Municipality of Inverness County

Committee of the Whole Meeting
Thursday, October 29, 2026
9:30 a.m.
Council Chambers

MINUTES

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

Staff: Keith MacDonald, Chief Administrative Officer
Jim Davis, Director of Finance
Erin Gillis, Chief of Operations
Morgan Murray, Director of Culture & Community Development
Lauren MacDonnell, Director of Engineering & Planning
Josh Wludyka, Director of Capital Projects Administration
Debbie Nicholson, Administrative Assistant to Council/CAO
Megan Wludyka, Chief Communications Officer
Siobhan Beaton, Communications & Digital Marketing Coordinator
Michelle Coffin, Policy Analyst

1. CALL TO ORDER

Warden MacIsaac called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. 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: Deputy Warden Chisholm
SECONDED BY: Catherine Gillis
MOTION CARRIED

4. PRESENTATION: INVERNESS COUNTY CENTRE FOR THE ARTS; TAMARA DEVERELL AND EILEEN MACKINNON

The Inverness County Centre for the Arts (ICCA) serves the practicing and aspiring musicians, performers, craftspeople, artists, and art lovers of Western Cape Breton/ Unama'ki by providing the space, the tools, and the support to create, share, and grow. Over the past year ICCA hosted summer youth arts camps, a summer ceilidh series as well as ongoing exhibitions, concerts, workshops and arts events. Larger events such as the Seaglass Festival, the Cabot Trail Writer's Festival, Casino Night Fundraiser and the inaugural Unama'ki /Cape Breton Film Festival. Despite challenges including volunteer burnout, volunteer capacity and increasing facility repairs and maintenance, the ICCA board remains committed to a more sustainable ICCA with a strategic plan that is ambitious, achievable, and responsive to the needs of the community.

5. PRESENTATION: AT YOUR TABLE INVERNESS COUNTY FOOD ASSOCIATION; KERRY WALKINS

At Your Table Inverness County Food Association was established in 2025 by the Municipality of Inverness County to provide coordination and support for community-led food security initiatives. Operational funding has been provided by the provincial government, with additional grants awarded for individual initiatives. Strategic goals of the association include:

- Building food security understanding, awareness and capacity.
- Enhance food security support programs (Meals on Wheels, community kitchens and gardens).
- Grow the supportive infrastructure for food security programs (volunteer base, transportation options).

6. STAFF REPORTS

(a) Public Works, Chestley Carr

Recent Initiatives/Accomplishments:

- Service Installations – several new water and sewer services were completed. Continued collaboration between departments helped to streamline the process and reduce delays.
- Repair/replacement work – several large issues with water and sewer pipes were repaired.
- Seasonal maintenance activities are winding down, with staff completing final inspections and maintenance at the Inverness Multicourt Facility and Port Hood Administration Building before transitioning into winterization activities.
- Routine inspection and preventative maintenance were completed across all seven serviced communities (pump inspections, well cleaning, alarm tests, backup pump checks).
- The control system upgrade for the Port Hood wastewater treatment plant was completed in coordination with Lynk Electric.
- Maintenance was preformed on the air saturation tank at the Judique Water Treatment Plant.
- Staff reinstalled the interior plumbing for the Port Hood water treatment plant on Dunmore Road, allowing for a new sink and eyewash station to be connected.

- Several calls were received through the emergency phone line. The majority of these calls were related to the ongoing work on Central Avenue. All calls were monitored and reported to the appropriate staff for follow-up.

(b) Operations, Erin Gillis

Recent Initiatives/Accomplishments:

- There will be no curbside collection on November 11. A double collection will occur on November 18.
- Efficiencies at Kenloch - Improvements to the residential drop-off area have been completed, including the installation of new signage for tires, appliances, and paint.
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) – Continued implementation and coordination with Circular Materials regarding recycling collection, receiving, and processing requirements.
- Waste Reduction Activities – Halloween costume swap event at Creignish, and a gift card giveaway for best thrifted/second hand costume.
- A video for proper battery disposal was shared on social media.
- Occupational Health & Safety training continues for leaders and frontline teams.
- Bylaw development continues (vending, community standards, solid waste).
- A review of the September rain event was held in Richmond County. Lessons learned from the event will guide continuous improvement and EMO advancement.

