

Committee of the Whole Meeting
Thursday, January 23rd, 2025
9:30 am
Council Chambers

MINUTES

Council: Warden Bonny MacIsaac
Deputy Warden Lynn Chisholm
Councillor Claude Poirier
Councillor John MacLennan
Councillor Blair Phillips
Councillor Catherine Gillis

Staff: Keith MacDonald, CAO
Melanie Beaton, Deputy CAO
Brian Luciano, CFO
Jason Calder, Acting Manager of Recreation and Community Wellness
Morgan Murray, Director of Culture and Community Development
Erin Gillis, Chief of Operations
Chestley Carr, Director of Public Works
Debbie Nicholson, Administrative Assistant to Council/ CAO
Lauren MacDonnell, Director of Engineering & Planning
Jessica Grande, GIS Technician
Crystal Jones, Director of Solid Waste

1. CALL TO ORDER

Warden MacIsaac called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and welcomed all in attendance. Roll call was taken.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Warden MacIsaac acknowledged that the land on which we gather is located in the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: *That the agenda be approved as amended. Agenda item number 6. Community Grant Applications, North Mountain Cultural and Recreation Association will be added as the third application.*

MOVED BY: Councillor Gillis

SECONDED BY: Councillor Poirier
MOTION CARRIED

4. STAFF REPORTS

(a) Chestley Carr, Public Works

With the onset of winter weather Public Works staff have been busy with snow removal, ensuring that sidewalks and facilities are salted and sanded in Port Hood, Judique and Inverness seven days a week. Contractors have been busy as well, ensuring snow clearing is kept up in Port Hastings, Whycomomagh, Mabou and Cheticamp. Staff have been working closely with Hilltop electric to complete necessary lighting repairs throughout the municipality. Scheduled inspections are ongoing. There have been 4 repairs completed to the water distribution system in Inverness this month. All water towers have been maintaining a good level to meet the capacity for the needs of each community.

Sampling activities aimed at ensuring the municipality adheres to its operational approvals have been successfully carried out, and no instances of exceedances have been detected. Staff assisted the finance department with water utility service connects/disconnects and finding water shut off locations. Staff also assisted the Capital Projects and Planning team in reviewing water/wastewater service requests to determine the capacity of serviced communities.

Public Works staff continue to monitor hydrants through out the winter and re-winterize when required. Inspections will start again in the springtime ensuring all are in good functioning order. Public Works staff continue inspections on the lift stations in each community to assess if any repair work is required to ensure all mechanical parts are functioning properly. SCADA radios in the Port Hastings lift stations are being updated, this will ensure consistent communication and remote monitoring. New eyewash stations have been installed at all facilities that handle chemicals for treatment. This will ensure the health and safety of all municipal staff working in these environments.

Speed statistics collected from December 1st to 31st in Margaree Forks and Chéticamp were provided.

Ongoing projects include lift station control panel replacements in Port Hastings and Mabou, control system upgrades in Port Hood and filter head replacements at the Mabou Water Treatment Plant

(b) Erin Gillis, Operations Department

Winter road conditions have made it challenging to complete weekly solid waste collections. With these challenges so close to the holiday collection delays compounded resident frustration. Staff met with GFL to review holiday collection and identified areas for improvements in scheduling and communication.

The expansion and replacement of two of the three Kenloch Transfer station garage doors is complete. New scale software will be implemented and electrical work for the equipment building project is complete. On December 19th, 2024, NSECC representatives were on-site to

conduct an audit of the facility. The audit went well with no non-conformance identified. NSECC expressed verbal support for the site's preliminary development plans.

Solid waste education and communication is ongoing with a focus on how to manage textile waste, proper sorting and disposal of boxboard, blue bag basics, how to manage medical sharps, and an overview of what materials are accepted at each of our facilities.

The bylaw enforcement officer is addressing complaints related to roaming dogs and reviewing dangerous and unsightly properties with the Eastern District Planning Commission. In addition, he is networking with regional bylaw enforcement officers on best practices for document control and the issuance of summary offence tickets.

The community of Meat Cove continues to have regular landline interruptions. With no cell phone service in that area, this can limit access to emergency services when required. Planning for the 2025 provincial EMO exercise has begun with a practice date in May of this year.

Projects currently ongoing include C&D regulatory changes, storage building construction in Kenloch, and review and assessment of the Extended Producer Responsibilities (EPR).

