A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Baddeck on April 20, 2026, at 10:00am with Warden Organ in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1 - Donna Matheson-Lefort

District #2 - Perla MacLeod, Deputy Warden

District #4 - Rosella Born

District #6 – Tim Donovan

District #7 - Jackie Organ, Warden

District #8 – Wanda Hennick

STAFF PRESENT

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

Alix Redden, CFO

Steff MacLeod, Municipal Clerk, Recorder

Ursula Melski, Manager of Communications

Jessica Klein, Digital Communications Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Warden Organ called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval.

ABSENT

District #5 - Fraser Patterson

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Warden Organ, before asking for approval of the agenda, with an addition of an In-Camera to discuss a personnel matter.

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the Agenda for April 20, 2026.

Motion Carried.

PROCLAMATION – MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS MONTH MAY 2026

WHEREAS, Multiple sclerosis symptoms vary widely, and the disease may cause symptoms such as fatigue, lack of coordination, weakness, tingling, impaired sensation, vision problems, bladder and bowel problems, and cognitive and mood changes; and

WHEREAS, MS is thought to be caused by a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle risk factors; and

WHEREAS, MS Canada is the only national organization in Canada that supports both MS research and services for people affected by MS; and

WHEREAS, Annual fundraising events such as the MS Walk, MS Bike, and A&W Canada's Burgers to Beat MS campaign support programs to enhance the lives of people affected by multiple sclerosis and help support MS research in Canada; and

WHEREAS, Since 1948, MS Canada has provided over $224 million for MS research; and is grateful for the dedication and commitment of supporters and volunteers that have made this possible; and

WHEREAS, Together we will find ways to connect and empower the MS community to create positive change and see a world free of multiple sclerosis.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That I, Warden Jackie Organ, on behalf of Victoria County Council do hereby proclaim May to be Multiple Sclerosis Month in Victoria County.

PROCLAMATION MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH – MAY 2026

WHEREAS the month of May is observed as Mental Health Awareness Month, offering an important opportunity to increase understanding, reduce stigma, and highlight the value of mental health supports and services; and

WHEREAS mental health is a fundamental aspect of overall health and well-being, influencing the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities locally, nationally, and globally; and

WHEREAS mental health challenges and illnesses are common, with a significant portion of the population in Canada experiencing impacts to their mental well-being in any given year; and

WHEREAS mental illness can affect people of all ages, cultures, and socioeconomic background, and may be further influenced by systemic barriers and social inequities, including racism, poverty, homelessness discrimination, and gender-based violence, which can limit access to appropriate care and support; and

WHEREAS Victoria County acknowledges the importance of mental wellness and is committed to promoting awareness, fostering inclusive and supportive communities, reducing stigma, and supporting initiatives that advance mental health and well-being for all residents;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That I, Warden Jackie Organ, on behalf of Victoria County Council do hereby proclaim May to be 'Mental Health Awareness Month' in Victoria County.

May is also Gaelic Heritage month and there will be a proclamation read and a flag raising at the Municipal Building on May 4th at 9:30am.

MINUTES

Let it stand that the March 23, 2026, Minutes were read.

Warden Organ acknowledged that there was a junior journalist, Jeremy Best, in attendance who is working with a local reporter on behalf of the Victoria Reporter.

PRESENTATIONS

FIRE SERVICES UPDATE – LYLE DONOVAN

Mr. Donovan went over Fire Services and some of the changes that are coming, highlights included:

- Currently 3 dispatch centres
- Provided current call volumes in the County.
- Currently 21% of calls are medical calls
- Fire Service Training being standardized across the province, including PPE.
- Victoria County purchased 4 Dry Hydrants, installing them throughout the County.
- The province is going to make a new position call a Fire Commissioner
- All Personal Protective Equipment to meet a standard (Provincial)
- Proposed dispatch and record keeping model which will be free for all fire departments and municipalities.
- 6 Structural Protection Units purchased for Nova Scotia (1 to be based in Cape Breton).