(c) Recreation and Community Wellness, Anna Solomon

Recent Initiatives/Accomplishments:

- Recent Highlights – Capers Basketball Clinic, in partnership with Inverness Minor Basketball (60 participants), guided hikes, ice cream social, multiple locations hosted social inclusion activities in conjunction with Senior's Week, book clubs were held in multiple locations. The Escape Room Series "Houdini's Hidden Room" was held in five communities, and the Intergenerational Birdhouse Building Workshop was held on October 10 in Margaree with twenty six participants.
- Major Projects & Initiatives: October 31 in Inverness, Halloween Trunk or Treat (to encourage residents to consider accessibility during Halloween; biweekly senior walks in Judique, biweekly senior gym access in Chéticamp; October 23 movie night in Hillsborough "the Shining"; Santas for Seniors initiative begins in November with delivery in December; Seniors Emergency Preparedness Session – November 24 in West Bay Road.
- Staff are currently identifying needs and availabilities within communities (with access to halls) for cardio, strength, and seated classes to encourage social inclusion, aid in fall prevention, and build healthier, more engaged communities.
- Fifty-two applicants for funding through KidSport are under review.

(d) Capital Planning and Projects, Melanie Beaton

Recent Initiatives/Accomplishments:

- Inverness Wastewater Treatment Plant – All equipment has been started and commissioned with training provided to Municipal staff and operators. Staff will receive full plant operation training and begin monitoring the new facility by the end of October.
- Central Avenue, Inverness - Phase 1 work has reached important milestones with each of the water, sanitary gravity and sanitary forcemain pipes and associated manholes being nearly completely installed, with testing and lateral service connections remaining for water and sanitary. The project is on track to be substantially completed by the end of December, including the new asphalt roadway.
- Jajiktek Seawall Trail – On October 19 a well attended launch of the construction phase was held at the Port Hood Administration Building.
- Ongoing initiatives include multiple infrastructure upgrades, Whycocomagh wastewater treatment plant, bylaw development, source water protection committee promotion, signage initiatives, Port Hood Park project, active transportation planning initiatives, and an active transportation link between Dalbrae Academy and Celtic Shores Coastal Trail.

(e) Finance, Jim Davis

Recent Initiatives/Accomplishments:

- Non-Consolidated statements were submitted to the auditors for the year end March 31, 2026.
- Work continues on the transition to the new accounting software.
- Financial Information Return (FIR) reporting is 80 % complete; awaiting the consolidated statements from the auditors.
- Meetings continue with the CAO and Deputy CAO to finalize the Capital Budget.
- One tender is currently open; one is under evaluation and two have been recently awarded.

(f) Culture & Community Development, Morgan Murray

Recent Initiatives/Accomplishments:

- Food Security – Advanced the development of community pantries in Whycocomagh and Pleasant Bay, and planning a third in Chéticamp.
- Culture & Heritage – A letter has been drafted for the Minister of Opportunities and Social Development re: Inverness County Asylum project.
- Healthcare – Hosted newcomer welcoming events, including Try Tennis, Meet & Mingle, salsa lessons, Taste of Home, and a Celtic Colours gathering.
- Housing – Supporting West Isle and community groups to access funding for housing.

- Libraries – Whycocomagh Library services have seen a reduction due to issues with Same Page Alliance.
- Funding – New webpage launched: https://invernesscounty.ca/services/funding/
- Reconciliation – Working with Mi'kmaq partners on library, culture, visitor projects, and healthcare.
- Visitors – Developing proposal for enhancing Visitor Information Centres (VICs).
- Youth – Hosted Social Innovation Lab class from Dalhousie University with 67 students who will be doing feasibility studies about new projects in Inverness County this term.
- Community Grants – Community Development – six applications approved.
- Recreation & Tourism – Assumed chair of the Cabot Trail 100 project, and continued work to strengthen visitor information services and regional tourism coordination.

(g) Eastern District Planning Commission, John Bain

- Coastal Planning Support Program – Dillon Consulting to deliver community consultations.
- Subdivision Bylaw working discussion – tentatively scheduled for January 2027.
- The Board approved to adopt TownSuite Financials and customer portal (e-Billing). IPSG Technologies was approved to facilitate the transition.
- Final payment was received from the province for the shared MIP Project.
- EDPC Orientation and Information Session – October 15; a very good turnout.
- Rezoning request for 110 Main St. Whycocomagh – Public Hearing took place in July with no appeals – file closed.
- Rezoning request from AP to CR for Geodomes in Big Harbour Centre- Public Hearing took place in July with no appeals – file closed.
- Rezoning request for Cape House & Camp Cove Oceanfront Retreat, Grand Étang- Public Hearing took place in July with no appeals – file closed.
- Residential Uses in the Waterfront Zone, Chéticamp – Public Hearing took place on July 30 – waiting for ministerial approval.
- Eleven cases of Dangerous & Unsightly premises were addressed from April 1 – September 30.

