

Committee of the Whole Meeting
Thursday, April 24th, 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
Chestley Carr, Director of Public Works
Morgan Murray, Director of Culture and Community Development
Erin Gillis, Chief of Operations
Michelle Coffin, Governance and Bylaw Researcher
Debbie Nicholson, Administrative Assistant to Council/CAO
Maggie MacDonald, Accessibility and Senior Safety Coordinator
Megan Wludyka, Chief Communications Officer

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 presented.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Phillips
SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis
MOTION CARRIED

4. STAFF REPORTS

(a) 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). These items are displayed in public washrooms and common areas.
- Food Security – The free seed library will be offered again in 2025, supported by Food Security funding. A variety of vegetable and herb seeds will be made available through this program.
- Programming Highlights:
 - Spring programming – seed library, on-demand programming, take & make crafts.
 - Board Game Club – every Saturday, 2- 4 pm Coady and Tompkins Public Library.
 - Library Guild is offering drop-in sessions on alternate Saturdays starting at 2 pm at the Cheticamp Public Library.
 - Freedom to Read event was held at the Cheticamp Public Library on March 1. Families joined local authors Rejean Aucoin and Kate Beaton as they shared some of their stories. 29 people were in attendance. MLA Kyle MacQuarrie spoke to the importance of supporting local libraries and the freedom to read.
 - Plans are underway for the 2025 Summer Reading Club.
 - The Strategic Plan for the Library will be discussed during the May Board meeting.

Monthly usage statistics were provided for the period of January to March 2025 at the Mabou, Margaree Forks, and Cheticamp library locations.

(b) Chestley Carr, Department of Public Works

Over the past month Public Works crews have diligently detected and repaired multiple water line leaks across three communities. This proactive approach has ensured the continued delivery of essential services and minimized disruptions for residents. This work has not only restored normal water supply but also prevented potential damage to infrastructure and reduced the risk of future leaks. Additional activities of staff include:

- Snow removal – facility clean up and municipal road repairs resulting from snow removal.
- Distribution System – six repairs completed in Inverness, Mabou and Whycomogagh.
- Community standpipes – reminders for residents to report any cases of damage.
- Municipal lighting – ongoing in collaboration with Hilltop Electric.
- Road maintenance – new culvert installation at Forest Street, Inverness. The required patch work will be carried out once the asphalt plant opens for the season.
- Public Works SOPs – the creation of safe work practices and policies is underway in collaboration with Occupational Health and Safety.

Staff assisted the finance department with water utility service connects and disconnects

and finding water shut off locations and assisted the Capital Projects and Planning team in reviewing water/wastewater service requests to determine the capacity and compliance with municipal requirements.

Speed statistics collected from March 1st to 30th in East Margaree, Margaree Forks and Chéticamp were provided.

Ongoing projects include lift station control panel replacements in Port Hood, control system upgrades in Port Hood, lift station control panel replacements in Port Hastings and filter head replacements at the Mabou water treatment plant.

(c) Erin Gillis, Operations Department

The 2025 Spring Bulky garbage collection is scheduled for the week of May 12 – 15. Advertising and promotional materials have been distributed to inform residents. A Residential Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off Event will be held on Thursday, June 5, 2025, at the Judique Firehall and Margaree Forks Firehall, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Members of the solid waste team continue to work with the OHS lead to complete the Occupational Health and Safety training program. Changes to the GFL collection routes took effect on March 3, 2025 resulting in fewer missed collections lately.

Solid waste education initiatives continue with social media postings featuring the tours of the Kenloch and Strathlorne facilities and direction on how to sort waste and litter. For the month of April, the municipality is challenging residents to cleanup litter and fill out a form for a chance to win a \$50 gift card to a local grocery store. Litter bags are being distributed through Library and Canada Post locations. Each litter kit contains garbage bags, gloves, litter cleanup information, Great NS Pick Me Up data cards and bag labels so that litter bags can be placed curbside with regular waste. Staff are working with the Operations department to amend the current Dog Control bylaw, sewer discharges bylaw and enforcement of the new Mobile Vending bylaw.