- FTAC (Fire Training Advisory Committee) review the training standards around the province. They are making sure that there is safety and consistency around Nova Scotia.
- Make a requirement for firefighters driving heavy fire apparatus to have the proper licensing (Class 3).
- Introduction of Bill 158 and 186.
- The vital role of firefighters and the fire service leaders is not changing.
- Municipalities are not required to provide fire services: Existing authority under the Municipal Government Act remains the same.
- Current fire service organizations remain in place: Fire departments, brigades, commissions, and associations are not being restructured currently.
- The province will continue working collaboratively with municipalities and fire service providers to support a gradual move toward a service delivery model led by municipalities, where appropriate (3-year plan).
- A municipal services delivery model would integrate fire services in municipal operations: delivered either directly by municipal staff or through agreements and regional collaborations.
- Provincial support for those interested in transitioning: If a municipality and a fire service provider(s) decide to transition to this model, the new OFC will provide support.
- Where a municipality opts in, councils would govern and oversee fire service levels. Decisions will be informed by standards, expert advice and risk assessments.

There was some discussion around Level 1 Training, ensuring there is a standard in place for all of Nova Scotia, signage, including civics, costs of training and outfitting new recruits, and mental health impacts. A question was raised regarding if volunteer firefighters have to respond to medical first aid calls, and they do not. They have to attend a certain amount of fire calls but there is no requirement for them to go to medical calls if they choose not to. It is usually up to the individual fire departments.

CAPE BRETON REGIONAL VICTORIA CENTRE FOR EDUCATION (CBRVCE) – SUSAN KELLEY and LEWIS MACDONALD

Ms. Kelley and Mr. MacDonald went over the current enrollment numbers and floor plans of Baddeck Academy and gave a brief long-range outlook for the building, including a roof section replacement.

A question was raised about bringing the Skills Trades programs and there is no immediate plan to do that in Baddeck at this time.

The CBRVCE is responsible for signage at the schools but not the school zones and it was stated that Cabot High needed a new sign and that, that was the responsibility of the school board to get a new one.

CAO MacEachen asked Ms. Kelley for permission to use the school parking lots for the document shredding events in May and Ms. Kelley gave permission to allow the shredding

trucks to park onsite at Baddeck Academy and Cabot if there are no other events going on that day at the schools. A formal request will be sent.

There was a request for old banners to be put back up in the gym at Cabot.

RCMP UPDATE – BRIAN BONNELL

Mr. Bonnell provided Council with an update regarding the National change of uniforms and cars. The uniforms are now dark blue, and the police vehicles are going to be transitioning to a black and white vehicle but at this time there is no formal release or correspondence.

CAO MacEachen asked how they would be getting rid of old uniforms and cars, uniforms and clothing is collected, and they get incinerated. Police cars will be crushed; they no longer go to auction since the Portapique tragedy.

District Commander Weise is on a gradual return to work and should be full operation by September.

Do local trainees get to come back close to home to get posted and he said yes and that is a change from how it was done in the past. If you are a resident of NS, they are telling you before you go to Depot that you will be posted in NS.

Is there a possibility to get more officers when it is the tourist season and he will get an answer to the question.

IT was discussed that break ins are on the rise on the North Shore and also cyber/identity crimes targeting seniors. There have been a couple of arrests made in connection to those break ins, and it is important to educate yourselves, don't give out your personal information. RCMP encourage seasonal residents to let them know when they are shutting down their properties for the season.

Councillors wanted to know how they should advocate for youth and drug use, we all have to do a better job on educating our youth, explaining that stuff lives on the internet forever. Unfortunately, drugs are present everywhere. Have open honest conversations with your kids about drug use and the side effects, including marijuana. The school or community groups should reach out to the RCMP to get them in there to give educational sessions.

The missing person case in Tarbot was brought up. It was determined that the female had been missing for 2-3 years and it was referred to the major crime unit, so they are currently investigating it.

COUNCIL REPORTS

DISTRICT 1

- On April 12th, I had the honour of attending the Iona Volunteer Fire Department AGM, where Fire Chief Colin MacNeil and Deputy Fire Chief Gregory MacNeil were officially

sworn in once again as they continue in their leadership roles. Their ongoing dedication and experience are a tremendous asset to the department and the community. The evening was especially meaningful with Dena MacDonald in attendance, who brought along a book documenting the early days of the Iona Volunteer Fire Department. Her father, Arthur Campbell, was a founding member and served as the very first Fire Chief in 1959—a legacy that continues to inspire. Thank you to all members, past and present, for your service and continued commitment.

