

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

Minutes of a Special Meeting of Municipal Council

Held in Council Chamber, 10 Allée Champlain Drive, Cookville, N.S.
Tuesday, February 12, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.

Attendance

Deputy Mayor Chasidy Veinotte, District 10, Chair
Councillor Morgen Reinhardt, District 1
Councillor Martin Bell, District 2 (arrived 6:23pm)
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 Ben Brooks, District 9

Regrets

Councillor Kacy DeLong, District 8
Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile

Staff

Tom MacEwan, Chief Administrative Officer
Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO
April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk
Tina Robichaud-Bond, Executive Assistant

1. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Veinotte called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m. and began by acknowledging that the meeting was held in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

3. Municipal Budget

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance, began the presentation of the draft Operating Budget noting that the draft capital budget had been introduced to Council on November 25, 2025 and updates presented on January 13, 2026. She also noted that Council would have an opportunity to review both the draft Capital and draft Operating budgets on March 3, 2026 with the formal approval of the budget scheduled for March 31, 2026.

Ms. Wentzell explained the process, parameters, and fundamentals of the operating budget and expectations of Council.

Key Highlights:

- Residential assessments increased 7.8%; commercial increased 2.2%.

- 89% of properties capped at 2.6%; average tax bill projected to increase \$54 if rates remain unchanged.
- 39% of the municipal budget (\$18.1M) is allocated to mandatory expenditures, projected to rise 5.46%.
- Deed-transfer tax remains 1.25% and continues to be a strong but unpredictable revenue source.
- New recycling agreement creates a stable revenue source and eliminates recycling tipping fees.
- Five-year financial projections show small future deficits, with reserves potentially required to maintain balance.

3.1 Staff Presentation on draft Operating Budget

Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO, gave a presenting on the proposed operating budget for the Administration and Protective Services departments. Discussions followed and clarifications were provided on details of the proposed operating budget.

Key Highlights

- Core Services: Legislative support, municipal administration, fire services coordination, and policing oversight (RCMP).
- Programs: Council support, grant coordination (~\$550,000), and water financing program (up to \$500,000).
- Funding & Reserves: Primarily staffing and operational budgets (\$2.6M), fire services flow-through (\$5.5M), policing (\$4.9M), election reserve (\$50,000), and \$400,000 net from reserves for operations and water programs.

Stephen Pace, Director of Engineering & Public Works, gave a presentation on the proposed operating budget for the Engineering & Public Works department. Discussions followed and clarifications were provided on details of the proposed operating budget.

Key Highlights:

- Core Services: Wastewater systems, municipal roads, streetlights, municipal buildings.
- Key Programs: Road maintenance, wastewater treatment and capital upgrades.
- Funding & Reserves: \$25k to roads, \$175k to sewer, \$350k from Canada Community Building Fund; net \$150k from reserves.

Jeff Merrill, Director of Planning & Development Services, gave a presentation on the proposed operating budget for the Planning and Development department. Discussions followed and clarifications were provided on details of the proposed operating budget.

Key Highlights:

- Core Services: Regional inspections, planning & policy, GIS/civic addresses, private roads, climate & clean energy programs, housing, and transit.

- Key Programs: Clean Energy Financing, Energy Navigator, climate action projects, housing strategy, regional inspection services, planning policy development.
- Notable Projects & Reserves: Housing strategy \$110k, Clean Energy Financing \$500k, private roads revenue (5% admin fee), Hemlock-Woolly Adelgid \$200k; reserve transfers \$800k.

Dave Waters, Director of Economic Development, gave a presentation on the proposed operating budget for the Economic Development department. Discussions followed and clarifications were provided on details of the proposed operating budget.

Key Highlights:

- Core Services: Implements 5 year action Plan; manages Osprey Village, affordable housing, and community hub projects.
- Key Programs: Regional economic platform; business support, marketing, investment readiness, workforce development, agriculture, and community grants.
- Funding & Reserves: Personnel and project costs; community hub fit-up funded via reserves; marketing and platform initiatives included.

Trudy Payne, Director of Recreation, Parks & Tourism, gave a presentation on the proposed operating budget for the Recreation, Parks & Tourism department. Discussions followed and clarifications were provided on details of the proposed operating budget.

Key Highlights:

- Core Services: Recreation, parks, trails, tourism, volunteer support, and community programs.
- Key Programs: Active transportation, e-bike loan, volunteer summit, ProKids/ProFund, major events grants, Parks, community engagement and special projects.
- Notable Projects & Reserves: Trail upgrades \$78k+ (municipal share included), arena support \$60k, Zero Hunger Fund \$24k, Mahone Bay Center \$10k; Town of Lunenburg additional budget request \$150K; net transfers \$180,500 reserves.

Elana Wentzell, Director of Finance, gave a presentation on the proposed operating budget of the Finance Department. Discussions followed and clarifications were provided on details of the proposed operating budget.

Key Highlights:

- Core Services: Municipal accounting, property taxation, grants, investments, debt servicing, financial reporting.
- Key Programs: Tax rebate program, reserve/infrastructure fund management, shared services (IT, procurement, privacy officer), and mandatory contributions (assessment, library, education).
- Funding & Reserves: Expenditures \$18.6M (+3.5%), revenue \$1.9M (+5%), reserves for waste, gas tax, and capital.

3.2 Expanded Public Input

There were no members of the public in attendance for Public Input.

Council recessed at 7:08 p.m. and resumed at 7:14 p.m.

3.3. Council Deliberation and Direction to Staff

Council deliberated and clarification was given on various topics.

- Water Relief/Drought – \$30K budget; flexible; long-term goal to shift residents to financing program.
- Conservation Options – Could include rain barrels/cisterns; communication needs updating.
- Comfort Centre Grants – Support backup power; open to any eligible building.
- Communications – \$182K+ budget; review effectiveness of “Council in the Community” meetings; possible reallocation.
- Finance/Facilities – Credit card fees under review; CES rental covers operations; capital upgrades tenant responsibility.
- Animal Control – Shared service with Chester; municipal portion \$44K covers full services.
- Economic Development – Action plan reporting; marketing flexible; Well-tide operating costs.
- Planning/Energy Navigator – LCAP projects placeholder; navigator assists residents and community halls; 50/50 cost-share with Town of Bridgewater.
- Environmental Programs – Hemlock treatment over several years; tree removal only if hazard; Sherbrooke Lake monitoring design for use elsewhere.

Consensus was no revisions to be made to the draft operating budget.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.