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

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

The Recreation department is partnering with NS Health, the Strait Regional Centre for Education, and the YMCA on Wellness Day on April 17th at Dalbrae Academy. The theme of the day is mental health and staff will be focusing on the benefits of recreation on mental health. Recreation staff will host two breakout sessions with groups of teens. Staff are working with community partners and Jr. NBA representatives to facilitate 130 youth participants in this youth basketball program to begin on April 6th.

The equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility survey closed at the end of March. 45 responses were collected from committee members. Staff members will be hosting an Open House in Inverness to gather additional feedback.

Staff facilitated an Age Well Session at the Whycomomagh Waterfront Centre on Bone Health and a presentation from the Alzheimer's Society of Nova Scotia.

Ongoing projects include the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, Age Well services, Seniors Programming, Volunteer Timebank, Jr. NBA, get Active Summer Programming, Ball Hockey, Girls Spring Volleyball Clinic, Ultimate Frisbee, and Blue Jays Care.

Meetings continue both with internal and external partners such as Inclusion NS, Jr. NBA and local teachers, NS Health, Triathlon NS, MPAL, OHVIF (Off Highway Vehicle Infrastructure Fund Committee) and Canadian Sport Institute Atlantic.

(e) Melanie Beaton, Deputy CAO

The following projects were updated:

Complex Infrastructure Projects

- Whycocomagh Wastewater Treatment Plant and Collection System
- Whycocomagh Effluent Pipe and Outfall
- Inverness Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Inverness Outfall
- Port Hood Outfall
- Chéticamp Digester Walkway Replacement
- Mabou Wellfield Pump Testing and Wellfield Expansion
- Chéticamp Wellfield Exploration
- Inverness Wellfield Expansion/Exploration
- Judique Dam Rehabilitation
- Water Storage Tank Inspections
- Port Hood Lift Station # 1
- Central Avenue Lift Station Designs
- Port Hood and Chéticamp Lift Station Replacements

Linear Infrastructure Projects

- Central Avenue Water & Wastewater Replacement

Facilities/Buildings/Roads/Active Transportation

- Jajikte Seawall Trail
- Central Avenue Complete Streets
- Active Transportation Planning Whycocomagh
- Foyer Père Fiset
- Cheticamp Pedestrian Lighting
- Inverness Park
- Port Hood Park
- Destination 252 Signage Plan
- Multi-Court Recreation Facility

Compliance

- Water & Wastewater 2024 Annual Reporting

Planning and Development

- Development & Servicing

Joint Committees, Foundational Documents, and Core Competencies

- Asset Management & Asset Inventory Development
- Fleet Management Committee
- Sewer Discharge Bylaw

(f) Brian Luciano, Finance Department

Budget planning for the upcoming fiscal year is underway. Draft versions are being reviewed by departments heads, with the CAO, CFO and HR compiling the HR budget components.

A blanket insurance program is now in place for the volunteer fire departments in the municipality as of April 1st, 2025. Three remaining departments are still not committed and are expected to join in May 2025.

Account collections continue with regular contact with delinquent accounts. A draft credit card policy has been circulated for administration's review. The policy is to be presented to Council in the coming months. Staff are preparing for the spring tax sale on May 27th. 46 properties are presently listed for sale.

The Water Utility is assisting Capital Planning and Projects (CP&P) in mapping water utility standpipes across the county. Staff will add additional account details for asset management. Finance has begun investigating the feasibility and process required to implement a Road Association Levy. Information regarding by-law and process was received from Kings County.

Multiple meetings continue regularly such as the finance department team, employee benefits, department heads, the Literacy Council, Municipal Homes Board, the Strait IT board, We'koqma'q First Nation and the municipal audit committee.

