

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

Minutes of a Meeting of Municipal Council

Held in Council Chamber, 10 Allée Champlain Drive, Cookville, N.S.

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

Attendance

Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile

Deputy Mayor Chasidy Veinotte, District 10

Councillor Morgen Reinhardt, District 1

Councillor Martin Bell, District 2

Councillor Wendy Oickle, District 3

Councillor Pam Hubley, District 4

Councillor Cathy Moore, District 5

Councillor Alison Smith, District 6

Councillor Edgar Burns, District 7

Councillor Kacy DeLong, District 8

Councillor Ben Brooks, District 9

Staff

Tom MacEwan, Chief Administrative Officer

Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO

April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk

Joanne Powers, Executive Assistant

1. Call to Order

Mayor McLean-Wile called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.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 Smith acknowledged the official opening of the new location of the Thomas H. Raddall Library in Liverpool.

3. Public Input - Nil

4. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Hubley that the Agenda be approved as circulated. Carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Minutes – March 25, 2025

The Minutes of the March 25, 2025, Council meeting were approved as circulated.

6. Business Arising from Minutes

Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO, reported on the following input from a resident during the Public Input on March 25, 2025:

- Evening Council meetings
Mr. Dumaresq advised that the Council meeting on the second Tuesday of each month would be held in the evening.
- Investigate the development of the draft planning document
The Municipal wide Land Use By-law was sent back to staff to prepare a less restrictive document for discussion at upcoming public engagement sessions.
- Investigate MODL's membership in ICLEI and Partners for Climate Protection (PCP)
ICLEI is a network on local governments for sustainability and is focused on enhancing sustainability at the local government level. The Municipality is not a member of ICLEI.

The PCP is a free program that provided a step-by-step to municipalities on how to develop a local climate change action plan. It is a voluntary group, and it doesn't dictate the required actions rather it sets out a process so communities can develop their own plans.

- End memberships with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM)
FCM is a national advocacy organization for municipalities that speaks on federal policies. Most notably is the Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF), which is a transfer of funds from the federal government to local governments for infrastructure projects. MODL's annual allotment is \$1.2M. They also offer training and resources to municipalities.

Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) is a similar advocacy organization at the provincial level that guides decisions by doing research, offering advice, workshops/training and white papers. They help shape provincial policies that impact municipalities. Notably was the new service exchange which was approved last year which resulted in municipalities no longer having to contribute to housing or corrections through property tax.

7. Awarding of Tenders/RFPs

7.1 Award of Tender 2024-01-003 Municipal Public Road General Maintenance

Jamie Burgess, Senior Municipal Engineer and Tyler Richardson, Municipal Engineer, reviewed the report, "Award of Tender 2024-01-003 Municipal Public Road General Maintenance", (circulated with the agenda).

2025-072 Moved by Councillor DeLong, seconded by Councillor Oickle that Municipal Council authorize staff to award Tender 2024-01-003 Municipal Public Road General Maintenance to Gerhardt Property Improvements Ltd. for an estimated value of \$233,711.42, excluding HST, over the 3-year contract. Carried unanimously.

8. Presentations/Scheduled Times - Nil

9. Consideration of Correspondence - Nil

10. Recommendations from Committees & Boards

10.1. Finance Committee

10.1.1 LCLC – 2025-226 Operating & Capital Budgets

Tom MacEwan, Chief Administrative Officer, reviewed the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre (LCLC) operating and capital budgets (circulated with the agenda),

2025-073 Moved by Councillor Hubley, seconded by Deputy Mayor Veinotte that Municipal Council approve the 2025-2026 LCLC operating expenditure budget in the amount of \$1,917,500 with the Municipality’s operating grant being \$958,750. Carried unanimously.

2025-074 Moved by Deputy Mayor Veinotte, seconded by Councillor Hubley that Municipal Council approve the 2025-2026 LCLC Capital Budget in the amount of \$206,500 with the Municipality’s Capital grant being \$103,250. Carried unanimously.

