A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers at Baddeck on August 12, 2025, at 9:00am with Warden Organ in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1 - Donna Matheson-Lefort

District #2 - Perla MacLeod, Deputy Warden

District #4 - Rosella Born

District #5 - Fraser Patterson

District #6 – Tim Donovan

District #7 - Jackie Organ, Warden

District #8 – Wanda Hennick

STAFF PRESENT

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

Steff MacLeod, Municipal Clerk and Executive Assistant, Recorder

Alix Redden, CFO

Ursula Melski, Manager of Communications

Jessica Klein, Digital Communications Administrator

Morgan MacInnis, Summer Intern

ABSENT

District #3 - Jess Kerr

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On Motion of Councillor Matheson- LeFort seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the Agenda for August 12, 2025.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the July 7, 2025 Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve the Regular Council Minutes of July 7th 2025.

Motion Carried.

PRESENTATIONS

DESTINATION CAPE BRETON - TERRY SMITH

Mr. Smith gave a presentation to Council and some highlights included:

- Marketing Levy Update, CBRM keeping 50% of their levy. Destination Cape Breton did not agree with this direction; it was done without any consultation.
- Have had some social media influencers visiting the Island.
- Waterfall Season, seeing some growth.
- Launched a new website.
- Recently shot a 2026 Campaign with lots of filming in Victoria County.
- Cabot Trail 100th Anniversary in development.
- Results Year to Date: Hit a record number on our website, anticipating more this year.
- All of our markets are up.
- Room Nights Sold, until the end of April, down 8%. Earlier end to the snowmobiling season.
- STR: Nights sold are up 13%. Bookings are up for August, September and October.
- Parks Canada Sites: AGB is up 25% and camping in the Highlands are up 23%.

BASIC INCOME NS – MANDY (ELIZABETH) KAY-RAINING BIRD

Ms. Kay-Raining Bird gave a presentation and highlights included:

- Advocates for a Livable Basic Income for Nova Scotians.
- Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) overview, indicating that everyone has a sufficient income to meet their basic needs. It is a proactive approach versus a reactive one.

Following the presentation and discussion, it was noted that Councillor Matheson-LeFort would bring forward a motion later in the Council meeting to advocate for Basic Income.

COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS

- AMANS (ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATORS OF NOVA SCOTIA) CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP REQUEST.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Deputy Warden MacLeod to sponsor the AMANS conference for $2,500.00

Motion Carried.

- INVERNESS COUNTY ASYLUM COMMORATION PROJECT

Council requested more information and requested representatives of the project to come to council to discuss.

On Motion of Councillor Kerr seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to have representatives of the project to come to council to discuss.

Motion Carried.

- MOBILE FOOD VENDING DRAFT BYLAW

Municipal Clerk, Steff MacLeod discussed the draft of the mobile food vending by-law and discussion followed. Some highlights and suggestions included:

- First Offence will be a written or verbal warning; Second Offence will be a fine of $500 and Third Offence will be a revocation of permit. RCMP can enforce the bylaw and fines.
- Private residential locations do not exclude food vendors from being required to have a permit as stated by the by-law.
- Permit fees should be as follows:
    - **Daily permit:** Reduce to $50 (Previously drafted as $100)
    - **Event permit:** Increase to $100 (Previously drafted as $50)

Meat and Fish Trucks:

- Fish and meat trucks will be explicitly included under the Mobile Vending Bylaw
- Must hold valid food safety certifications.
- Must obtain a seasonal mobile vending permit, as applicable.

- The question was asked what Council is trying to accomplish with this bylaw and Council agreed it was to allow the opportunity to have mobile food trucks providing services, but at the same time protect brick and mortar restaurants from being pushed aside. To ensure fairness for all parties involved.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to apply the feedback and develop the food vending bylaw.

Motion Carried.

- WASHROOM PROGRAM AND FUNDING MODEL

Council was given a pilot funding model report for a washroom program and discussion took place.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to approve the pilot funding model as presented.

Motion Carried.

- COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE OF WHOLE DATES AND TIMES

Council agreed to the following:

- Council meetings will be held every second Monday of the month, at 10am and Committee of the Whole Meetings will be held every 4th Monday of the month.
- If there is a holiday than it will take place on the Tuesday.
- If a councillor cannot make it, they must send regrets because the dates will not be changed.
- Schedule will be set for the whole year.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to approve the schedule and format of Council and Committee of the Whole meetings for 2025–2026.