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

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

Over the coming months the CCD team will continue to support community organizations, 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:

- As part of the Cabot Trail 100th Anniversary project, cross-cultural Mi'kmaq training was completed with Robert Bernard and Graham Marshall.
- Inverness County Excellence in Healthcare Awards - April 23rd in Chéticamp.
- Funding was secured for an expanded transportation plan. Service provider meetings have kicked off the process, with stakeholder engagement sessions coming soon.
- The revamped Heritage Advisory Committee met and applications have been received from the public for membership.
- The Culture & Community Development's newsletter for community organizations has been distributed.

Partnerships continue with various partner organizations including Destination Cape Breton, Cape Breton University, local school groups, Inverness County Literacy Association,

community development and economic development organizations, food security initiatives, childcare options, summer festival support, housing initiatives, youth retention and heritage property registry maintenance.

Nine grants were distributed to municipal organizations through the Community Development Grants initiative.

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

Recent Community Environmental Outreach activities:

- Pre-primary classroom visits (January 15 and February 19). The sessions focused on water and habitats. The water session introduced students to the three states that water can take (liquid, solid, and gas), how we use water, and where we can find it. The habitat session detailed what animals need to survive (food, water, shelter, and space), and students helped construct habitats as an activity.
- Winter Watershed Walk – This session was led by René Aucoin of the Chéticamp River Salmon Association.

The ACAP Education Team has been working over the winter to create new school programming focused on source water. Currently, there are new presentations for grades pre-primary to grade 8 with plans to introduce these to schools in late May/ early June.

Activities to celebrate Earth Month:

- Three school visits are planned:
 - Inverness Education Centre/ Academy (April 22 and 24)
 - We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School (April 23)
 - Cape Breton Highlands Education Centre/ Academy (April 25)
- Community Clean-ups
 - April 22 in Port Hood
 - April 26 in Chéticamp

(i) Lynne MacLennan, Cape Breton Partnership

For the period January 1 – March 31, 2025 updates were provided on the following initiatives:

Highlights and Events:

- GST/HST tax break information session for businesses webinar – January 29.
- Response to Tariffs – latest updates: <https://capebretonpartnership.com/statement-on-the-us-tariff-response/>.

Project Updates- Local Economic Development Initiatives:

- Business and Entrepreneur Supports – individualized support for small businesses.
- Winning Strategies for Financing Webinar.

- Women in Business Networking event – March 17 in Port Hawkesbury.
- Unama’ki - Cape Breton Business Insights Program – launched April 1.

Project Updates – Creative Economy:

- Future in Film Information Series – March 25-27 in communities across Cape Breton.
- Future in Film Program – launched in February to connect residents with the film industry.
- Creative Careers Symposium – introducing County High School students to the industry.

Project Updates – Green Energy Engagement Program:

- Green Future Summit – Pictou County, March 31.
- Net Zero Atlantic Ports Study – potential in offshore wind development.
- Development of Ocean Technical Capacity with African Nations.

Project Updates – People and Labour Market Team:

- Coffee & Connect – networking opportunity for longtime residents and recent newcomers.
- Welcoming and Inclusive Communities – fostered by the Cape Breton local Immigration Partnership.

Upcoming Events and Activities:

- Unama’ki – Cape Breton Job Fair Series – a Job Fair Series to be held during April 2025.
- Safety First Symposium – May 14 in Membertou.
- Mukk Nqa’Itultuk: Community Connections Symposium – May 22 and 23. This event will bring together Economic Development Officers, Indigenous Employment Officers and Industry partners in Nova Scotia to connect, share ideas, and explore the opportunities in procurement, energy, and tourism.

(j) Terry Smith, Destination Cape Breton

Recent Highlights:

- Marketing Levy- Four of the five municipalities have given DCB the authority to manage the levy in terms of compliance. A new levy education manager will be contracted to facilitate this process for tourism providers.
- Tourism Forecast 2025- Strong economic headwinds from inflation and higher interest rates will continue to impact disposable incomes in 2025
- Visitations to cbisland.com were provided (5 year trend)
- Room nights sold/ tourism revenues were provided (5 and 10 year trend)
- 2024 – 2027 Goals: brand enhancement, shoulder seasons, increase average length of stay, increase average visitor spend, elevate the quality of the visitor experience, become recognized as a truly sustainable and inclusive destination.

