

Committee of the Whole
April 1, 2025
Town Council Chambers

Present

Mayor S. Cameron
Deputy Mayor D. Roberts
Councillor L. MacLellan
Councillor P. McKenna
Councillor A. Murray
Councillor J. Pelly
Councillor J. Sullivan

Also in Attendance

R. Delorey, CAO
M. Fougere, Deputy Clerk
L. Roy, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator
M. Barkhouse, Director of Corporate Services
Bethany Collier, Manager of Accounting
S. Long, Acting Director of Community Development

Members of the Gallery

1. Land Acknowledgment

Mayor S. Cameron acknowledged that the meeting took place in the traditional and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people, and that we are all treaty people.

2. Call to Order

Mayor S. Cameron called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.

3. Approval of Agenda

It was Moved and Seconded "to approve the agenda as amended."

Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

It was Moved and Seconded "to approve the Committee of the Whole Meeting minutes of March 4, 2025, as presented."

Councillor P. McKenna noted that his councillor report was not included in the minutes. The minutes were adopted as presented.

Motion carried.

5. Presentations

5.1 Keppoch – Dr. John Chaisson

Dr. John Chaisson provided an engaging presentation on Keppoch's initiative to combat social isolation among seniors in long-term care. In partnership with local organizations, Keppoch launched a program offering weekly outdoor outings between April and November. Activities included nature walks, music, and storytelling, with over 150 seniors participating. Feedback from participants highlighted the emotional and social benefits, with many expressing that the experience lifted their spirits and provided a meaningful sense of connection.

Dr. Chaisson addressed the logistical challenges involved in transporting seniors and ensuring accessibility, while also noting the program's positive reception both locally and internationally. The initiative has been recognized as a model for inclusion and well-being.

Keppoch is seeking funding support from the Town of Antigonish, requesting \$15,000 to sustain and expand the initiative. The program's budget covers transportation, staffing, and activity costs.

The presentation concluded with discussions on Keppoch's broader role in community engagement and the importance of access to outdoor recreation for people of all ages and abilities.

Mayor and Council thanked Dr. Chaisson for his presentation.

5.2 PARC (People for an Antigonish Rec Centre) – Stephanie Cooper & Paul Curry

Stephanie Cooper and Paul Curry presented to Council on behalf of PARC, outlining the group's current focus on conducting a Recreation Needs Assessment for the Antigonish area, rather than pursuing immediate development of a new recreation facility.

A structured assessment will provide data-driven decisions on facility utilization, community needs, and potential gaps.

The proposed needs assessment scope includes:

Inventory of Existing Facilities – Evaluating conditions, usage, accessibility, and capacity.

Community Input – Engaging residents to determine recreation needs.

Gap Identification – Assessing missing resources compared to similar communities.

Prioritization of Needs – Outlining recommendations for future recreation planning.

Request to Council:

- Staff assistance in developing an RFP (Request for Proposals) for the assessment.
- Collaboration in grant writing and securing funding.
- Oversight of the process with PARC's involvement.
- Formation of a steering committee including town, county, and PARC representatives.

The estimated cost of the assessment is \$75,000. PARC is seeking \$25,000 from the Town, \$25,000 from the County, and noted that \$10,000 has been secured through a provincial grant. Additional funding may be pursued through further grants and in-kind contributions. PARC is also in discussions with StFX University for potential collaboration.

Some council members expressed disappointment and questioned why preliminary assessment work had not been conducted following prior meetings.

Discussion on school gym access issues as a potential solution rather than a new facility.

Other community projects, such as the Theatre Expansion, were noted as competing priorities.

PARC will also present this request to the Municipality of the County of Antigonish in the coming week.

Mayor and Council thanked S. Cooper and P. Curry for their presentation.

5.3 File Management Policy Update (STFX Consultant Project)

Students from the St. Francis Xavier University BSAD492 business class presented the outcomes of a consulting project completed in collaboration with the Town's CAO and staff. The initiative aimed to improve internal document management systems and was delivered at no cost to the Town.

