

Committee of the Whole Meeting
Thursday, January 22nd, 2026
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
Erin Gillis, Chief of Operations
Morgan Murray, Director of Culture and Community Development
Christina MacDonell, Director of Finance
Debbie Nicholson, Administrative Assistant to Council/CAO
Megan Wludyka, Chief of Communications
Emery Ferraro, Trails Coordinator
Michelle Coffin, Governance and Bylaw Researcher (online)

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 on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: *That the agenda be approved as presented.*
MOVED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
SECONDED BY: Councillor Poirier
MOTION CARRIED

4. RECOGNITIONS

Warden MacIsaac read the following:

Snowmobiling Excellence Recognition:

WHEREAS, organized snowmobiling plays an important role in recreation, tourism, and community connection within our region; and

WHEREAS, the Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia annually recognizes outstanding individuals who demonstrate exceptional dedication, leadership, and stewardship of snowmobile trails; and

WHEREAS, the 2025 President's Award has been awarded to David MacLean in recognition of nearly forty years of involvement in organized snowmobiling and an unwavering commitment to trail excellence; and

WHEREAS, David consistently goes above and beyond to ensure snowmobile trails are safe, smooth, and enjoyable for all riders, often working early mornings, late nights, and in challenging weather conditions alongside his wife Barbara; and

WHEREAS, through his attention to detail, engagement with others, and ability to identify and correct trail hazards, David has helped set the high standard of trail quality enjoyed by riders each season and serves as a true ambassador for snowmobiling; and

WHEREAS, youth involvement is vital to the future of snowmobiling, and Ethan Gillis, a ten-year-old member of the Inverness Capers Snowmobile Club, has been awarded the 2025 Youth Snowmobiler of the Year Award for exemplifying enthusiasm, safety, and sportsmanship in the sport; and

WHEREAS, Ethan has been snowmobiling since the age of two, actively participates in club meetings and events, assists with fundraising initiatives, and supports both his local club and the Nova Scotia Youth Snowmobilers; and

WHEREAS, Ethan demonstrates respect for the trails and the environment, encourages others to experience snowmobiling, and shares his passion through stories and writing with classmates and friends, recognizing that snowmobiling is about community, memories, and friendships;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that the Warden and Council on behalf of the Municipality of the County of Inverness hereby recognizes and congratulates David MacLean, recipient of the 2025 Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia's President's Award, and Ethan Gillis, recipient of the 2025 Young Snowmobiler Award for their outstanding contributions to snowmobiling, community spirit, and trail stewardship.

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED, that Council extends its appreciation and best wishes to both recipients and thanks them for their dedication to promoting safe, responsible, and enjoyable snowmobiling for present and future generations.

Ethan Gillis was in attendance and was presented with a certificate of congratulations from Warden MacIsaac.

Exemplary Service Medal Recognition:

WHEREAS, on October 21, 2025, thirty-one paramedics were awarded the Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal in Halifax, Nova Scotia; and

WHEREAS, recipients of this national honour have dedicated their careers to providing care to individuals in their time of greatest need, often at personal risk; and

WHEREAS, the Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal recognizes long-standing dedication to the health, safety, and well-being of Nova Scotians; and

WHEREAS, Emergency Medical Services professionals may be nominated for this medal by their peers or members of the public and must demonstrate exemplary service over a minimum of twenty years, including at least ten years in an emergency medical services role involving risk; and

WHEREAS, the Warden and Council on behalf of the Municipality of the County of Inverness is proud to recognize Mike Gillis of East Lake Ainslie, who was a recipient of the Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Municipality hereby extends its sincere gratitude and congratulations to Mike Gillis for his many years of dedicated and exemplary service to the residents of our municipality and the Province of Nova Scotia.

Mike Gillis was in attendance and was presented with a certificate of congratulations from Warden MacIsaac.

5. STAFF REPORTS

(a) Chestley Carr, Public Works

Recent Initiatives/Accomplishments:

- The Convent St., Port Hood water treatment plant leaking valve was repaired.
- The Inverness Central Ave. sewer main blockage caused by flushable wipes was resolved.
- Staff continue to perform snow maintenance on roadway and pedestrian areas.
- The Mabou water production well # 2 – further study is required in order to be useable.
- Corrective actions are underway at the Port Hood Convent St. water treatment plant and the Inverness wastewater treatment plant as the result of recent audits.
- The originally leased backhoe has been fully repaired and inspected and is ready for use.
- Department staff continue to carry out routine maintenance and cleaning and inspections across all municipal facilities and equipment to ensure efficiency and minimize disruptions.
- Public works staff have completed seasonal hydrant winterization to ensure reliable operation through the colder months.