(k) John Bain, Eastern District Planning Commission (no quarterly report provided)

Direction to staff to send a reminder to the Eastern District Planning Commission stressing the importance of the quarterly updates to Municipal Council.

5. 2025 EASTERN DISTRICT PLANNING COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

MOTION: *That the following appointments are made immediately replacing all previous appointments of the Eastern District Planning Commission:*

Building Inspection:

Building Inspector: Luke Ross, Andre Samson and Sean Donovan

Assistant Building Inspector: Todd Samson

Alternates: David MacKenzie and Jonathan Martin

Development Officer: Brendan MacDonald

Alternates: John Bain; Andrew Jones; Kristen Scanlan and Mikayla Tait.

Assistant Development Officers: Heike Bruckner, Luke Ross, David MacKenzie and Andre Samson

Fire Inspectors: Andre Samson and Sean Donovan

Alternates: David MacKenzie; Todd Samson; Jonathan Martin and Luke Ross

Dangerous and Unsightly Premises:

Administrator: Sean Donovan and John Bain

Alternate: Luke Ross, David MacKenzie, Todd Samson and Andre Samson

Special Constables: Building/Fire Codes, Dangerous or Unsightly Premises, Land Use By-laws

Sean Donovan and Jonathan Martin

MOVED BY: Councillor Gillis

SECONDED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm

MOTION CARRIED

6. CLEAN FOUNDATION CONTRACT RENEWAL FOR THE PACE PROGRAM

MOTION: *That Council appoint the Clean Foundation to administer the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program for the Municipality for one year, ending March 31, 2026.*

MOVED BY: Councillor Gillis

SECONDED BY: Councillor Poirier

MOTION CARRIED

7. DEBENTURE APPROVAL

MOTION: *That the Municipality borrow by the issue and sale of debentures a sum or sums not exceeding \$525,967.00 for a period not to exceed 5 years, subject to the approval of the Minister.*

MOVED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm

SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis

MOTION CARRIED

8. RECOMMENDATIONS (MARCH 6 2025 PLANNING AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING)

MOTION: *That Council approve the Development Agreement application by Charlamara Holdings Inc. for a museum and restaurant at 759 Chéticamp Island Road, Chéticamp Island (PID 50168384).*

MOVED BY: Councillor Gillis

SECONDED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *That Council approve the Development Agreement application from Charlamara Holdings Inc. for up to twelve (12) rental cottages at Chéticamp Island Road, Chéticamp (PIDs 50350693, 50350685, and 50350677).*

MOVED BY: Councillor Poirier

SECONDED BY: Councillor Phillips

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *That Council approve the Development agreement application by Charlamara Holdings Inc. for a test kitchen at 13716 Cabot Trail, Point Cross, Inverness County, NS (PID 50089655).*

MOVED BY: Councillor Phillips

SECONDED BY: Councillor Poirier

MOTION CARRIED

9. EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY (Maggie MacDonald)

The Nova Scotia *Accessibility Act* was passed in 2017. Municipalities were prescribed under the Act as public sector bodies and required to develop Accessibility Plans. The Municipality of the County of Inverness passed the Municipal Accessibility Plan in 2022. Achievements to date include accessibility renovations to the Port Hood administration building, an adaptive equipment loan program, and the creation of a Sensory Loan Program.

Council appointed members of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Team (DIAT) to advise on barriers and challenges equity-seeking groups face within the County. Together, the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Diversity and Inclusion Action Team created the first municipal EDIA Strategy. The strategy was created by engagement with community groups, first-voice committee members, and a public survey.

