
Joint Town and County Council Minutes

Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 6:00 PM
Town Council Chambers
274 Main Street
Antigonish, NS

Present:

County of Antigonish

Warden Nicholas MacInnis
Deputy Warden John Dunbar
Councillor Mary MacLellan
Councillor Adam Baden-Clay (by Zoom)
Councillor Richelle MacLaughlin
Councillor Wayne Melanson
Councillor Gary Mattie
Councillor Mary MacLellan
Councillor Harris McNamara
Councillor Sterling Garvie

Town of Antigonish

Mayor Sean Cameron
Deputy Mayor Dianne Roberts
Councillor Leon MacLellan
Councillor Pat McKenna
Councillor Andrew Murray
Councillor Juantia Pelly
Councillor Jack Sullivan

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Deputy Clerk

Randy Delorey, CAO
Melanie Fougere, Deputy Clerk
Megan Barkhouse, Director of Corporate Services
Shannon Long, Director of Community
Development
Mikaela Williams, Marketing & Communications
Officer
Kyle Meisner, P.Eng, Director of Public Works

Also Present:

Blaise MacDonald, Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Coordinator
Denise Dunn, Housing Accelerator Fund Coordinator
Drake Lowthers, The Reporter

Absent with Regret: None

Call to Order

The Joint Town and County Council Committee was called to order by Chair Warden Nicholas MacInnis at 6:06 PM. Warden MacInnis and Mayor Cameron welcomed everyone in attendance to the meeting. A roundtable of introductions was done.

Approval of the Agenda

Warden MacInnis called for any additions or deletions to the agenda. Hearing none, the agenda was considered approved as presented.

Approval of November 29, 2023, Council Minutes

Warden MacInnis called for any errors or omissions in the Joint Council meeting minutes of November 29, 2023. Hearing none, the minutes were considered approve as presented.

Presentations

Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Presentation – Denise Dunn, HAF Coordinator

Ms. Dunn provided an overview of the economic circumstances that have caused the affordable housing conditions being as they currently are, resulting in the creation of the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). General information was shared about the spectrum of housing types, the definition of affordable housing, and a summary of the housing needs assessment that was undertaken for the Town and County.

Ms. Dunn then provided an overview of the housing accelerator funding that was awarded to the Town and County and reviewed the initiatives that were identified in the applications for that funding. The 2023-2027 project timeline was also presented. Ms. Dunn also suggested the book 13 Ways to Kill Your Community and noted that some copies were available at the County Office for Council and staff.

The floor was then opened for questions from the Councils. Enquiries were received regarding population growth and the impact on housing affordability, the projected population growth expected for the Town and County, and off-campus student housing numbers. A question was asked about fixed-term leases, and the impact of those on housing affordability. Ms. Dunn noted that the lease issue was a provincial matter and would be something that the municipality could contact the provincial elected officials about. Further questions were asked about the various initiatives, including grants programs and permitting modernization.

Ms. Dunn was thanked for her presentation.

Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization (AREMO) update - Blaise MacDonald, EMO Coordinator

Mr. MacDonald provided the committee with an overview of the Emergency Management Office shared by the Town and County. Information regarding the Town and County Emergency Management Team, with photographs and the most recent training sessions, were shared with the committee. Highlights were reviewed, including upcoming training plans and work underway to prepare emergency shelters and comfort centres. Upcoming projects to support fire training in the community were shared.

Discussion followed regarding training in the community, and challenges with the availability of volunteers. The Nova Scotia Guard Act (2024) and proposed vulnerable persons registry were discussed. Mr. MacDonald summarized his presentation by noting that future priorities included updates to regional fire mapping and reviewing Hazmat response capability in the community.

A brief recess was held prior to the start of the final presentation.

Sewer/Water Capacity Presentation – Kyle Meisner P.Eng., Town of Antigonish Director of Public Works

Mr. Meisner took the opportunity to introduce himself in his new role as Director of Public Works. He provided a general overview of the current water system and source water infrastructure. An overview of the physical capacity of the sewer system noted that water infiltration, via leaky pipes and storm connections, are the largest problem. The sewage

treatment plant is also approaching the rated capacity. A brief summary of the CBCL study done after odour issues arose in the summer of 2024 was provided. A timeline and upcoming projects planned for the sewage treatment facility to improve capacity and operation were reviewed, including the addition of a screening system.

Mr. Meisner then spoke to the intermunicipal agreement between the Town and County regarding sewage treatment. He made a suggestion for the Town and County to jointly hire a consultant to undertake an independent study for sewer flow/cost sharing, and using this information, draft a new intermunicipal agreement.

The floor was then opened for questions. Councillors asked questions about the proposed screening mechanism and the lifecycle of the water treatment plant. A concern was raised about the County's use of the Town's sewage plant and increasing the demand on the system, and the County needing to pay a larger share of operating and more of the capital expenses for any upgrades. Further concerns were raised regarding water capacity in the community, particularly if there was a fire emergency. A suggestion was made to look at cost-sharing based on assessment, and not population.

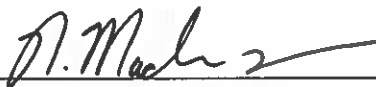
A question was asked about how long a study as suggested might take to complete, and Mr. Meisner noted that it would take at least a minimum of six months in order to get appropriate averages of readings. A suggestion was made to look at whether development charges to cover infrastructure expenses should be considered. Questions were asked about how the proposed upgrades to the plant would affect the capacity of the facility. A suggestion was also made to step up public education regarding the sewer system, to encourage residents not to flush inorganic materials that clog the system.

A question was asked about how the cost of the consultant would be shared between the communities. A suggestion was made to look at grants or funding support for the study. A question was asked about capacity, looking for information about how past growth may indicate how much more growth the plant could tolerate. Mr. Meisner noted that reducing leakage would assist with increasing capacity. Other options for increasing capacity were discussed.

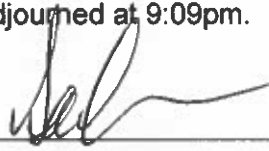
Discussion followed regarding the cost sharing for the operating and the capital costs as noted in the agreement included in the agenda package, and a question was asked regarding how cost sharing for subsequent capital improvements have been shared over time. The committee seemed to be in general agreement to proceed with the study to learn more about the system and cost sharing options.

Adjournment

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:09pm.



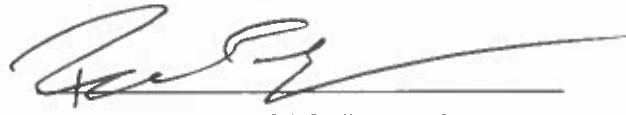
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