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## Joint Town and County Council Minutes

Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 6:00 PM  
Heatherton Community Centre  
42 Summerside Rd.  
Heatherton, NS

Present:

County of Antigonish

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

Town of Antigonish

Mayor Sean Cameron  
Deputy Mayor Andrew Murray  
Councillor Leon MacLellan  
Councillor Patrick McKenna  
Councillor Diane Roberts  
Councillor Juantia Pelly  
Councillor Jack Sullivan

Shirlyn Donovan, CAO  
Beth Schumacher, Municipal Clerk

Melanie Fougere, Municipal Clerk  
Kyle Meisner, P. Eng., Director of  
Infrastructure and Engineering

**Also Present:**

Dr. Kara Thompson, Inaugural Director of the Victor and Mona Dahdaleh Institute for Innovation and Health  
Eric Stackhouse – Chief Librarian, Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library  
Sheldon MacDonald – Antigonish Farmers Market Association  
Richard Grant - Antigonish Farmers Market Association  
Fenn Martin – Antigonish Culture Alive  
Caleb Marshall – Festival Antigonish

Drake Lowthers, The Reporter  
Gallery (In-Person & Online)

**Absent with Regret:**

Richelle MacLaughlin joined virtually  
Randy Delorey, CAO (Town of Antigonish)

**Call to Order**

The Joint Town and County Council Committee was called to order by Chair Warden Nicholas MacInnis at 6:05 PM. Warden MacInnis welcomed those in attendance. A roundtable of introductions was held.

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A moment of silence was observed in recognition of the recent tragedy in Tumbler Ridge.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Councillor Sullivan requested that an In Camera session be added to the agenda, following New Business, to address Contract Negotiations following the Municipal Government Act (MGA) Section 22(2)(e).

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

Moved by: Councillor MacNamara

Seconded by: Councillor Baden-Clay

**Motion carried.**

**Approval of the November 19, 2025, Council Minutes**

Warden MacInnis called for any errors or omissions in the minutes of the Joint Council meeting held November 19, 2025.

Councillor Sullivan noted that the statement under the *Water and Sewer Update* on page 3, "Sewer Plant odor issues all resolved," should be amended to reflect that it was uncertain whether the matter had been fully resolved.

Minutes were approved as amended.

**Delegations**

**Victor & Mona Dahdaleh Institute for Innovation in Health – Dr. Kara Thompson**

Dr. Thompson delivered a presentation on research related to substance use and prevention, with a focus on building healthy rural communities where people can thrive. Dr. Thompson highlighted the importance of upstream prevention, referencing the Health Impact Pyramid and the need to support individuals early to reduce crisis-level impacts on communities.

Dr. Thompson outlined the Institute's vision of advancing healthy rural communities through research, innovation, and knowledge translation. Key values highlighted included innovation, collaboration, community partnership, equity, and knowledge to action.

Information was also provided regarding education, training, leadership development, and future opportunities to support rural health initiatives. Dr. Thompson shared updates on the development of the Victor Phillip Dahdaleh Hall (VPDH), a new health research facility at St. Francis Xavier University that will support the Institute's work and future growth.

Council discussion followed:

- Councillor McKenna asked what Joint Councils can do to support healthy communities. Dr. Thompson advised that communities could begin with knowledge-based approaches and that municipalities can play a role in supporting alcohol-use prevention, with approaches varying based on local priorities.
- Councillor Sullivan asked how the research aligns with medical professionals. Dr. Thompson noted that collaboration with physicians and medical staff is an area currently being explored.

- Councillor Baden-Clay asked whether the Institute could provide practical, “low-hanging fruit” actions municipalities could take collectively to support healthier communities, and how this information could be shared with Council. Dr. Thompson advised she would be pleased to provide information and would share it through the CAOs for distribution to both Councils.
- Councillor MacNamara asked what could be done to address more harmful drugs in the community. Dr. Thompson noted that options would require further exploration and learning from approaches used in other municipalities.
- Councillor Brophy inquired about the Institute's grant-funded research activities. Dr. Thompson advised that research initiatives include substance use, mental health, culturally safe care for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals in rural communities, cancer screening, and food security. She further noted the importance of making publicly funded research accessible to the public, as research findings are often published in academic journals requiring paid access.
- Councillor Garvie asked about funding sources and the sustainability of funding for the institute asking whether the province will support this financially. Dr. Thompson advised she has spoken with MLA Michelle Thompson, who expressed strong interest in the institute and its potential. She noted that funding remains a key consideration and a common challenge for initiatives of this nature. Dr. Thompson added that work is underway to develop a financial plan to support community engagement, research partnerships with faculty, and student participation in community-based initiatives.

Following questions and discussion, the Warden and members of Joint Council thanked Dr. Thompson for the presentation.

Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library - Eric Stackhouse, Chief Librarian

Mr. Stackhouse provided an overview of the regional approach to public library funding and increasing demand for library services. He noted growth in usage, including increases in visits (approximately 3%), circulation (33%), and internet training (14%), and advised that demand for in-person support and training has increased in the post-COVID period.

Mr. Stackhouse spoke to evolving community expectations of libraries as trusted in-person service providers. He provided an overview of the Library Funding Formula Regulations, noting that Library Boards are responsible for 3% of employee costs.

He also reviewed recent funding history, including a period of no provincial funding increases from 2009–2019, a one-time provincial increase in 2019–2024, and a current provincial funding review indicating libraries are underfunded across all areas.

Mr. Stackhouse advised that the Library Board has established a Revenue Committee to explore additional revenue opportunities.