- Last Friday, I attended a conference hosted by BIG-NS in Halifax that focused on advocacy strategies for advancing a Basic Income Guarantee. I participated as a panel speaker during the afternoon session, which explored effective approaches to municipal-level advocacy. The discussion highlighted practical strategies, shared experiences, and ways local governments and community leaders can play a role in supporting and promoting the implementation of a basic income guarantee.
- A constituent contacted me last week to inquire whether there are alternative methods for receiving information regarding municipal closures beyond Facebook, noting that they do not have a Facebook account, or whether calling ahead remains the only available option. They also asked whether additional notification mechanisms may be available or under consideration. I advised them that I would make inquiries, as these matters are typically addressed through administrative processes.

CAO MacEachen said it is posted on our website and Voyent and encourage everyone to sign up for Voyent as this is used for Municipal notifications as well as social media and website.

DISTRICT 2

- Provincial Public Works issues have all been reported.
- Volunteer of the Year Awards submissions are being accepted until April 27th.

DISTRICT 4

- All inquiries, questions, and concerns from residents have been forwarded to the Provincial Public Works Manager for follow-up.
- On March 25th, I requested a formal update on the Englishtown Ferry refit. The response, which I shared on my council Facebook page, indicates the ferry is expected to return to service by the end of April. I will share any new information as it becomes available.
- I attended a Regional Well-being Conference on March 26th, where I had the opportunity to learn about upstream health and well-being initiatives across Nova Scotia and connect with other communities.
- Governance training for elected officials was held on March 30th, it was a great day learning and networking with councillors from across the province.
- I enjoyed attending the fundraiser at St. Andrew's Hall in North River on April 11th. It was wonderful to meet community members, enjoy homemade soups and desserts, and thank the volunteers for their hard work.

- Communities are preparing for Earth Day on April 22nd, which officially kicks off the annual spring cleanup. Community volunteers will be cleaning the sides of roads and public spaces over the next month to help keep our district looking its best.
- Overall, it has been a busy month full of events, training, and community engagement, with April and May shaping up to be just as active.

DISTRICT 6

- Cabot Trail 100 engagement at the Legion on April 23 at 7pm.
- Ski Cape Smokey is hoping to stay open until the end of the month.

DISTRICT 7

- The first FIS (Federation of International Skiing and Snowboarding) Race in Nova Scotia since the 1970s (also at Cape Smokey where a young Todd Broker won) was successfully held at Ski Cape Smokey from April 9-12th. A team of volunteers from Victoria Co. and the Sydney Ben Eoin area made this event possible. Thirty athletes from Canada, the US, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago and New Zealand competed for valuable points that determine their starting position for the next season and a chance to compete for the Junior World Championships! World renowned coaches were here with athletes from 3 Ski Academies, 1 College and part of the Canadian National Development Team. This generated a boost in the local economy. Any open stores, restaurants and motels were busy. The event will be held again next year with an anticipated bigger number of athletes. Bravo Ski Cape Smokey.
- Prior to the FIS Race, the Cape Smokey Race Team held a 4-day Race Camp for athletes ages 8-18. 60 athletes registered from Newfoundland, New Brunswick and all 4 ski hills in NS. It was also a big success with more collaboration between our race team and the folks at Ski Ben Eoin Race Club. It also generated a big boom for local businesses during the less busy month of April!
- The Young at Heart Senior Social is about to wrap up in Neil's Harbour. A total of 21 events has taken place to date at St. Andrew's Parish Hall. Each week brought between 35-55 people together to learn about a wide range of topics like Nidra Yoga, Wills and Estate Planning, Waste Management, etc. and to enjoy monthly visits from the Outreach Book Table. The participants enjoyed weekly Food Door Prizes and monthly Food markets. The last event was attended by 57 people, and the special guest was Mary Janet MacDonald of Tunes and Wooden Spoons fame. Mary Janet said of the event, "We made salads, a casserole and dessert and had a few laughs as well ... I loved every moment." Coordinator Karla Williams would like to extend a huge thank you to the Municipality for the chance to be part of the pilot project. She says it has been an immensely satisfying experience because of the positive impact it has made on so many lives in her area.
- We held the Clayton Organ Memorial Bursary Auction last week and we were overwhelmed with the outpouring generosity from people donating auction items 163 lots, monitory donations and all the bidders. Also, we have tickets on a Beach Bike

donated by Surf and Turf Adventures which will be drawn on April 25. Lisa MacKinnon held a trivia night on Sunday with all proceeds also going to the bursary fund. I do not have a total to share in funds raised but as soon as I get the final total I will be posting it. When all funds are collected Clayton's daughter and I will be handing a cheque over to Cabot Education Center to be put into the bursary account. Our local resident journalist, Jeremy Best will be in attendance to take a photo and do a little story. All of the family and I cannot convey how grateful we are to have had such wonderful support in helping us with this fundraiser to help graduating students of Cabot and keeping Clayton's name alive.