ANNUAL MODL BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mayor McLean-Wile gave opening remarks (attached to the minutes) and welcomed everyone to the 2025-2026 Budget meeting.

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance, gave a presentation on “Operating & Capital Budget 2025-26” (circulated with the agenda) providing details on the following:

- Council Strategic Plan & Priorities
 - Infrastructure Upgrades, Expansion & Management
 - Regional Economic Development
 - Climate Action
 - Quality of Life & Affordability
 - Communication & Engagement
 - 2024-25 Budget – Success Stories
 - 2025-26 Budget Overview
 - 2025-26 Proposed Tax Rates
 - Tax Rate Jurisdictional Scan
 - Impact of Tax Rate on MODL Residents
 - Targeted Tax Relief for Residents – Property Tax Rebate
 - Assessment Trends

- Deed Transfer Tax
- Budget Highlights & Municipal Financial Condition
- Budget Details
 - Mandatory vs Discretionary Expenditures
 - Mandatory Expenditures & Provincial Transfers
 - Operating Budget Summary
 - Operating Expenditures – summary
 - Operating Revenue: Tax Revenue
 - Operating Revenue: Non-Tax Revenue
 - Operating Revenue: Area Rates
 - 5-year Financial Strategy
 - Operating Reserves
 - Capital Reserves
 - 5-year Financial Strategy – Reserves
 - 2025/26 Capital Budget & Canada Community-Building Fund Investment
 - 5-Year Finance Strategy & Capital Plan
 - Summary

10.1.2 Approval 2025-2026 Operating Budget

2025-075 Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor DeLong that Municipal Council approve the 2025/26 Operating Budget in the amount of \$46,693,200. Carried unanimously.

2025-076 Moved by Councillor Oickle, seconded by Councillor Moore that Municipal Council approve the 2025/26 Residential Tax Rate of \$0.81 per \$100 of assessment. Carried unanimously.

2025-077 Moved by Deputy Mayor Veinotte, seconded by Councillor Hubley that Municipal Council approve the 2025/26 Commercial Tax Rate of \$1.957 per \$100 of assessment. Carried unanimously.

2025-078 Moved by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Moore that Municipal Council approve the 2025/26 Seasonal Commercial Tax Rate at \$ 1.468 per \$100 of assessment. Carried unanimously.

2025-079 Moved by Councillor Oickle, seconded by Deputy Mayor Veinotte that Municipal Council approve the 2025/26 Flat Fee Area Rate of \$10 per residential and commercial property in the Village of Hebbville on behalf of the Hebbville Village Commission. Carried unanimously.

2025-080 Moved by Councillor Burns, seconded by Councillor Bell that Municipal Council approve the Reserves Transfers as presented in the 2025/26 Operating Budget. Carried unanimously.

10.1.3 Approval 2025-2026 Capital Budget

2025-081 Moved by Councillor Reinhardt, seconded by Councillor DeLong that Municipal Council approve the 2025/26 Capital Budget and the Canada Community Building Fund Investment in the amount of \$18,370,100 and further that the 5-Year Capital Plan be approved as presented. Carried unanimously.

2025-082 Moved by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Bell that Municipal Council approve the Reserves Transfers as presented in the 5-year Capital Plan. Carried unanimously.

10.1.4 2025-2026 Budget Highlights

The 2025-2026 Budget Highlights were circulated with the agenda.

10.2 Nominating Committee

10.2.1 MODL Provincial Volunteer Representative

The Nominating Committee met on April 1, 2025, and made the following recommendation:

2025-083 Moved by Councillor Oickle, seconded by Councillor Moore that Municipal Council accept the recommendation of the Nominating Committee and approve the nomination of Sheila Woodcock of Feltzen South as the 2025 Provincial Volunteer representative for the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg. Carried unanimously.