Council discussion followed:

- Councillor Baden-Clay commented on the importance of library funding to community health and inquired about opportunities for additional municipal support. Mr. Stackhouse advised that continued awareness and advocacy remain important.
- Councillor MacLaughlin inquired about in-kind contributions. Mr. Stackhouse confirmed that this information had been compiled as part of the funding formula review and submitted to the Province.

- Councillor Roberts inquired about grant funding and advocacy efforts. Mr. Stackhouse advised that approximately 300,000 in grant funding had been secured, with additional opportunities being pursued, and noted that correspondence from municipal leaders had been submitted with no response received to date.
- Members emphasized the importance of maintaining library services, recognized the contributions of library staff, and highlighted the broad range of services provided by libraries.
- Discussion also noted that libraries operate as charitable organizations and may accept public donations eligible for charitable tax receipts.
- Mr. Stackhouse advised that overall library funding is comprised of approximately 71% provincial funding, 26% municipal funding, and 3% Library Board contribution.

Following questions and discussion, the Warden and members of Joint Council thanked Mr. Stackhouse for the presentation.

#### Antigonish Farmers Market – Sheldon MacDonald & Richard Grant

Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Grant, representatives from the Antigonish Farmers Market addressed Council regarding the condition of the Farmers' Market parking lot and proposed that the parking lot be paved, requesting consideration by both Town and County Councils.

Mr. Grant spoke to upcoming provincial regulatory requirements and advised that ongoing issues with potholes, drainage, and accessibility have resulted in regular complaints, particularly on Saturday mornings. He referenced best practices at other Farmers' Markets across the province. Mr. Grant noted that paving the parking lot would allow for designated accessibility spaces, organized parking, and improved entrance and exit points.

Council was advised that the Farmers' Market has established a subcommittee, including representatives from the Antigonish Arena Association, the Farmers' Market, and the agriculture sector. The subcommittee intends to proceed with an RFP process to determine the cost of paving the parking lot.

During discussion:

- Mayor Cameron asked whether permission had been received from the Department of Agriculture to undertake work on the property. Mr. Grant confirmed that written permission had been obtained.

Following questions and discussion, the Warden and members of Joint Council thanked Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Grant for the presentation.

#### Antigonish Culture Alive and Festival Antigonish – Fenn Martin & Caleb Marshall

Mr. Martin and Mr. Marshall presented to Council on the growing demand for creative recreation and community group space. They identified capacity and accessibility limitations as current challenges and spoke to the vision of developing a facility with an economic development focus. Mr. Martin and Mr. Marshall outlined a three-part request to Council:

1. Endorsement of the overall project direction
2. Consideration of a \$30,000 financial contribution, proposed as a collaborative effort between the Town and County
3. Appointment of a staff liaison from each municipality and submission of a letter of support

It was noted that, with Council support, work could begin immediately to advance and strengthen the initiative.

Council discussion followed:

- Councillor McKenna spoke to the proposed financial contribution and questioned whether a 50/50 cost-sharing model between the two municipalities was appropriate, given differences in tax base and funding ratios.
- Councillor MacLaughlin inquired about land access. Mr. Marshall advised that a shared services agreement is in place with the University.
- Members expressed support for the initiative and highlighted the importance of creative recreation opportunities, community space, and the project's potential regional impact.

Following questions and discussion, the Warden and members of Joint Council thanked both Mr. Martin and Mr. Marshall for the presentation.

Council recessed at 7:53 p.m. and reconvened at 8:06 p.m.

### **Continuing Business**

#### **Water and Sewer Systems Update**

Kyle Meisner, P. Eng., Director of Infrastructure and Engineering with the Town of Antigonish provided an update on water and sewer infrastructure projects.

#### **Water Supply – Test Well**

Mr. Meisner advised that the final test well report is anticipated by the end of February and will include screen designs, cost estimates, and recommended next steps, including land acquisition and well construction.

Discussion included potential waterline routing and associated costs.

Councillor Baden-Clay inquired whether information would be shared through the Town's website and social media platforms.

#### **Sewer Treatment Plant Upgrades**

Mr. Meisner reported that new aeration chains were installed in November, significantly increasing system capacity. A design review for a new screening system building is underway; timelines have not yet been confirmed.

Councillor Brophy asked whether there are plans to install new wet wells and about the use of bypass lines. Mr. Meisner advised that planning is being undertaken with a future-focused approach, though no guarantees have been made at this time.

**Sewage Flow Study**

Mr. Meisner advised that flow meters have been installed and data collection has been underway since early October. An initial set of data has been shared with County consultants.

**Bay Street Project**

Mr. Meisner provided an overview of the Bay Street sewer project, including the jack-and-bore installation under the railway. Work is scheduled to resume March 9–21.

**STP Capacity**

It was noted that the Town was not successful in securing Canada Housing Infrastructure Funding (CHIF) for sewer capacity upgrades. The County was also unsuccessful. Staff are exploring alternative funding opportunities.

**New Business**

There were no items of New Business.

**In-Camera**

Contract Negotiations - MGA Sec 22(2)(e)  
Moved and Seconded

That the Joint Town and County Committee move into an in-camera session to discuss Contract Negotiations at 8:28 p.m.

Moved and Seconded

That the Committee adjourns the in-camera session at 9:09 p.m.

**Adjournment**

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



Warden Nicholas MacInnis



Mayor Sean Cameron



Shirlyn Donovan, CAO, County of Antigonish



Randy Delorey, CAO, Town of Antigonish