(c) Jason Calder, Department of Recreation and Community Wellness

The Santa for Seniors project was a huge success. The municipality partnered with local schools including Whycomomagh Education Centre, Inverness Education Centre and Academy and Bayview in Port Hood. Through this program students helped create handmade Christmas ornaments and cards, while municipal staff delivered these small gifts to 110 Inverness County seniors. A seniors Christmas Tea was hosted December 19th in Port Hood at the former Haus Treuburg home (Merchant Inn). 40 older adults gathered to socialize before the holidays.

Department staff met with Lynn Levatte from Cape Breton University and was interviewed for a research project. This project is related to sport leadership training being offered for rural areas and gaps that could be identified. Staff also supported Nick Phillips in hosting community engagement for a new track and field club in the county. The meeting was well received and it appears that the club will move forward.

Additional meetings continue with staff and partner groups such as KidSport, Ability to Rise, as well as neighboring municipalities and members of the Accessibility Directorate to discuss a more regional approach to creating updated accessibility and anti-racism and equity plans. Staff also met with Bill Culp, the Creative Economy Development Officer with the Cape Breton Partnership and Norma MacKinnon from NS Health to discuss a large scale symposium at Dalbrae Academy this spring.

(d) Melanie Beaton, Deputy CAO

The following projects were updated:

Linear Infrastructure Projects

- Port Hastings Rotary Water and Sanitary Sewer Re-Alignment

- Port Hood Sanitary Main Flushing & CCTV Inspections

Complex Infrastructure Projects

- Whycomomagh Wastewater Treatment Plant and Collection System
- Whycomomagh Effluent Pipe and Outfall
- Inverness Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Inverness Outfall
- Judique Wastewater Treatment Plant & Outfall
- Chéticamp Wellfield Exploration
- Inverness Wellfield Expansion/Exploration
- Judique Dam Rehabilitation
- Water Storage Tank Inspections
- Port Hood Lift Station # 1
- Central Avenue Lift Station Designs

Facilities/Buildings/Roads/Active Transportation

- Jajiktek Seawall Trail
- Active Transportation Planning Whycomomagh
- Strathlorne Keyless Entry Pilot Program

Recreation Facility Development

- Inverness Outdoor Multi-Court Recreation Facility
- Inverness Multi-Court Recreation Facility Amenity Building Design

Compliance

- 2023 Water Utility Corrective Action Plans
- Source Water Protection
- Water & Wastewater 2024 Annual Reporting
- Development & Servicing

Joint Committees, Foundational Documents, and Core Competencies

- Asset Management & Asset Inventory Development
- Sewer Bylaws

(e) Brian Luciano, Finance Department

Draft financial statements for the fiscal year 2023-24 have been presented to the Audit committee and will be advanced to Council for final approval. Department heads have been asked to start compiling information to form the budget for the fiscal year 2025-26.

Updates to water meters continue. Staff are reviewing the final remaining flat rate accounts with about 50 remaining to be converted.

The Eastern District Planning Commission has a letter for short term rental accommodation owners to provide to the province for tourist registration. All requests can be directed to rentals@edpc.ca

Multiple meetings continue regularly such as the finance department team, employee benefits, department heads, the Strait IT board, employee benefits, by-law committee, Diamond Group of 9, municipal fire chiefs, the municipal homes board, and the water utility committee. Staff met with the Communications Director to discuss the communications needs of the finance

department. As well as the Capital Projects team to review the tender for Port Hastings rotary upgrades.

Multiple requests for proposals, requests for quotations and tenders are either open, awarded, or currently being evaluated.

(f) Morgan Murray, Department of Culture and Community Development (CCD)

Over the coming months the CCD team will continue to support community organizations, including fleshing out a more structured program of supports and resources, work towards formalizing and funding a robust population growth plan (including newcomers and youth), and finalize a department workplan for the next fiscal year. Recent department highlights include:

- Youth Engagement Strategy: Conducted youth engagement sessions in multiple communities and partnered with Cape Breton Partnership to begin building a youth workforce and entrepreneurship plan.
- Food Security (Meals on Wheels): Submitting funding applications for a county-wide Meals on Wheels Program, aiming for a launch by April 2025, and creating a business plan for a county-wide food bank program.
- Park Development: Advancing conceptual designs for a new park, resolving land questions, and engaging community committees to support development efforts in Inverness, Port Hood, and SW Margaree.
- Healthcare Recruitment and Retention: Received more than 25 Healthcare Award nominations, finalizing healthcare recruitment materials, planning career fairs, and preparing for a Healthcare Awards gala in late April.