- Solid waste pickup at We'koqma'q continues in partnership with Operations.
- Decorative streetlight repairs continue with the assistance of a contractor.

(b) Erin Gillis, Operations

Major Projects and Initiatives:

- Curbside Collection Route Review – creating a master list of curbside collection stops.
- Solid waste efficiency plans – diversion bins and Point of Sale (POS) system at Kenloch Transfer Station.
- Staff completed training on Extended Producer Responsibility regulations.
- Planning is underway for 2026 Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP) community clean up initiatives.
- Solid Waste Education continues with the waste wizard app and sort guides.
- Training programs completed include skid steer and sidewalk machine, as well as fit testing and respiratory protection.
- Bylaw Development – dog control, solid waste management, animal control and littering.
- Review of website for bylaws, resident contact options, forms and payment links.
- Funding request to support the creation of a REMO (Regional Emergency Management Organization) was submitted to the Department of Emergency Services.
- Staff are reviewing comfort centres to standardize processes and supports offered.
- A partnership is being developed with the Red Cross to assist with emergency planning, resourcing and shelter identification.
- Approximately 430 metric tons of waste were shipped to GFL Guysborough in December.

(c) Department of Recreation and Community Wellness

Recreation Program Initiatives and Highlights:

- The Santa for Seniors initiative was very successful, with 170 nominations county wide.
- All ages Escape Room events were held in four communities during December.
- Introductory Learn to Skate was hosted at the Mabou arena for children ages four to six years.
- Junior Scientists program was hosted in Port Hood for ages seven to nine years.
- Department staff attended the KidSport Annual General Meeting on December 3rd.
- Christmas Craft Socials were held in Whycocomagh and Chéticamp.
- Budget planning is underway for the Get Active – Summer 2026 programming.
- Sensory Skating program will continue through the winter at the Mabou Arena.
- Grant funding applications have been submitted for Stir the Pot meal prep program and Jumpstart physical activity based programs.
- Planning is underway for the Winter Snowshoe series.

- Sensory skating in collaboration with the local schools and Autism Nova Scotia is beginning in Inverness and Port Hood.
- A Smart TV user guide will be created in January.
- Staff are connecting with comfort centres throughout the municipality to determine how the New Horizons for Seniors grant funding can best support their needs.

(d) Melanie Beaton, Deputy CAO

The following projects were updated:

- Inverness Production Well (PW#1) replacement drilling project
- Municipal Public Works Association of NS 2026 conference; May 13-15 in Chéticamp
- Judique wastewater treatment plant safety improvements
- Inverness wastewater treatment plant upgrades project
- Chéticamp Lift Station # 3 and # 5
- Port Hood Lift Station # 3
- Central Avenue water and wastewater replacement/ complete streets
- Foyer Pere Fiset new build
- Port Hood Community Park
- Destination 252 Signage Plan
- Port Hastings and Port Hawkesbury Infrastructure planning
- Mabou Water Source of Supply
- Port Hood Water Source of Supply
- Chéticamp Wastewater Treatment Plant Digester
- Whycocomagh Wastewater Treatment Plan
- Meat Cove Community Centre Upgrades
- Water Utility (annual reporting, private hydrants, water rate study)
- Development and Servicing with Eastern District Planning Commission
- Asset Management and Asset Management Development
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Climate Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan

(e) Christina MacDonell, Finance

Department Highlights:

- 2024-25 audit - internal audit work is complete, awaiting Municipal Housing Corporation portion of the audit.
- Vendors are switching to electronic funds transfer (EFT) to speed up payments.
- Purchase Orders are now required of all staff prior to purchasing.
- FIR (Financial Information Return) will soon be submitted to the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs.
- 2025-2026 budget review meetings are ongoing.
- 2026-2027 budget preliminary budget meetings are underway.
- Tipping Fees statements for all outstanding accounts will be mailed during January.

- The next property tax sale will be scheduled in the coming months.
- Insurance Policy renewal work is ongoing.
- Water Utility Bills are due to be mailed out this week.
- Multiple requests for proposals, requests for quotations and tenders are either open, under evaluation or were recently awarded.

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

Major Projects and Initiatives Updates:

- Whycocomagh Library construction is largely complete and is due to open in late winter.
- Provincial Community Facility Improvement Fund and Access-ABILITY Grant Clinic program recently hosted fifteen community organizations at a workshop in Chéticamp.
- Planning discussions have taken place with the Strait Regional Centre for Education and Nova Scotia Department of Early Childhood Education regarding an Inverness daycare.
- A new youth employment program has been developed.
- Staff are working with arts and culture organizations to improve governance, financial stability and program impact.
- Supports for the continuation of food security programs continue.
- The second annual Healthcare Awards of Excellence is planned for April 2026.
- The Heritage Property Program update continues.
- Ongoing support of the Inverness Literacy Council in promoting this year's offerings.
- Supporting Capital Projects & Planning & Recreation & Community Wellness in development and improvement of facilities.
- The municipality continues to support the Cabot Trail 100th anniversary public engagement efforts.