This initiative is fully operational, aimed at improving internal document management processes.

Town operations face challenges with misplaced, or disorganized documents. The goal was not only to organize past records but to implement a long-term, sustainable document management system.

Solutions developed align with best practices and ensure future efficiency.

- Document Retention Policy
- File Naming Convention
- SharePoint Redesign
- Updated Document Templates
- Training Videos & User Guides

Council Discussion and Feedback took place. Positive reception, particularly regarding real-world application of student work.

Recognition that past document storage issues have persisted for years.

Acknowledgment that successful adoption requires leadership and accountability.

The project establishes a foundation for improved document management.

The Town now has tools and policies in place to reduce clutter, enhance searchability, and streamline operations.

Next steps involve staff implementation and potential funding for historical document digitization.

Council expressed appreciation for the students' contributions and recognized the project as a valuable foundation for long-term organizational efficiency.

Recess

Council recessed at 7:13 PM

Reconvene

The meeting resumed at 7:19 PM

6. New Business

6.1 Council Strategic Planning Update (CAO)

CAO, R. Delorey provided an update on Council's strategic planning process, informed by survey input from all seven councillors and five senior staff. The survey helped establish a shared understanding of the Town's key priorities.

Key Strategic Priorities

- Infrastructure
- Fiscal Sustainability
- Environmental Sustainability
- Social Sustainability
- Strategic Supports

To ensure efficiency, the town has narrowed its infrastructure priorities to the top five categories:

- Sewer
- Water
- Streets/Paving
- Electric Utility
- Sidewalks

Other areas, such as flood mitigation and the Northern Collector, were also identified as significant but secondary to these top five priorities.

The town's infrastructure investments must align with fiscal sustainability, ensuring affordability without excessive tax increases.

The balance between infrastructure spending and social sustainability must be maintained to avoid financial strain on residents.

The planning update will be formatted into a formal document for council's review and potential modifications.

Council will use this framework to guide budget decisions and strategic investments over the coming years.

Continued discussions will refine priorities, ensuring alignment with the town's long-term vision.

6.2 Body Armour Policy – Memo to Council

S. Long presented a proposed Body Armour Policy for the Town’s Special Constables. The policy outlines conditions under which body armour may be worn, with oversight provisions included.

Council expressed general support for the policy.

A motion to formally approve the policy will be brought forward at the April 22 Regular Town Council meeting.

6.3 Tourism Strategy Update – Memo to Council

S. Long presented an update on the Town’s Tourism Strategy, with a focus on the recent implementation of the Marketing Levy Bylaw, effective January 2024.

Collections began in April, following initial administrative setup.

Marketing Levy Use - Funds are legally required (under Section 75 of the MGA) to support tourism only.

Tourism Working Group Includes representatives from the Town, County, StFX, the Antigonish Tourism Association, and the Visitor Information Centre.

Consultant Mary Tulle has been engaged to assist in organizing implementation and governance.

The Antigonish Tourism Association will hire a Director of Tourism to lead local tourism efforts.

Discussion to place.

Emphasis on keeping levy funds local instead of remitting to DEANS (Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores).

Tourism operators and guests have largely accepted the levy without issue.

A long-term multi-year funding commitment from the County is being sought to ensure stability.

6.4 Temporary Borrowing Resolution for the Grid Modernization project

Meaghan Barkhouse outlined the need for a Temporary Borrowing Resolution (TBR) of \$10.8 million to cover the utility’s share of the Grid Modernization Project, which totals \$20.5 million. The remaining \$9.7 million will be covered through external funding sources. The borrowing will be arranged through Scotiabank, following the same model used for the Solar Garden project. As per Municipal Finance Corporation guidelines, long-term debentures cannot be issued until the project is fully operational. The TBR will allow access to funds over the 36-month period following ministerial approval, with funds drawn as required.

Council Discussions took place.