Partnerships continue with various partner organizations including ACAP Cape Breton, Cape Breton University, local school groups, community development and economic development organizations, Cabot Trail 100th anniversary planning, Destination 252, and the Jajiktek Seawall Trail.

Four grants were distributed to municipal organizations through the Community Development Grants initiative. The annual municipal volunteer recognition program will launch in February of this year.

(g) John Bain, Eastern District Planning Commission

Updates were provided to Council on the following initiatives and projects

- Updates
 - a. 2025 – 2026 Operating Estimates
 - b. Plan Eastern Nova – Updates
 - c. Staffing
- Staff Activity
 - a) Inverness County Wind Turbine Policy Review
 - b) Port Hood Cottages – Development Agreement

- c) Private Roads in the Port Hood Plan Area
- d) LaPointe Museum and Gastropub by Development Agreement
- e) LaPointe Rental Cottages by Development Agreement
- f) La Doucet Test Kitchen by Development Agreement
- g) Le Cap Hotel by Development Agreement

(h) Monica Ragan, Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP) Cape Breton

ACAP activities in recent week include:

- Community Clean-up: For Waste Reduction Week, ACAP teamed up with the municipality for a clean-up on October 22 in the community of Melville. The site not only had general litter but was a dumping place for household garbage. 400 kg of waste was collected and an anti-littering sign was installed to deter this behaviour.
- Visit with local school: On December 12 Ms. Ragan visited Bayview School where she met with 10 pre-primary students and presented on the topic of Habitats and Water.
- October 31 working group session with the municipality: Topics covered include ACAP's winter watershed walk, how the summer recreation students can help with events, possible venues for hosting events, educational visits to schools and daycares, and how to reach youth in the county outside of the school system.

Upcoming Event: Winter Watershed Walk. After a successful winter walk with the Chéticamp River Salmon Association last year, it was decided to collaborate on another walk. On Saturday, January 25th at 11:00 am participants will meet at the Chéticamp Visitor Centre for an informative nature walk learning about salmon and trout.

(i) Lynne MacLennan, Cape Breton Partnership

For the period October 1 – December 31, 2024 updates were provided on the following initiatives:

Highlights and Events:

- Investor Summit 2024 – 230 business leaders came together to collaborate and connect.
- Invest in Cape Breton Podcast – episode 6, *An Under Saturated Market for Tourism* was released on October 31.
- Welcoming Spirit Awards - presented at the annual CBLIP Partner Update in November.
- Safety in the Strait Lunch & Learn – held on December 2 in Port Hawkesbury.

Project Updates – Local Economic Development Initiatives:

- Business and Entrepreneur Supports – individualized support for small businesses.

- Mabou Waterfront Development Project – an overview of the proposed development was presented to government departments.
- Investment Readiness Training – session held in December 2024.
- Sustainable Tourism Plan – session held in Chéticamp.
- Unama'ki – Cape Breton Tourism Summit – held on November 12 in Membertou.

Project Updates – Creative Economy:

- Hollywood Executives Tour – to promote Cape Breton as an attractive location for film and television productions.
- Cape Breton Reads – a new TV series featured on Telile TV featuring authors from around the island.
- The ABC's of Oysters TV Series – filming continued into October. The Annex restaurant was a filming location.
- Sea Class Premiere – film screening held in Inverness in November.

Project Updates – Green Energy Engagement Program:

- Offshore Wind Community Information Sessions – held in November with Net Zero Atlantic.
- Offshore Wind Research & Development – forum held recently in Halifax.
- Electricity Sector Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Team – province wide initiative.

Project Updates – People and Labour Market Team:

- Supporting Newcomers, Employers & Community – newcomer welcome event for Dr. Coakley, a doctor who recently relocated to Inverness.
- Welcoming Communities – annual partner update November 8 in Eskasoni.
- Cape Breton Job Board – currently has 44 registered Inverness County employers.
- Work Permit Options – virtual event on November 19 with an immigration lawyer.

Upcoming Events:

- Information Session for Businesses: GST/HST Holiday Tax Break – webinar on January 29.
- Inverness County Coffee and Connect – January 30 at the Inverness Arts Centre.