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

- Water in Schools – three school visits are planned for October – Taigh Sgoile na Drochaide, Bayview Education Centre and Whycocomagh Education Centre.
- Community Environmental Outreach – 13 Outdoor for Learning Sessions were held in Margaree, Whycocomagh and Mabou.
- Hands on environmental learning through interactive programming for children and teens (July 23, July 28 and August 28).
- Attendance at Community Events – Mabou Farmers Market, Inverness Gathering, August 12 Meteor Shower and three community parades.
- Nature Walks – July 11 in Port Hood, August 5 in Judique and September 17 in Judique.

- Community Cleanups – Port Hood, Mabou, Pleasant Bay and Melville. A total of 367 kg of waste was collected.'

(i) Eastern Counties Regional Library, Laura Emery

- Visitor Statistics for the four library locations (Chéticamp, Mabou, Margaree and Whycocomagh) were provided.
- Alexander Doyle Public Library in Mabou was closed several times during the summer due to high heat and humidity.
- Chéticamp Public Library has raised concerns about cleaning the space, which the Municipality is addressing.
- Coady & Tompkins Memorial Public Library is often a popular stop for many in the summer to take a break in the air-conditioned space, visit the grounds, and browse the collection.
- Whycocomagh Public Library improved cell service this summer by installing a cellular signal booster.
- Sixty-one children registered for the Summer Reading Club.
- The partnership with ACAP continued to offer the Learning for Littles program.
- Comic and cartooning club during the summer in Margaree Forks.
- August 12 – Nature Storytime in Margaree Forks.

(j) Destination Cape Breton, Terry Smith

Marketing Initiatives

- The Fall campaign is wrapping up. It included a robust ad campaign on TV, connected TV, YouTube, Google, Meta, Pinterest and Reddit.
- The Winter campaign is scheduled to start on November 2 and will be focused on the Maritimes and the greater Toronto area.

Destination Development

- Cabot Trail 100th Anniversary- A draft Strategic Action Plan has been developed and a meeting with the Advisory Committee is being planned.
- Initial discussions are underway on a Mi'kmaq Tourism Workforce Program in partnership with NSITEN (Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network) to connect tourism operators with Mi'kmaq community members and students.

Upcoming Events

- Annual Tourism Summit – November 12 in Port Hawkesbury.
- 2026 Cabot Trail Food Truck Rally – late October.

Other

- Jajiktek Seawall Trail Announcement – October 19 in Port Hood.
- Destination Cape Breton's crisis communications plan was activated for the September 5 storm and updated until the State of Emergency was lifted.

- Marketing Levy- Expedia, Vrbo and Airbnb are on track to begin collecting and remitting the levy early in the new year in Inverness County. This will remove a burden for short-term rental hosts as well as County and DCB staff.

(k) Cape Breton Partnership, Brad Jacobs

Supplier, Project and Investment-Readiness Support

- Current tracking adds tangible outreach: information on tourism engagement was shared with 80-plus Inverness businesses, and more than 60 businesses received job-fair information and registration help.

Immigration, Labour-Market and Business Connectivity

- The Immigration and People & Labour Market teams combine regulated immigration advisory and representation, employer and newcomer navigation, labour-market outreach and Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) coordination. For Inverness County, this regional capacity supports employers in tourism, fisheries, construction, health care and other sectors facing recruitment and retention pressures.

Film and cultural activity

- Two sold-out Little Lorraine screenings at Strathspey Place drew 970 ticket holders and helped fund the Unama'ki- Cape Breton Film Festival. The $5 million Grip of the Kelpie Mother project has brought its producers to Inverness repeatedly for location, crew and business-service development.

Since former Econmic Development Officer's retirement in July, the Cape Breton Partnership has been navigating a significant change to the provincial government's funding model, resulting in a 64% reduction in funding. In response, we have been working closely with the Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network (CBREN) Board and the CBREN Liaison and Oversight Committee, currently chaired by the Inverness CAO, to develop a sustainable path forward that maintains economic development support across our municipalities.

