
Joint Town and County Council Minutes

Wednesday, November 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
Councillor Richelle MacLaughlin
Councillor Gary Mattie
Councillor Harris McNamara
Councillor Sterling Garvie

Town of Antigonish

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

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO
Beth Schumacher, Clerk

Randy Delorey, CAO
Melanie Fougere, Clerk
Meaghan Barkhouse, Director of Corporate
Services
Shannon Long, Director of Community Services
Kyle Meisner, P.Eng, Director of Public Works

Also Present:

Jennifer DeCoste, Fireloch
Drake Lowthers, The Reporter
Gallery

Absent with Regret: Councillor Wayne Melanson, County of Antigonish

Call to Order

The Joint Town and County Council Committee was called to order by the Chair, Mayor Cameron, at 6:04 PM.

Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Cameron called for any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Moved and Seconded

That the agenda be approved as presented.

Motion Carried.

Acceptance of the September 17, 2025, Council Minutes

Mayor Cameron called for any errors or omissions in the Joint Council meeting minutes of September 17, 2025. Hearing none, the minutes were considered approved.

Presentations

Fireloch – Jennifer DeCoste

Ms. DeCoste provided members of the committee with an overview of their operation at Fireloch, which serves as a gathering place where retreats and community events are hosted. Starting in 2022, they have since built a dome structure on the site and continue to grow in programming and events at their location. Ms. DeCoste then provided an overview regarding the field of wellness tourism, challenges with groups looking for accommodations near their site, and future plans to look at creating on-site accommodations on-site at Fireloch.

Ms. DeCoste also provided an overview of partnerships between Fireloch and Paqtnkek with respect to the construction of Dodeca Homes for both the accommodations at Fireloch, but also as a model for modular housing in the community. She noted that they anticipate that Fireloch will serve as a training centre modular home building in partnership with Dodeca and the NSCC.

Ms. DeCoste provided an overview of an investment model that they are considering as a means of funding their future growth. A summary of upcoming programs, including ongoing programming with Care for Caretakers, workshops and wellness events to support African NS seniors and Physician Retention programming, and working in conjunction with Art for Health Antigonish.

The floor was then opened for questions. The year-round use of the Dodeca cabins, programming opportunities with the high school trades classes, where the facilitators are drawn from, and the future vision for the operation. Several councillors also expressed their support for how Fireloch has grown since they first presented to Joint Council several years ago.

Correspondence

Antigonish Community Soup Gatherings

Mayor Cameron noted that the community soup gathering has reached out and is looking for volunteers from the Councils to attend to help with the preparation and serving of soup on Sunday, December 7th.

Business from Minutes

EDPC South-West Primary Watershed Flood Mapping Study

This item was received for information.

Continuing Business

Water and Sewer Update

Mr. Meisner provided the committee with an update on the work being undertaken by their department on water and sewer projects, including the following:

- Water conservation lifted with return of rainfall Oct 29th

- Test well drilling set for next week (Nov 24th)
- Sewer plant odor issues are being addressed.
- Installation of new front end aeration system currently underway (today/tomorrow)
- STP Screening Project underway – screens on order, civil tender to be issued next
- Sewage Flow Study – Meters installed and recording data since early October

Members of the committee were then able to ask questions, which focussed on details about capacity, process and timelines for test wells, capacity at the sewer plant, and the concerns about smells from the sewer plant as follows:

- Test wells – what happens if water is found? Are we being mindful that it won't take from existing well sources for homes and farms in the area?
 - Mr. Meisner noted that their drilling and any extraction is subject to strict permitting requirements that takes into consideration the current consumers of water on that aquifer.
- How long after the test drilling done should there be results?
 - Lab testing of samples described, could take until Christmas or January for final results, although preliminary by end of week re whether there is water.
- How is the reception with the people?
 - Varies.
- Sewer plant capacity – what percentage of the inflow to the plant is coming from I&I?
 - Generally higher based on seasonal, but base flow over dry summer was measured. Plant flow could double on average due to I&I.
- Capacity for additions to the sewer plant, how many dwellings could that be?
 - Last work for capacity was done for average flows – mentioned rating now – 2024 work shows 150000ga/day to work with. Calculated home use / day, getting to 10% level limiting growth so now looking at an upgrade. 375 new units is the rough calculation of capacity.
- A question was asked about whether the plant nearing capacity and new development could be the reason why there are concerns with smells from the sewer plant.
 - No – smells from dry season that concentrates material. I&I concerns are due to aging systems and deferred maintenance.

A comment was made regarding the math of the remaining capacity of the sewer plant, and how that compares to the housing numbers that are required in the community for meeting community needs. A question was asked about how often the sewer system undergoes maintenance. Mr. Meisner noted that maintenance of 2% per year recommended, and that hasn't been done in the past. Noted that many municipalities in Nova Scotia and across Canada are experiencing the same thing.

Discussion followed about how infrastructure will take time to do upgrades and make improvements. Appreciation given to Mr. Meisner on the work that he has done in the last year as the director, bringing forward many of the issues and getting projects on the go to make improvements.

New Business

Library Funding Concerns

Councillor Mary MacLellan spoke to the concerns raised by the Library regarding the funding that they receive. She provided an overview of the services provided by the library to the community. With the current funding formula for the library, they are in a position where they will be facing a budget shortfall, meaning that they will have to look at cost savings such as cutting hours, layoffs for staff, support for virtual care access, and community support services. Letters outlining these concerns from the Chair of the PARL Board to the Premier and the Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage.

Councillor McKenna shared a summary of the funding breakdown provided to the library to support their operations. He noted that a funding strategy has been negotiation, but not implemented, since the last funding increase in 2019. A communications strategy is being developed, and board members will be visiting the library to speak to users to get feedback on how the library is important to them.

A suggestion was made to encourage the organizations that have offices in the library space to write letters to the Premier and local MLA to express how the space is important to them. Councillor Mary MacLellan shared that PARL is looking at opportunities additional fundraising to support the library operations.

A recess was called at 7:00pm. Mayor Cameron called the committee to order at 7:16

In-Camera Items

Moved and Seconded

That the Joint Town and County Committee move into an in-camera session to discuss Contract Negotiations at 7:16 pm.

Motion Carried

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee adjourns the in-camera session at 8:32 pm.

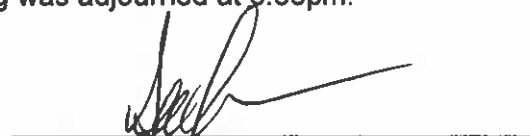
Motion Carried

Adjournment

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:36pm.



Warden Nicholas MacInnis



Mayor Sean Cameron



Shirlyn Donovan, CAO, County of Antigonish



Randy Delorey, CAO, Town of Antigonish