

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee

Held in Council Chamber, 10 Allée Champlain Drive, Cookville, NS
Tuesday, February 4, 2024 – 9:00 a.m.

Attendance

Councillor Wendy Oickle, District 3, Chair
Councillor Edgar Burns, District 7, Vice Chair
Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile
Councillor Morgen Reinhardt, District 1
Councillor Martin Bell, District 2
Councillor Pam Hubley, District 4
Councillor Cathy Moore, District 5 (via Teams)
Councillor Alison Smith, District 6
Councillor Kacy DeLong, District 8
Councillor Ben Brooks, District 9
Deputy Mayor Chasidy Veinotte, District 10

Staff

Tom MacEwan, Chief Administrative Officer
Alex Dumaresq, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance
April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk (via Teams)
Joanne Powers, Executive Assistant

1. Call to Order

Councillor Oickle called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and began by acknowledging that the meeting was held in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

2. Announcements/Acknowledgements/Recognition

Councillor DeLong congratulated the Mahone Island Conservation Association on their successful 19th fundraising gala dinner where they raised \$70,000.

3. Public Input

Andrew Himmelman – Newcombville

Mr. Himmelman made the following comments:

1. Comments in public against the US president, does not feel that municipal officials should be commenting on international politics and trade. Asked that elected officials listen to all residents.
2. Do your research re PCP, ICLEI.
3. Believes tax rate can be lowered via scrapping climate change initiatives.
4. Be kind.

4. Changes/Approval of Agenda (as circulated)

Moved by Councillor Burns, seconded by Councillor Hubley that the February 4, 2025, Finance Committee agenda be approved as circulated. Carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Minutes – December 3, 2024

The Minutes of December 3, 2024 were approved.

6. Business Arising from Minutes - Nil

7. Presentations/Scheduled Times - Nil

8. Consideration of Correspondence - Nil

9. Recommendations from Council - Nil

10. Staff Reports

10.1 Finance Department

10.1.1 Region 6 Waste Management – Budget 2025-26 – Christine McClare, Regional Coordinator

Christine McClare, Regional Coordinator, Region 6 Solid Waste Management, reviewed the presentation entitled, “Budget 2025-26” (included in the agenda package). Her presentation included the following topics:

- Revenue
- Expenses
- Budget 2025-26
- Municipal Billing 2025-26

Ms. McClare reported that the overall Region 6 Waste Management 2025-26 budget was \$846,045 of which MODL’s portion was \$35,940.35.

There was some discussion around education and Ms. McClare talked about Angela Taylor, Regional Educator, who visits schools, businesses, and the general public, to provide education, performs waste audits, inspections and provides general outreach.

Ms. McClare left the meeting.

Moved by Councillor DeLong, seconded by Councillor Hubley that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that Municipal Council approve the Region 6 2025/2026 Budget with the Municipality's share of the budget being \$35,940.35. Carried unanimously.

10.1.2 Proposed Amendments to Policy 049 – Property Tax Rebate

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance, reviewed the report entitled “Amendment, Policy 049 “Property Tax Rebate” (included in the agenda package).

At the January 21, 2025, Policy & Strategy Committee meeting, revised income thresholds and rebate amounts were discussed and were to be considered in the upcoming 2025-26 budget. Staff also recommended that the rebates include an amount for interest that would accrue between the interim and final tax billing if the applicant did not pay the interim tax bill.

Staff recommended that Section 5 of Policy 049 be amended to allow for the application of property tax rebate to overdue interest charges that accrue between the interim and final tax billing.

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Smith that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that Municipal Council amend Policy 049, Property Tax Rebate as presented and hereby gives seven days' notice of Council's intention to amend on February 11, 2025. Carried unanimously.

10.2 Planning & Development

Councillor Burns declared a Conflict of Interest and left the table.

10.2.1 Request to Levy Private Road Maintenance Charge – Homestead Estates Private Road Owners Association

Norma Schiefer, Manager of Development, reviewed the report entitled, “Request to Levy Private Road Maintenance Charge – Homestead Estates Private Road Owners Association.” She explained that a request was received from the Homestead Estates Private Road Owners Association for Council to levy a charge pursuant to the Private Roads By-law for road maintenance fees.

Moved by Councillor Reinhardt, seconded by Councillor DeLong that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that Municipal Council levy a maintenance charge within the Charge Area identified by the Homestead Estates Private Road Owners Association as follows:

- A uniform amount per lot.

With the 2025-26 charge being set at:

- **\$350.00 per lot**

Subject to an Agreement being entered into between the Municipality and the Homestead Estates Private Road Owners Association that satisfies the requirements of Section 9 of the Private Roads By-law. Carried unanimously.

Councillor Burns returned to the table.

10.1.5 Proposed Area Rates – Streetlight & Hydrants

Angela Veinot, Accounting Manager, reviewed the report entitled “2025-26 Proposed Area Rates: Streetlights and Hydrants” (included in the agenda package). The streetlight and hydrant rates are calculated based on the previous years’ revenues collected minus the actual costs. The current year’s property assessment and an estimated overage and shortage in the accounts are included in the calculation.