(j) Laura Emery – Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL)

Current Initiatives:

- Community Wellbeing – Free items are currently available to the public at all Inverness County library locations (diapers, menstrual products, incontinence products, HIV self-test kits). Current direction from Public Health is available at all ECRL locations re: accessing COVID-19 rapid tests.
- Food Security – Progress has been made with partnership development; ECRL has partnered with four local organizations to support food security efforts over the winter holidays. \$4000 was distributed to these organizations to support food hampers, gift cards and food pantries.

- Community Engagement – ATN Consultants were engaged to establish a strategic plan for ECRL. Information received at community engagement sessions will inform the strategic plan as it develops.
- Programming Highlights:
 - Library guild in Cheticamp is offering drop-in sessions on Saturdays; the program will expand to Coady & Tompkins Public Library in January.
 - Fiber artists (knitters, stitchers) convene weekly at the Margaree Forks and Mabou locations.

Monthly usage statistics were provided for the period of September to December 2024 at the Mabou, Margaree Forks, and Cheticamp library locations.

(k) Terry Smith, Destination Cape Breton

Statistics were provided for the following:

- 275,000 web site sessions (+ 23%)
- visitcapebreton.com (+29% compared to 2023)
- visitcapebreton.com clicks to operators (+10% compared to 2023)
- room nights sold (+2% ytd compared to 2023)
- admission to Cape Breton Highlands national park (+5% compared to 2023)

5. PRESENTATION: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Jessica Grande, Lauren MacDonnell

GIS or Geographic Information Systems is technology used to gather, manage, analyze and visualize data. It helps us answer these questions: What do we own and where is it? What is it worth? What condition is it in? What needs to be done and when? Regarding municipal water and wastewater there are currently three steps of gathering information on assets; consulting old drawings, daily logs entered into SiteDocs, and consulting with senior staff. An asset management plan for the municipality will allow for an asset inventory (maps of the infrastructure) as well as a database to track asset attributes (install year, diameter, material, etc.).

6. COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS

- Margaree Area Development Association (MADA) – Margaree Meals on Wheels

The Request of Council is \$10,000.00

Recommendation to grant \$2500.00 to this project with funding coming from District 2 CDC funds. Any future contributions from the municipality towards this project will be revisited after April 1.

- Belle Cote & Area Community Center – Belle Cote Community Beach Access

The Request of Council is \$6,243.32

Recommendation to grant this request in full with funds coming from District 2 CDC funds.

- North Mountain Cultural and Recreation Association – Furnace Replacement
The Request of Council is \$8,984.37

Recommendation to grant this request in full with funds coming from District 6 CDC funds.

7. HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Recommendation that the municipality establish a Heritage Advisory Committee.

8. 2025 HEAVY/BULKY GARBAGE COLLECTION

MOTION: *That Heavy/Bulky garbage be collected during the week of May 12, 2025.*
Moved BY: Councillor Poirier
SECONDED BY: Councillor Phillips
MOTION CARRIED

9. SOLID WASTE COMMITTEE

The Rural Region One Waste Committee is being established consisting of staff and elected officials. It will be the link between rural Cape Breton and the provincial waste committee. The committee will have representatives from Richmond, Victoria, Inverness, and Port Hawkesbury. Warden Bonny MacIsaac has agreed to participate on this committee.

10. MARKETING LEVY ADMINISTRATION

Staff direction to issue correspondence to Destination Cape Breton to administer the Cape Breton Island Marketing Levy on behalf of the Municipality of the County of Inverness.

11. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

An Occupational Health and Safety Policy is being developed by the Municipality. The following first three policies were introduced to Council today. Remaining policies will follow in future Council meeting packages.

- OH & S Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Safe Work Practices Policy

12. CONSOLIDATED AND NON-CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (Brian Luciano)

MOTION: *That the Consolidated and Non-Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ending March 31, 2024 for the municipality be approved as presented.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Phillips
SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis
MOTION CARRIED

13. CORRESPONDENCE

- Eastern District Planning Commission - December 2024 building statistics for the municipality were provided in today's Council package.

14. NEXT MEETING DATE

February 6th, 2025 – 9:30 am; Regular Meeting of Council

15. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: *That Council adjourn at 11:39 am.*
MOVED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
MOTION CARRIED