10.2.2 Sawpit Wharf Advisory Committee Membership

The Nominating Committee met on April 1, 2025, and made the following recommendation:

2025-084 Moved by Councillor Oickle, seconded by Councillor Bell that Municipal Council accept the recommendation of the Nominating Committee and approve the appointment of Hal West and Cowan George as members on the Sawpit Wharf Committee for three-year terms ending November 2027.

There was discussion regarding membership terms for the Committee. It was noted that this could be brought back to a future meeting.

The Motion on the floor was voted on and carried unanimously.

10.3 Municipal Joint Services Board

10.3.1 PCAP Funding

Mr. MacEwan advised that a request was received from the Municipal Joint Services Board (MJSB) to provide support for their Provincial Capital Assistance Program (PCAP) funding application (circulated with the agenda) to offset a portion of the compost tipping floor replacement project at a total cost of \$150,000.

2025-085 Moved by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Hubley that Municipal Council provide a resolution supporting the Municipal Joint Services Board's submission of a Provincial Capital Assistance Program (PCAP) funding application to offset a portion of the compost tipping floor replacement project at a total cost of \$150,000. Carried unanimously.

11. Staff Reports - Nil

12. Mayor's/Deputy Mayor's/Councillors' Matters

12.1 MJSB

Councillor Oickle provided an update on the following matters of the Municipal Joint Services Board:

- Possibility of MJSB corporate offices relocating to the new Lumia Building
- PCAP funding application
- Brush tipping fees waiver approved
- Approval of Procurement Specialist position
- Request from LCLC Board to be included in the MJSB Shared Services arrangement.

12.2 Deputy Mayor's Update

Deputy Mayor Veinotte advised that she attended all meetings as assigned, agenda briefings, and the first MODL planning open house meetings.

12.3 Mayor's Update

Mayor McLean-Wile's update is attached to the Minutes.

13. Added Items - Nil

14. In Camera - Nil

15. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

BUDGET OPENING

April 8, 2024

Good evening and welcome to our 2025-2026 budget meeting.

This is the first budget for this term of Council and we took a different approach to the planning and development of the budget. All the discussions were held in public and open for public input. We did not receive as much public involvement as we might have liked however, I am not discouraged by this as this was year 1 and it will take time for people to understand the process we follow and the extent to which residents can be involved and contribute to the discussion.

For next year we will start the process in November with a reconfirmation or refinement of our strategic priorities and then follow with the budget planning process. We have to consider the requirements from both the provincial and federal government, our priorities, the needs of our community and the opportunities that present themselves to work with others to achieve our goals.

In developing our budget we begin by recognizing the mandatory contributions that are made for education, policing, assessment services and libraries, road maintenance (on the municipally owned roads – 11.3km), and waste collection. This accounts for .60 cents of each tax dollar, leaving .40 cents for the other services – parks and recreation, administration, economic development,

During our planning process we recognized that affordability is a key concern for many residents. The municipality does not have a lot of ways to address this however here is what we have done:

- There is a significant increase in the Property Tax rebate program. This is targeted to help those who need it most, like seniors or people with lower incomes who are homeowners. We have increased the budget from \$550,00 to \$753,400 which is the equivalent of reducing the tax rate by \$.02. We believe we lead the province outside of HRM with the amount returned to low income homeowners
- We have recognized the need to support children by expanding the funding for our PRO Kids program so they can access cultural and recreational opportunities. There is also a program for adults which supports their participation in sport, recreation and cultural activities.
- Community groups will see increased grants in this budget and we are contributing more funding to Fire Service, the Regional Emergency Management Office and important services like Lunenburg County Wheels.
- MODL collects more than \$4.7 million dollars each year and sends this directly back to the fire departments. In addition, MODL spends more than \$400,000 to provide additional services to our fire departments. We have a Fire Service Coordinator on staff who works with the fire department on a wide range of activities, all intended to support the service they provide to our

community which includes recognition event grants, leadership training, Family and Members Assistance Programs, recruitment campaigns, group insurance, and WCB premiums.