10. RESOLUTION – MIP (MUNICIPAL INNOVATION PROGRAM) (read by Councillor Gillis)

WHEREAS the Municipality of the County of Inverness and the Municipality of the County of Victoria have identified the need to enhance curbside waste collection services through a collaborative approach;

***AND WHEREAS** the Municipal Innovation Program (MIP) offers funding to support regional collaboration and service delivery improvements;*

***AND WHEREAS** both municipalities have agreed to jointly apply for MIP funding to support regional collaboration that will create efficiencies and improve service delivery across both municipalities;*

***BE IT RESOLVED** that the Municipality of the County of Inverness Council hereby authorizes the submission of an application for the Municipal Innovation Program to fund the collaborative delivery of waste collection services between the Municipality of the County of Inverness and the Municipality of the County of Victoria;*

***AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Municipality of the County of Inverness Council commits to participating in the project, including providing necessary financial resources and support for implementation, in accordance with the guidelines set out in the MIP;*

***FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Municipality of the County of Inverness Council agrees to the formation of a joint working group with the Municipality of the County of Victoria to manage and oversee the planning, procurement, and implementation phases of the project.*

11. INVERNESS COUNTY HEALTH CARE AWARDS

The Municipality of Inverness County proudly celebrated the outstanding contributions of local healthcare professionals at the first annual Awards for Excellence in Healthcare, held at a gala event at the Canton Culturel de Chéticamp on April 23.

The 2025 Award Recipients are:

- **Dr. Raymond Lok**, Outstanding Physician
- **Mary Anderson**, Outstanding Nurse Practitioner
- **Yvon Pino**, Outstanding Allied Health Professional
- **Edith Anne MacKay**, Outstanding Nurse
- **Lori Ann Gillis**, Outstanding Palliative Care Professional
- **Graham Patrick McIsaac**, Outstanding Young Healthcare Professional
- **Inverness Cancer Care Clinic**, Outstanding Collaborative Care Team

Special Leadership Recognition:

In addition to the individual and team awards, two special honours were presented to recognize exceptional leadership in healthcare:

- **Heather Gillis**, Site Lead at Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital
- **Johanne Doucet**, Site Lead at Sacred Heart Community Health Centre

Both were celebrated for their dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to patient care.

12. J CLASS ROADS

MOTION: *That Council accept the following project and cost estimate for the J Class Roads cost shared program for fiscal 2025-26: Maple Drive from Marble Mountain Road. to Orangedale Road., repaving .309 km.
Total Cost Estimate = \$165,000.00. Cost Share estimate = \$82,500.00*

MOVED BY: Councillor MacLennan

SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis

MOTION CARRIED

Warden MacIsaac raised a Point of Order to Councillor MacLennan.

13. CORRESPONDENCE

- Building Statistics for the month of March 2025 were provided by the Eastern District Planning Commission.
- Notice of provincial legislation, regulation, or administrative actions that could have the effect of decreasing revenues or increasing the required expenditures of municipalities was provided by the Department of Municipal Affairs.
- A reminder for elected officials who have not yet completed the mandatory *Code of Conduct Online Module* was issued from the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.
- The Departments of Emergency Management issued correspondence regarding an upcoming governance review of fire services in Nova Scotia.

14. NOTICES OF MOTION

Proposed amendments to the following bylaws and policy will be introduced to Council at future meetings:

- Solid Waste bylaw
- Sewer Discharge Bylaw
- Dog Control Bylaw
- Heritage Property Bylaw
- Diversity and Inclusion Action Team Policy

15. CELLULAR NETWORK ACCESS COVERAGE MAP & FEEDBACK SURVEY

The Cellular for Nova Scotia Program Network Map link and survey were provided to Council:
Map: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e30e55b9506f42c28191b13f29e60974/>
Survey: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/2c3d36eca3f94562ba7977016f27bfc2?portalUrl=https://NSLI.maps.arcgis.com>

16. NEXT MEETING DATE

May 8th, 2025 – 9:30 am; Regular Meeting of Council

17. IN CAMERA

MOTION: *That Council move to “In Camera” at 12:04 pm to discuss two land issues.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Poirier
SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *That Council move out of “In Camera” at 12:07 pm.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Phillips
SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis
MOTION CARRIED

18. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: *That Council adjourn at 12:07 pm.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Poirier
MOTION CARRIED