- Attended the red-carpet event on Friday for the premier of the Cape Breton movie Little Lorraine. What an amazing evening great to see Cape Breton on the big screen. I would encourage everyone to go see this movie a few twists and turns I wasn't expecting. I'm glad I went.
- Wish all the Fishers a good season, may your seas be calm and catches be bountiful and be safe out there.

DISTRICT 8

- On April 29th from 1-4pm there will be a Health Fair at Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre.
- Cabot Trail 100 Engagement session will be held on April 23rd at 2pm at the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre.
- Cabot Fire Ladies Axillary are having a Spring Market, see their Facebook page to book a table.
- Happy setting day to all the fisher people who are getting ready to start their lobster season.

SUBMITTED REPORTS

a. CAO Report

CAO MacEachen highlighted a few items from her report:

- The Re-Use Centre is opening for its first Saturday of the season, this Saturday on April 25th.
- Cabot Trail 100 Engagement Sessions have started.
- Volunteer of the Year nominations are being submitted.
- Earth Day is April 22nd, staff will be involved in a cleanup, clean up kits will be available, contact the Solid Waste Educator, Morgan to get the kits.
- There is a new Sports Swap Program, it's a great re-use initiative, check the website for details and dates.

There is no official date for heavy garbage pickup yet, but there will be communication out about it soon. The tender just closed.

MOTIONS

a. EASTERN DISTRICT PLANNING COMMISSION (EDPC) APPOINTMENTS:

The following appointments were submitted for Council approval:

- Building Inspectors: **David MacKenzie,** and **Sean Donovan**
- Assistant Building Inspector: Todd Samson
  - Alternates: Jonathan Martin, Andre Samson and Luke Ross
- Development Officer: **Kristen Scanlan**
  - Alternates: John Bain; Andrew Jones; Hetvi Joshi; Brenan MacDonald and Mikayla Tait. Assistant Development Officers: Heike Bruckner, David MacKenzie and Luke Ross
- Fire Inspector: **David MacKenzie**
  - Alternates: A. Samson, L. Ross, S. Donovan; **T.** Samson; and J. Martin.
- Dangerous or Unsightly Premises
  - Administrators: **Sean Donovan** and **John Bain**
  - Alternate: Luke Ross, David MacKenzie and Andre Samson
- Special Constables: Building/Fire Codes, Dangerous or Unsightly Premises, Land Use By-laws
  - **Sean Donovan** and **Jonathan Martin**

These appointments stay in place so long as they are employees of the Commission or until they are replaced by new appointments

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort, seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve the EDPC appointments.

Motion Carried.

Councillor Born added that a Planning Advisory Committee still has to be formed as well.

b. IN-CAMERA RECOMMENDATION FROM APRIL 7, 2026, COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING:

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-Lefort, seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the In-Camera recommendations from April 7, 2026.

Motion Carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no committee reports.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Victoria Highland Civic Centre
- DOJ Police Service Recipient Update
- Municipal Advocacy– Cell Service
- Municipal Advocacy – Support for Antigonish Coalition

CAO MacEachen said that the DOJ would be willing to come to Council to discuss changes and Council requested they be invited to attend a future Council meeting.

IN-CAMERA – LEGAL MATTER and PERSONNEL

On Motion of Councillor Donovan, seconded by Councillor Born to go In-Camera to discuss a legal and personnel matter.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan, seconded by Deputy Warden MacLeod to approve the recommendations made In-Camera.

Motion Carried.

QUESTIONS FROM GALLERY

There were 3 members of the public present but had no questions.

NEXT MEETNG

May 19, 2026, at 10:00am.

ADJOURN

Warden Organ made a motion to adjourn at 12:08pm