washroom Facilities

Following a procurement process for the construction of an accessible washroom at the Antigonish Scotiabank Mini-Pitch facility, three proposals were received. The review process is ongoing and expected to be completed by February 24th.