

Joint Town and County Council Minutes

Wednesday, June 18, 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
Councillor Richelle MacLaughlin
Councillor Wayne Melanson
Councillor Gary Mattie
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 Juanita Pelly
Councillor Jack Sullivan

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Clerk

Randy Delorey, CAO
Melanie Fougere, Deputy Clerk
Mikaela Williams, Marketing & Communications
Officer
Kyle Meisner, P.Eng, Director of Public Works

Also Present:

Denise Dunn, Housing Accelerator Fund Coordinator
Blaise MacDonald, Antigonish Regional EMO Coordinator
Edwin DeMont – Seniors for Climate
Sue Adams – Seniors for Climate
Dr. Jane Anne Howard, Physician Co-lead, Antigonish Collaborative Clinic
Angela Meagher, Director of Primary Health Eastern Zone, Nova Scotia Health Authority
Sarah O'Brien, Director, Integrated Health Services, Nova Scotia Health
Anne Marie Long, Nova Scotia Federation of Seniors
Drake Lowthers, The Reporter
Gallery

Absent with Regret: None

Call to Order

The Joint Town and County Council Committee was called to order by Interim Chair, Deputy Mayor Dianne Roberts at 6:02 PM.

Approval of the Agenda

Deputy Mayor Roberts called for any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as presented.

Motion Carried.

Approval of February 19, 2025, Council Minutes

Deputy Mayor Roberts called for any errors or omissions in the Joint Council meeting minutes of February 19, 2025. A request was made for a notation to identify Mr. Meisner as the Director of Public Works for the Town of Antigonish, to avoid any confusion in the future.

Moved and Seconded

That the Joint Council Committee meeting minutes of February 19, 2025 be approved as amended.

Motion Carried.

Presentations

Seniors for Climate – Edwin DeMont

Mr. DeMont provided members of the committee with an overview of the background of the Seniors for Climate group. He reviewed many of the activities undertaken by the group over the past year, including a proclamation, film screenings, museum talks, nature walks, events at local long-term care residences, and a climate presentation from staff from the Town and County about municipal initiatives in the community. Preliminary details regarding upcoming events that the group is planning were also shared. The floor was then opened for questions from the committee.

Questions were asked about the role of nuclear power as a form of energy generation, American climate-initiative changes, integration of climate initiatives with economic and emergency management initiatives, and opportunities for the Town and County to work together with climate groups in the community. Mr. DeMont and his group were thanked for their presentation.

Antigonish Collaborative Clinic Update – Jane Anne Howard, Angela Meagher, Sarah O'Brien

Dr. Howard introduced herself and her colleagues who were joining her to provide an update regarding the collaborative clinic being constructed in the community on Sears Ross Road, which is just off of Beech Hill Road. Dr. Howard reviewed the types of services that are expected to be available at the clinic, including housing support, nurse practitioners, family physicians, and allied health providers. She noted that the focus of the facility will be to provide patient/person-centred services in a collaborative facility.

Ms. Meagher provided an update on construction work on the building and noted a target completion date of January 2026. She provided more information about the "Health Home" model, and how the different providers expected at the facility will assist the other medical services in the community by relieving stress/demand on the local emergency room services at the hospital. The clinic is also expected to improve recruitment efforts to bring medical professionals in the community.

Ms. O'Brien reviewed the community and professional engagement work done over the two years through project development. Accessibility to the site, through transit and for pedestrians, was identified as a concern that the group is looking to work with the municipalities to address.

The floor was then opened for questions from the committee. Questions were asked about whether any local physicians were looking to relocate to the facility, concerns about access to the new facility, the types of practitioners that might operate out of the facility, and the integration of services with those at the hospital. The presenters were thanked for their time and coming before the committee to provide their update.

Deputy Mayor Roberts handed over the Chair to Mayor Cameron, who joined the meeting during the presentation.

Emergency Management (EM) Vulnerable Members of the Community – Anne Marie Long

Ms. Long provided an overview of the Nova Scotia Federation of Seniors, and the role that they have had in advocating for a registry of vulnerable persons that would provide support to identified residents in the event of an emergency. She shared an information package with the committee about the registry, the example of how a similar registry was established in Richmond County, and offered the help of the Nova Scotia Federation of Seniors through their groups to assist with getting the word out and assisting with registration.

The floor was then opened for questions from the committee. Questions were asked about the potential interest of seniors in the community in signing up for such a registry, the capacity the municipalities to manage a vulnerable persons registry, expectations of services to those on the list, and what support might be expected from the province for the program.