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

Recent Projects and Initiatives:

- Water in Schools Project: In October 2025 ACAP staff visited three local schools with the new source water programming. Presentations were made at We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School, Inverness Education Centre and Academy and Pleasant Bay School. Students in grades primary to eight were introduced to the water cycle, freshwater habitats and watersheds and the role of trees.
- Community Environmental Outreach:
 - Riparian Zone Ready (RZR) – a land based learning program where youth will plan, present and implement freshwater habitat restoration solutions. The October project featured the planting of 1000 maple, birch and oak trees in Skye Glen.
 - Watershed Walk; January 31st at 12:00 pm Hillsborough Celtic Shores Coastal Trail.
 - Community Clean Ups: November 7th 20.5 kg of litter was collected in Judique.

(h) Lynne MacLennan, Cape Breton Partnership

October 1st to December 31st, 2025 Highlights:

- Events: Cape Breton Partnership Investor Summit; October 23rd in Baddeck, Federal Budget Outlook Session; November 19th in Port Hawkesbury, Safety in the Strait; November 28th in Port Hawkesbury, Elisk+Nweyek – Weaving Together, the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) hosted a partner update; December 12th at Membertou Trade and Convention Centre.
- Local Economic Development Initiatives: Elevate the Cape Tourism Conference, November 26th in Baddeck, Lake Ainslie's Lake Shore Living video was featured at the 2025 Investor Summit, Partnership staff continue to provide customized and individualized support and advice to small and medium sized businesses.
- The Creative Economy: The Cape Breton Partnership hosted the 2025 Creative Arts Awards on November 6th. Award winners included Betty Ann Cormier, Carole Chisholm and Margie Beaton. Promotion of Cape Breton film and television opportunities continues. A film screening event for *The Piano Tuner* took place on December 6th in Inverness.
- Green Energy Engagement Program: Marine Renewables Conference in Halifax on November 12th, presentation to Indigenous Youth at the CEPI/UINR Sustainable Futures Forum in Membertou.
- People and Labour Market Team: Immigration Access + offers immigration assistance to employers and entrepreneurs. Cape Breton Connector and Welcome Network Program brings together newcomers, volunteers and professionals. The Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) representatives attended the Pathways to Prosperity National Conference in Halifax recently. Forty eight Inverness County employers currently have active accounts on the Cape Breton Job Board.

(i) Laura Emery, Eastern Counties Regional Library

Branch Highlights:

- The Alexander Doyle Public Library recently had a staff transition. The new employee has been a wonderful addition to the team, creating inviting displays and finding ways to connect with the community.
- The Coady & Tompkins Memorial Public Library has created a warm winter environment for library users, providing drop-in activities for all.
- The Chéticamp Public Library had long-awaited repairs to the accessible entrance and now has an automatic door switch to assist library users.

Programming Highlights:

- The Alexander Doyle Public Library:
 - A watercolour workshop was held on October 2nd.
 - A youth sewing workshop was held on October 22nd.
- The Coady & Tompkins Memorial Public Library
 - Drop in Thanksgiving Crafts event was held on October 11th.
- The Chéticamp Public Library: The Library Guild continues.
- The Whycocomagh Public Library: Story Picnic in the park event on October 4th.

Monthly usage statistics were provided for the period of October to December 2025 at the Mabou, Margaree Forks, and Chéticamp library locations.

(j) Terry Smith, Destination Cape Breton

Marketing Initiatives:

- Winter campaign in market in the Maritimes, Ontario, and Quebec
- Spring/Summer campaign in market in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta
- Social media influencer, Stéphanie Bureau, visiting in late January/early February
- Working with local content creators on short-form video content across the Island
- Finalizing new 'Take Your Time' campaign for 2026
- Adding an AI travel planning tool to visitcapebreton.com and making content easier to read for generative AI platforms

Destination Development:

- Establishing task forces for Cultural and Environmental Sustainability in Tourism
- Finalizing MOU with Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism to support the development of Mi'kmaw tourism partners
- Working with the Snowmobiling Association of Nova Scotia and local clubs on grooming and signage projects
- Cabot Trail 100th Anniversary engagement project to commence
- Accommodation Needs Assessment:
 - More accommodations needed in Chéticamp, Margaree and Strait region
 - Need for reinvestment Island wide