7. FIRST READING: DOG CONTROL BYLAW

MOTION: *That Council advance Bylaw 68 – Dog Control to Second Reading during the next Regular Meeting of Council.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Gillis
SECONDED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
MOTION CARRIED

8. FIRST READING: ANIMAL CONTROL BYLAW

MOTION: *That Council advance Bylaw 67 – Animal Control to Second Reading during the next Regular Meeting of Council.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Gillis

SECONDED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
MOTION CARRIED

9. FIRST READING: HERITAGE PROPERTY BYLAW

MOTION: *That Council advance Bylaw 69 – Heritage Property to Second Reading during the next Regular Meeting of Council.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Phillips
SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *That that Council consider adopting the Heritage Property Advisory Committee Terms of Reference at the next Regular Meeting of Council.*
MOVED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis
MOTION CARRIED

10. RESOLUTION: STORMWATER TRANSFORMATION OPTIMIZATION AND RESILIENCE FOR MUNICIPALITIES (STORM) FUNDING APPLICATION

Whereas, the Municipality of the County of Inverness has the following interest: in submitting a funding application in support of initiatives that advance stormwater management, including improving system knowledge and risk awareness and establishing governance for municipal planning.

Whereas, the Municipality of the County of Inverness is undertaking Strengthening Municipal Infrastructure in Inverness County through Stormwater Bylaw Adoption and Infiltration and Inflow (I/I) Risk Assessment.

Be it resolved that Inverness County Council acknowledges that the Municipality of the County of Inverness is applying for a funding opportunity from the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA) and the STORM funding program.

Inverness County Council also recognizes that funding being requested would support (1) the establishment of a stormwater bylaw, to clarify provincial, municipal, and private landowner responsibilities associated with stormwater infrastructure; and (2) to undertake a risk assessment related to infiltration and inflow (I/I), with the objective of developing a remediation strategy for future implementation, with respect to I/I impacts on stormwater management in Inverness County.

RESOLUTION PASSED

11. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Information was provided to Council indicating the two types of interests that must be declared, as well as when and how to declare. This item will be revisited at the next Regular Meeting of Council to address any questions or concerns.

12. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT APPLICATIONS

i. Inverness County Centre for the Arts (Summer Youth Arts Camp)
Ask of the Municipality = $980 → *Recommendation to support in full.*

ii. Cape Clear Snowmobilers Club (Snow Trax TV Destination Feature Project)
Ask of the Municipality = $5,000 → *Recommendation to support in full.*

13. CORRESPONDENCE

i. The Eastern District Planning Commission September 2026 Building Statistics were provided to Council.

ii. Strait Area Chiefs, Mayors, Wardens – Correspondence issued form the Strait Area Chiefs, Mayors and Wardens to the Honourable Fred Tilley, Minister of Public Works regarding the lack of consistent cellular service in our region was provided to Council.

iii. East Coast Learning Association – Request for Property Tax Relief.
Direction to staff to invite this organization in to present to Council.

iv. Margaree XII Step Club – A thank you letter was received from the Margaree XII Step Club acknowledging receipt of recent funding.

v. Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) – proposed bylaw amendments.
Correspondence was provided to Council regarding proposed amendments to the NSFM By-laws to be presented to for the membership's consideration at the upcoming Annual General Meeting.

14. NEXT MEETING DATE

November 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.; Regular Meeting of Council

15. "IN CAMERA"

MOTION: *That Council move to "In Camera" at 1:10 p.m. to discuss one item related to Section 22.2(c) personnel and one item related to Section 22.2(e) contract negotiations*

MOVED BY: Councillor Gillis
SECONDED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *That Council move out of "In Camera" at 1:54 p.m.*
MOVED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
SECONDED BY: Councillor Poirier
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *That Tiffany Cameron and Ingrid Kanics be appointed as members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Phillips
SECONDED BY: Councillor Poirier
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: *Direction to staff to issue a letter to the Board of the Eastern Counties Regional Library asking that the Municipality of the County of Inverness is on the agenda of their next board meeting.*
MOVED BY: Deputy Warden Chisholm
SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillis
MOTION CARRIED

16. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: *That Council adjourn at 1:56 p.m.*
MOVED BY: Councillor Poirier
MOTION CARRIED