It was requested that staff provide Councillors with a map of all streetlights for all areas.

Moved by Councillor Burns, seconded by Councillor Veinotte that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that Municipal Council approve:

- **The 2025-26 fire hydrant rate at \$0.1270 per \$100 of assessment and**
- **The 2025-26 street light rates as presented. Carried unanimously.**

10.1.6 Proposed Sewer Rates Based on 5 Year Sewer Rate Review

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance, reviewed the report entitled, “Proposed Sewer Rates Based on 5-year Sewer Rate Review” (included in the agenda package).

Ms. Wentzell, reported as background information, that in 2019 an in-depth analysis and a 5-year projection for the municipal sewer systems was conducted to determine rate adjustments required to meet the original mandate. Council then approved further reductions to the sewer rates to be effective April 1, 2020.

Staff analyze costs and revenue annually to ensure the rates are adequate based on the financial model. Based on the modeled 5-year cycle, when the updated Cookville Wastewater Treatment Plant is constructed and an estimated \$6M loan is secured, the subsidy will increase to \$0.028, which is still within the recommended subsidy of \$0.03.

It was discussed that Council needs to think about whether there is a better way to offer sewer treatment and if there is an alternative that could offer savings for everyone.

Moved by Mayor McLean-Wile, seconded by Councillor Hubley that the Finance Committee direct staff to conduct preliminary research on alternative wastewater technologies for

existing smaller central systems and report back to the Policy and Strategy Committee in 2025. Carried unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Burns, seconded by Councillor Moore that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that Municipal Council approve the proposed Sewer Rates of \$0.43/\$100 of assessment for Global Rate and \$0.25/\$100 of assessment for Hebbville, and further that these rates become effective April 1, 2025. Carried unanimously.

The meeting recessed at 10:06 a.m. and resumed at 10:16 a.m.

12. In Camera

At 10:17 a.m., it was moved by Councillor Hubley seconded by Councillor Reinhardt that the Finance Committee go In Camera to discuss 12.1 Contract Negotiations under Section 22(2)(e) of the MGA. Carried unanimously.

Finance Committee In Camera in session.

At 12:01 p.m., it was moved by Deputy Mayor Veinotte, seconded by Councillor Hubley that Finance Committee come out of In Camera and return to open session. Carried unanimously.

Finance Committee in session.

The meeting recessed at 12:01 p.m. and resumed at 1:23 p.m.

10.1.3 Operating Variance Report 3rd Quarter (to December 31, 2024)

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance, reviewed the report entitled, "Operating Variance Report 3rd Quarter (to December 31, 2024)" (included in the agenda package). She reported that an operating surplus of \$1,706,180, or 3.89%, was projected for the third quarter.

The revenue variance showed \$731,405 and the expenditure variance showed a forecasted budget savings of \$944,800.

10.1.4 Capital Status & CCFB Investment Report 3rd Quarter (to December 31, 2024)

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance, provided an overview of the report entitled, "Capital Status & CCFB Report 3rd Quarter" (included in the agenda package). She reported that of the \$11.5M approved budget, project costs in the amount of \$2,092,239 have been paid at the end of the second quarter with a forecast of \$7.6M to be completed by year end.

10.1.7 Five-Year Financial Strategy & Budget Process Presentation

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance, reviewed the presentation entitled, “Draft Budget Process & 5 Year Financial Strategy” (included in the agenda package).

- Draft Budget Process
- Draft Budget Process Schedule
- 5 Year Financial Strategy
- Approved 5 Year Operating Budget 2024-25
- Reserve Strategy
- Approved 5 Year Reserve Budget 2024-25
- Reserve Transfers in Operating Budget 2024-25
- Mandatory Costs & Expenditure
- Uniform Assessment & Mandatory Costs
- Current Tax Rates
- Tax Rate Jurisdictional Scan 2024-25
- Tax Rate Impact
- Financial Model Assumptions
- Tax Rate & Draft Budget Discussion

Moved by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Burns that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that Municipal Council approve the 2025-26 Budget Schedule process as presented. Carried unanimously.

Moved by Mayor McLean-Wile, seconded by Councillor Hubley that the Finance Committee recommend to Council that Municipal Council approve the Reserve Strategy as part of the 2025-26 budget deliberations. Carried unanimously.

There was discussion about the reserve and having a 5-year strategy when Council’s term is for four years, but it was explained that a 5-year term was required due to Gas Tax.

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor DeLong that the Finance Committee direct staff to prepare the draft budget based on using the existing 2024-2025 tax rates.

It was suggested if the deed transfer tax surplus could be used to provide a one time credit on residential tax bills rather than putting the money in reserves.

Motion to Amend

Moved by Councillor Burns, seconded by Councillor Veinotte that the motion on the floor be amended to include an option of a possible credit to residential properties with a dwelling based on the estimated surplus deed transfer tax revenue. Carried unanimously.

Amended Motion

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor DeLong that the Finance Committee direct staff to prepare the draft budget based on using the existing 2024-2025 tax rates and include an option of a possible credit to residential properties with a dwelling based on the estimated surplus deed transfer tax revenue. Carried unanimously.

11. Added Items - Nil

13. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.