

Planning Advisory Committee Meeting

June 12, 2025

Town Council Chambers

Present

Councillor J. Sullivan, Chair

Councillor L. MacLellan

Mayor S. Cameron

M. Grant

O. Adewoye

J. Bain, Director of EDPC Planner/Development Officer

D. Halfpenny, Secretary

Absent

A. Boudreau

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

1. Approval of Agenda

Meet and greet to familiarize the new committee with the mandate for the Planning Advisory Committee and their role in the planning process. No formalized agenda to approve.

2. Approval of the Minutes

No minutes to approve as the first meeting of the new Planning Advisory Committee.

3. Round table introductions.

Chair J. Sullivan welcomed the committee members and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

J. Bain, Director of the Eastern District Planning Commission, explained that the committee is an advisory committee as noted in the name. He noted that as an advisory committee our role is to make recommendations to Council. He explained that Eastern District Planning follows that policy that is outlined in the Land Use Bylaw and the Municipal Planning Strategy for the Town of Antigonish. These documents he reported were developed with WSP consulting prior to EDPC assuming the Planning role for the Town of Antigonish. He advised that changes have been made to update these documents as needed in subsequent years.

J. Bain explained that the upcoming June 25th planned workshop at 6 p.m. at the Antigonish People's Place Library will involve a presentation from Upland Consulting to both Town and County Planning Advisory Committees. The focus will be on affordable housing initiatives. The workshop has been organized by Denise Dunn, Housing Accelerator Fund Coordinator.

4. As of Right Developments

J. Bain explained that AS of Right developments would not need to be reviewed by the Planning Advisory Committee as the plans would fit within the permitted rules as outlined in the Land Use Bylaw.

5. Development Agreements

J. Bain advised that development agreements would require a review by the Planning Advisory Committee. He explained that a development agreement is a legally binding contract between a municipality and a landowner/developer. In the development agreement specific terms and conditions are put in place for the development of the property including the land use, design of the building, any infrastructure requirements and financial obligations are involved. The purpose of this type of agreement is to ensure that the new development fits with the Town of Antigonish's planning policies and objectives while providing clear direction and certainty for the developer and the citizens of the Town of Antigonish.

He used an example of a landowner/Developer that had gone through the development agreement process that included a landscaping plan with trees and a bench fire pit feature overlooking the waterfront. However, when the landowner/developer had requested the return of their bid bond, a review of the completed project by EDPC identified that the landscaping plan had not been implemented and because it was a legal document and the work was not completed the bid bond could not be returned to the developer until they completed the agreed upon work.

Mayor S. Cameron asked when a Development Agreement would come before the Committee. Would it be when it is at the early discussion stage with EDPC or would it be when plans are developed?

J. Bain stated that he encourages developers to contact him and discuss their proposed development prior to them paying to have plans developed. EDPC staff will generate a report when the plans are submitted, then a meeting will be called with the Planning Advisory Committee to provide their input and make a recommendation to Council.

6. Lodging Houses

When discussing the plan to increase density to allow for additional affordable housing in Antigonish, new committee member M Grant questioned why there is a requirement to register as a lodging house when exceeding the four-bedroom maximum.

J. Bain provided examples of developments that have caused problems in the community. He commented that this was caused by landlords that decreased living space in the home to turn all rooms they could into bedrooms creating a dorm like environment. He noted that unsafe living conditions, parking situations, waste and noise issues caused the Planning Advisory Committee to closely look at what changes needed to be put in place to address these issues.

7. Other roles of EDPC

J. Bain stated that other employees of Eastern District Planning take care of building permits, inspections, and respond to complaints of dangerous and unsightly premises. He provided an example of a call where a person had reported a building that was in danger of falling on children who were entering the building. A site visit identified that the building owner was improperly harvesting the beams

and had removed all the supports. The building was slated for immediate demolition due to unsafe conditions and the building owner received a bill for the demolition.

8. Questions from new members

O. Adewoye asked if the Town had plans of all the homes in Antigonish available digitally and do they keep track of buildings that have structural issues.

J. Bain advised that the Town does not have such a program in place to have the electronic plans for all the buildings in the Town. He noted that the only time EDPC would be involved with the structural issues would be due to a complaint. Then it may evolve into a dangerous and unsightly issue which could mean an order to fix the issue within thirty days or worse case resulting in a demolition order.

Councillor L. MacLellan inquired as to when changes could be made to the Municipal Planning Strategy.

J. Bain noted that as needs of the Town change or items that come up when working on a new proposal there becomes a need to tighten up rules.

He used the example of a developer that had a proposal to build three apartment buildings. However, when he applied for the first two permits a look at the Land Use Bylaw determined that he had been changed slightly when WSP completed the review. An issue arose with storm water management concern. He explained that only a percentage of the building lot that can be used for the actual building, other factors such as parking, green space, etc, are factored into the site plan. The rules were changed, and the developer was advised that he would be required to his plans in place prior to the change or he would have to decrease his building size to facilitate the third building. The developer did in fact get his permits in place prior to the change. However, the driveway is to remain graveled to allow for water absorption.

9. Date of Next meeting

J. Bain advised that at present there are no new developments that require a review by the Planning Advisory Committee. He noted that a September meeting could be set up to do a more in-depth review of the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use Bylaw.

L. MacLellan made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

The Planning advisory Committee meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Next meeting to be determined.