Mr. Blaise MacDonald, Regional EMO Coordinator, provided some additional details about the work being done by the Province regarding the vulnerable persons list throughout the province. Ms. Long was thanked for her presentation.

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

Ms. Dunn provided the committee with an overview of the initiatives that are a part of the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) and noted the connections with the previous presenters and the HAF program. She noted that the proposed planning items being reviewed under HAF program are being presented to the Town and County Planning Advisory Committees in a workshop on June 25th at the library.

Ms. Dunn noted that the Community Transit initiative is now considered complete, being the first initiative completed as part of the program for both the Town and the County. Progress of other joint initiatives was also highlighted. Communication tools and methods were reviewed, and Ms. Dunn noted that a new website is under development and is expected to be live in the near future. A new logo was also shared for the joint initiatives under the HAF project. Ms. Dunn offered to send a link to members of each council so that they could review the draft project website, requesting comments back by Tuesday June 24th.

The floor was opened for questions from the committee. Questions were asked about the function of the email marketing tools, and the source water joint initiative timeline. Ms. Dunn was thanked for her presentation.

A recess was called at 7:27pm. The committee was called back to order by Mayor Cameron at 7:40pm.

Business from Minutes

Water and Sewer Update

Councillor McNamara asked for an update regarding the water and sewer systems, as discussed at the last Joint Council meeting. He asked for a committee to be formed to facilitate long-term service planning.

Mr. Delorey provided an update on the water and sewer work that has been undertaken since the last Joint Council meeting and noted that both councils included funds in their budgets for water and sewer initiatives. He provided further details on the status of maintenance work planned for the summer months, as well as other Town initiatives planned for water and sewer infrastructure. Ms. Donovan noted that work is also underway to commission the flow study required to inform the intermunicipal servicing agreement, and the County has also applied for funding for I&I efforts that would help with sewer treatment plant capacity concerns. Mr. Delorey noted that he and Ms. Donovan meet bi-weekly to discuss matters like the inter-municipal agreement.

Further questions were asked regarding the status of reviewing cost-sharing as part of the inter-municipal agreement, and water and sewer planning for the future. Mr. Delorey provided a response to both questions, noting that work is underway regarding cost-sharing models, and that both municipalities have strategic plans that have identified infrastructure as a priority. Further comments provided thanks for the updates being provided, and a request was made for further updates on water and sewer work being shared with the community.

A question was asked regarding how capacity levels were expected to be impacted with the improvement efforts. Further comments regarding the importance of communication with the public about efforts to address water and sewer concerns were made.

Mayor Cameron noted that on Tuesday, July 8th an infrastructure committee tour of Town water and sewer facilities is planned, and an invitation was extended to the County Councillors who may be interested in joining in the tour. Mayor Cameron also shared details about the Terry Fox Cycling Tour that will be coming through the community and is looking for dinner to be hosted. He noted that an email will be sent around to Councils for further information.

Formation of a Joint Water and Sewer Committee

Mayor Cameron noted that an idea has been put forward for discussion to create a water commission for the water services in the Town and those areas of the County that are serviced through the Town water services. This would create a separate entity that would manage water services in those areas. A request was made for more information to assist with understanding the ask being put before the councils. A question was also put forward about anticipated timelines for this suggestion, given the timelines for other water and sewer studies underway. A suggestion to have a committee with representation from both councils to oversee the water and sewer projects in both municipalities may assist with overseeing the work planned over the next few years.

Discussion regarding the governance component of the suggestions put forward followed. A request was made to have water and sewer updates as a standing item on Joint Council Committee meetings over the next year, and the committee agreed to take this approach.

Joint Council Business

Discussion of Joint Council Priorities 2025 and Beyond

Councillor Leon MacLellan asked for consideration of how cost-sharing might be split between Town and County joint initiatives, such as recreation initiatives. Councillor Leon MacLellan noted that significant investments are being made in trunk roads by the Town, such as West Street and Hawthorne Street. Councillor Sullivan noted that sewer improvements are also a cost to the Town. Mayor Cameron noted that the Town is looking for consideration of cost sharing for improvements to Trunk roads in the Town with the County.

Adjournment

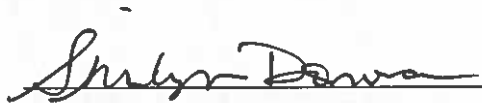
With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:37pm.



Warden Nicholas MacInnis



Mayor Sean Cameron



Shirlyn Donovan, CAO, County of Antigonish



Randy Delorey, CAO, Town of Antigonish