Councillor P. McKenna requested information on how the borrowing might impact household electricity rates. Staff will return with estimates at the April 22 meeting.

M. Barkhouse further advised that the town had submitted an expression of interest in December for a \$400,000 sub-project (reclosers to improve grid reliability), with 50% federal funding. If council wishes to proceed, a motion to support contributing \$200,000 is required.

Staff emphasized there's no obligation; the project could be deferred until future funding becomes available.

Council provided consensus direction for staff to prepare a support letter for the application without formal motion at this time, to meet the imminent submission deadline. If approved, council can opt out later if needed.

Consolidation from five metering points to one will reduce base charges paid to Nova Scotia Power.

Upgraded infrastructure will improve efficiency and reduce transmission losses, with long-term savings and enhanced reliability.

Once operational, the project's capital costs (including any additional components) will be incorporated into electric rates through a future General Rate Application (GRA).

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF THE
Town of Antigonish
TEMPORARY BORROWING RESOLUTION

Amount: \$ 10,800,000

Purpose: Grid Modernization (M11082)

WHEREAS Section 66 of the Municipal Government Act provides that the Council of the

Town of Antigonish, subject to the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, may borrow to expend funds for a capital purpose as authorized by statute;

WHEREAS the Council of the Town of Antigonish has adopted a capital budget for this fiscal year as required by Section 65 of the Municipal Government Act and are so authorized to expend funds for a capital purpose as identified in their capital budget; and

WHEREAS the Council of the Town of Antigonish has determined to borrow the aggregate principal amount of ten million eight hundred thousands dollars Dollars (\$10,800,000) for the purposes of Grid Modernization (M11082);

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED

THAT under the authority of Section 66 of the Municipal Government Act, the Council of the Town of Antigonish borrow a sum or sums not exceeding ten million eight hundred thousands dollars Dollars (\$ 10,800,000) for the purpose set out above, subject to the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing;

THAT the sum be borrowed by the issue and sale of debentures of the Council of the Town of Antigonish to such an amount as the Council deems necessary;

THAT the issue of debentures be postponed pursuant to Section 92 of the Municipal Government Act and that the Council borrow from time to time a sum or sums not exceeding ten million eight hundred thousand dollars Dollars (\$ 10,800,000) in total from any chartered bank or trust company doing business in Nova Scotia;

THAT pursuant to Subsection 92(2) the sum be borrowed for a period not exceeding Thirty Six (36) Months from the date of the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing of this resolution;

THAT the interest payable on the borrowing be paid at a rate to be agreed upon; and

THAT the amount borrowed be repaid from the proceeds of the debentures when sold.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution read and duly passed at a meeting of the Council of the Town of Antigonish held on the 22 day of April, 2025.

GIVEN under the hands of the Clerk and under the seal of the Town of Antigonish this 22 day of April, 2025.

Clerk

6.2 Letter – re: Flood Protection - Monitoring and Maintenance requirements

A letter addressed to Mayor and Council was received from several business owners Ron MacGillivray, owner Ron MacGillivray Chev Buick GMC, Jim Berkvens, President Antigonish Farm & Garden Co-op, Derek Geldart, Area Manager Natural Resources, Kyle VandeSande, President, Riavan Investments Ltd, Jordan Paradis, owner, Paradis Investments Ltd., Darrel MacLellan, Resident of St. Andrews St., Julie Duykers, Manager Antigonish Farm & Garden Co-op., regarding flood protection measures they have implemented around their properties. They request that the Town incorporate ongoing monitoring and maintenance of these measures into the annual Public Works operational budget and infrastructure planning.

Council Discussions took place.

Some council members suggested referring the request to the Infrastructure Committee to become part of regular maintenance planning.

There were questions raised over whether this is an operational budget issue or a committee responsibility. Staff clarified the Infrastructure Committee can monitor but does not control budget lines.

The Town previously commissioned the Rights River study, but follow-up on the study has lapsed.