Statistics:

- Visitcapebreton.com sessions were up 15% from 2023 to 2025
- Visitcapebreton.com clicks to operators were up 19% from 2023 to 2025, up 36 % since the new website was launched
- Room nights sold were up 1% to the end of September. October, November and December indicators appear strong
- Short term rental unit nights sold were up 6%, January to November, 2023-25
- To the end of October 2025 tourism revenues are up 10% year to date, after adjusting for inflation

(k) John Bain, Eastern District Planning Commission (EDPC)

Recent Updates:

- Organizational Review – The winning proposal for the EDPC Organizational Review Request for Proposals was from Davis Pier. Biweekly meetings will be held with the review committee until the review is completed.
- Municipal Land Use Planning Orientation and Information Session – October 15th, 2026.
- Coastal Planning Support Program Information Sessions were hosted by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities. EDPC will make a submission for funding under the Program

to fund community consultation sessions to hear residents' concerns and expectations around coastal protection planning.

- Development Agreement – Le Cap Hotel, Chéticamp, staff report being prepared.
- Inverness County Subdivision Bylaw amendment – staff report being prepared.
- Development agreement to rezone - Whycocomagh Consignment Store, file closed.
- Rezoning application - Chéticamp sandwich takeout restaurant, file closed.
- Application to rezone in Inverness to develop a mixed-use residential development, staff report in progress.
- Dangerous and unsightly premises cases; four are closed due to voluntary compliance and six are currently in progress.

6. PRESENTATION: PROPERTY VALUATION SERVICES CORPORATION (PVSC) Adam Hanna, Laura MacLean

PVSC is responsible for assessing all property in Nova Scotia as per the *Nova Scotia Assessment Act*. They deliver an Assessment Roll to all 49 municipalities and over 650,000 Assessment Notices to property owners in Nova Scotia each year. PVSC uses mass appraisal to determine the value of all real property in Nova Scotia each year. Mass appraisal is the process of valuing a group of properties as of a given date using common data, standardized methods and statistical testing. The three approaches to determining value are sales comparison, income and cost. In the Municipality of the County of Inverness, the 2026 assessment roll is valued at \$2,778,095,700.00. Each property owner receives a notice of assessment which indicates an assessed value for their property. Should a property owner disagree with their assessed value, classification, or ownership, they may file an appeal no later than February 12th, 2026. Inquiries can be directed to PVSC by telephone (1-800-380-7775) or e-mail (inquiry@pvsc.ca).

7. PRESENTATION: BEINN MHÀBU STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM; Sarah Turnbull, William Coulter, and Nella MacHattie

Sara, William and Nella are current Beinn Mhàbu students working towards a Bachelor of Arts in Community Studies from Cape Breton University. The student body at Beinn Mhàbu is made up of people from all across Canada, as well as the US and Europe. Throughout their time at Beinn Mhàbu they have made numerous friendships and had countless cultural experiences. The students would love the opportunity to stay in the community post graduation. One method to achieve this would be through the creation of an internship program. Short term paid positions would allow them to apply their education locally and would allow them to continue to be immersed in the Gaelic language and culture, to learn from it and contribute to it in meaningful ways. A one year post graduate internship program would enable them to become productive members of the community and build careers within the municipality.

8. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT APPLICATIONS:

- Raising the Villages Cooperative Ltd. – Community Health and Well Being Gatherings
The Request of Council is \$2,000.00

Recommendation to not support this request for funding.

- Community Matters Allons-y Ensemble – Festival Chocolat Chaud
The Request of Council is \$2,000.00

Recommendation to support this request in full with funds coming from the Regional CDC funds.

9. BUILD NS

Direction to staff to issue a letter to Build NS inviting them to a future meeting of Council to address the gaps in cell service throughout the municipality.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

- December Building Statistics from the Eastern District Planning Commission were provided to Council.
- The Eastern District Planning Commission Operating Budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year was provided to Council.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

February 5th, 2026 – 9:30 am; Regular Meeting of Council

12. IN CAMERA

MOTION: *That Council move to “In Camera” at 12:00 pm to discuss two contract items.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Gillis
SECONDED BY: Councillor Poirier
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *That Council move out of “In Camera” at 12:20 pm.*
MOVED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
SECONDED BY: Councillor Poirier
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *That the municipality reallocate \$100,000.00 in unspent funding from the Capital Budget to the Chéticamp Digester Walkway Project.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Poirier
SECONDED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
MOTION CARRIED

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: *That Council adjourn at 12:21 pm.*
MOVED BY: Councillor MacLennan
MOTION CARRIED