Parks and recreation are an important part of the work this municipality has championed for many years. Outdoor spaces are near and dear to our residents and appreciated for the trail ways, parks and access to water that are provided. We will continue to invest in these areas, working to develop the parks with a planned strategy which will develop the parks in an appropriate way and recognize the need to make our parks accessible and welcoming for all residents.

We continue to invest in major water and wastewater projects to ensure we do not incur costly failures in the future and create open areas for future residential development including affordable housing.

We have committed to planning for affordable housing development with the collection of data on the housing needs of our community and the subsequent preparation of a housing strategy which will likely be available in early 2026.

We are investing in projects that benefit our climate, address affordability and accessibility by committing to the establishment of the first phase of a public transit system. This will connect the communities immediately surrounding the Town of Bridgewater and Osprey Village with the town. I am very excited to see this happen within the next year.

We do put money aside – into reserves for future capital projects. This is a responsible and common-sense approach to managing residents' tax dollars. It requires us to plan, save money and allows time for seeking other funds from the federal and provincial government to support our work.

I would like to thank our staff – CAO Tom MacEwan, Director of Finance Elana Wentzell and the many others who worked diligently and thoughtfully – recognizing the direction offered by Council and the public to deliver a strong and balanced financial plan. We are in an enviable position as a Municipality to have the finances and ability to continue to take on new projects and invest in our community.

Elana would you please lead us through the Budget Presentation.

Mayor's Report

April 8, 2025

The past two weeks have been filled with discussions around the municipal planning strategy. As a Council, we committed to an immediate opportunity for residents to meet with us and MODL staff to learn about the reasons for a planning strategy and share their concerns about the draft that was released in late March.

My own involvement in these meetings started with attendance at the New Germany Community Café last Thursday. The Café is well attended by residents in the New Germany area and Councillor Smith, Moore and I were welcomed by the group.

Many people did know about the release of the plan; however, many did not have much understanding of the reasons for the plan or the details of the plan. As we know, concerns over restrictions on livestock were the most common concerns.

This is a worthwhile use of our time for many reasons beyond hearing the concerns over land use planning. I talked to people concerned about road conditions and unsightly premises. Being accessible and listening to concerns should be a priority for all of us.

In discussions with our CAO we agreed to begin tabling policy positions on the five statements of interest – water, agricultural land, infrastructure, housing and .>>>>>>. Planning staff will bring these policy positions to Council starting in mid-May. These again will be public discussions and will begin the revision process. Input from our district wide community meetings and input we receive as we review the policy positions will provide the foundation for a revised planning strategy. This entire process will extend well into the summer.

The priority for the first Council discussions in May will be policy statements on water, agriculture and home-based business. These were the areas where we heard the most concerns to date.

I met with Larry Haggell, the former chair of the Sherbrooke Lake Advisory Committee to learn of the history of the Sherbrooke Lake Park selection, planning and decision-making.

I also met with two residents who had concerns about the municipal planning strategy and a variety of issues related to his local fire department.

I attended the Vogler's Cove Breakfast along with Councillor Reinhardt.

Councillor Smith and I attended a public meeting called Thinking Beyond Band Aids, organized by the United Church and the Lunenburg County Community Health Board. This brought a wide variety of community members and representatives of not-for-profits from the area to discuss

the need for our community to think beyond the short-term solutions to community issues such as hunger, homelessness, mental health and addiction.

Yesterday, our CAO and our Building Inspection Graham Hopkins visited with Johnny Walls at Walls Metal Roofing to learning of his company's prototype CUBIT, a modular home which was unveiled at the recent home show in Halifax. He and his team spent two years developing a home that can be mass produced using components resembling oversized LEGO pieces. He has introduced an innovative approach to home construction which he hopes can be used to provide a low-cost housing alternative for first homeowners and those interested in 'granny suites' or tiny homes. The modular units are just under 400 square feet and can be blocked together to add more floor space as the homeowners needs and finances change. Their work and production site are very impressive and we will be following up by providing some contacts to assist in streamlining their approval process comparable to housing sold by Prestige and other 'modular homes'.