General consensus emerged that the Infrastructure Committee should take ownership of the study recommendations and ensure follow-up, particularly regarding flood mitigation.

A few members expressed concern about the lack of formal response structure and the need for better oversight and integration into budget planning.

Council agreed to acknowledge the letter, thank the residents, and consider their request through staff and budget planning channels.

6.3 Letter – Department of Emergency Management re: 911 Cost Recovery Fund

A letter from the Department of Emergency Management regarding the 911 Cost Recovery Fund was received by the Mayor and distributed to Council for information.

7. Councillor Reports

Deputy Mayor Diane Roberts

Deputy Mayor Roberts raised a safety concern regarding a Town sign near Chisholm Park, specifically at the exit behind Shoppers Drug Mart. The sign obstructs visibility for drivers pulling out, forcing them to enter the sidewalk to see oncoming traffic. The issue is expected to worsen once trees are in full leaf.

Noted that the current sign replaced an older one that previously had a flower basket removed due to similar safety concerns.

It was explained that the new sign uses the same location and base as the old one but has less clearance underneath, blocking more of the sightline.

Options to address the concern include relocating the sign, raising it, or redesigning it — though all options would come with significant costs, particularly due to underground lighting infrastructure.

Councillor Murray expressed frustration over the cost and the fact that the issue was not considered earlier.

Discussions ensued.

CAO R. Delorey advised that staff would review potential solutions and incorporate them into future budget considerations.

Councillor Juanita Pelly

Councillor Pelly provided an update on the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society, noting that a significant number of applications have been received. The organization is preparing to move seventeen families into housing by August.

Councillor L. MacLellan asked the question, if there will be any emergency housing and the answer was no.

Councillor Andrew Murray

Councillor Murray reported that the Peace by Chocolate shed may soon be relocated to its new location. He also attended recent RK meetings, describing them as interesting and lengthy.

Councillor Murray noted that ACALA meetings are progressing well. There has been no Beautification Committee meeting to date, pending new appointments expected following the April 22 Regular Council Meeting.

Councillor Jack Sullivan

Councillor Sullivan had no updates to report at this time. He noted that he is awaiting committee appointments before holding the first meeting of the Infrastructure Committee. New members are expected to be appointed at the Regular Town Council Meeting on April 22.

Councillor Patrick McKenna

Councillor McKenna reported that the Accessibility Committee held its first meeting and shared the update including the submission of the updated Accessibility Plan.

He also participated in multiple RK-related meetings, including board, steering committee, and finance.

Additionally, he attended a Waste Management meeting and described it as productive.

Councillor Leon MacLellan

Councillor MacLellan reported on behalf of the Watse Committee, noting that the CAO described the current state of everything that is being done or not done. There were no additional updates.

Mayor Sean Cameron

Mayor Cameron provided a summary of recent activities over the past month, including:

- Met with MLA Michelle Thompson.

- Met with the STFX President, Vice Presidents.
- Attended the Whitecaps Female Hockey Tournament, which Council had sponsored.
- Met with Julie Duykers, Jordan Paradis, and Danielle Maclellan regarding flood control.
- Attended the AREA Meeting in Ellershouse with Councillor MacLellan and CAO, R. Delorey.
- Met with the Sisters of Saint Martha alongside Warden MacInnis to discuss their 125th Anniversary.
- Chaired the first Nominations Committee meeting.
- Participated in an Arena Committee meeting.
- Had informal discussions with the Farmers' Market, who raised concerns about accessibility and paving.
- Attended the STFX Cheerleaders' closing event with Deputy Mayor Roberts.
- Attended the Strait Area Mayors, Wardens, and Chiefs meeting. It was a productive meeting, and the group intends to meet quarterly.
- Announced of his selection to sit as a member on of the NSFM (Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities) Municipal Autonomy Advisory Committee, which has met twice and will present at the upcoming NSFM Spring Conference.

8. Adjournment

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:16 PM.