Motion Carried.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

DISTRICT 1

- After months of public concern regarding the structure of the ferry signage for the Little Narrows Ferry, acting Captain David Grant has reached out to acknowledge the issue. He confirmed that the team is aware of the concerns and is actively working on a solution.
- The annual *Along the Shores of Washabuck* festival wrapped up another successful 10-day run, beginning on August 1st with the beloved family square dance and concluding on August 10th with a community meet-and-greet to celebrate the finale. The festival once again delivered a full schedule of engaging activities for all ages.
- Over in Iona, the 64th Highland Village Day Concert took place on August 2nd and drew record-breaking attendance. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the performers, musicians, volunteers, and the dedicated staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes—not just for this event, but throughout the other 364 days of the year—to make Highland Village a truly special place.
- On August 3rd, the Port of Iona hosted its popular Kite Flying Festival, which included kite-making and flying, a community BBQ, live music, and a visit from the Baddeck mobile library.
- Looking Ahead:

  Mark your calendars for the 2025 Mi'kmaw Summer Games in Wagmatcook, happening from August 15th to 24th. The games will feature a wide range of events—from arm wrestling to washer toss, and everything in between. For the latest schedule and details, visit mikmawsummergames.ca.

DISTRICT 2

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to send a letter to Premier Houston asking him to send correspondence to the Hon. Belanger indicating his personal and political support for a new community centre to be constructed in Victoria County.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Donovan to recognize Sandy and Annie Campbell for providing $500,000.00 to the Victoria Highlands Civic Centre Legacy Fund, which will support long-term operational sustainability of the new facility.

Motion Carried.

DISTRICT 4

- Celebration of Life – Sheldon Ferguson: Attended the Celebration of Life for Retired Deputy Chief Sheldon Ferguson on August 8th, on behalf of District 4 and Victoria County. Request: That letters of condolence be sent to his wife Cindy and family, and to the North Shore and District Volunteer Fire Department.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Donovan to send a condolence letter to the Ferguson family and the North Shore and District Volunteer Fire Department.

Motion Carried.

- Visit to Glenbourne Cider: Visited Glenbourne Cider in Glen Tosh – a local business built on passion and community spirit. Encouraged council and the public to follow *Glenbourne Cider* on Facebook for updates.
- New Local Businesses:
  - Welcomed new ownership at the Lobster Galley; noted their updated menu.
  - Announced the opening of Hinterglas Art Studio & Gallery in Skir Dhu on the Cabot Trail.
- Community Safety Concerns: Reported multiple community concerns regarding speeding, distracted driving, and a serious incident involving a truck and a local resident. The RCMP was contacted.
- Congratulations to Steve Kerr and Sam on 3 gold medals from the Outdoor Archery Championship.

DISTRICT 5

- Paving on the South Side.
- Brush cutting.
- New store across the Seal Island Bridge, it will be a coffee shop and small hardware store.
- Confirmation that this year was the first year that organizations were given partial amounts with the Municipal Grants and CAO MacEachen made a correction as it was not the first year for giving partial amounts, it has been done in the past, this year was the first year using a rubric to determine the amounts. Council passed that revision of the policy on February 10, 2025.
- There were some members of the Cape Breton Bible Camp present to ask questions following council.

DISTRICT 6

- Reminded people to stay out of the woods.
- Ingonish Development Society (IDS) continuing with their work on Fresh Water Cove, they have rentals and a floating dock and swimming lessons.
- Restaurants are busy, please have patience.
- Ensure to check out local entertainment.
- Beach volleyball court behind the Mary Barker field.

DISTRICT 7

- A busy summer is happening all around us with our beaches, restaurants, campgrounds and roads being full of happy visitors. Please be a little more patient and cautious travelling through our communities.
- Had the pleasure along with councillors Born and Kerr to visit with Premier Houston and MLA Timmins at the BOLD Centre in Baddeck.
- With the Premier's recent announcement, closing all hiking trails and prohibiting any off-road vehicles to venture into the forests because of the extreme dryness and no rain, I urge people to follow the rules one small mistake could be extremely disastrous to so many. There are many things that a person can do instead of going hiking, Victoria County is known for their beautiful beaches, museums, cultural centers, gift shops, restaurants, and ice cream parlors.
- I'd also like to remind all the residents of Victoria County to conserve our water supply. Let's all band together to do our part to save the forest by limiting our water use in case we need those resources soon. With the dry and hot weathers and with no rain in the forecast many of us are concerned about water levels in Victoria County. Together, we can do our part for our communities this summer by not watering lawns washing vehicles or filling pools. This will help conserve our water supply for essential needs and for the emergency response services that we rely on.

DISTRICT 8

- Attended the annual Crab Fest, lots of people out enjoying the crab or ham dinner. A special thank you to the Bay St. Lawerence Fire Department and all their wonderful volunteers. The Fishing Derby was also a great success with Dawson Whitty taking the $500 top prize for the largest fish.
- Attended the Boat Parade was so nice to see all the boats decorated, many thanks to the Bay St. Lawerence Community Center, that also had a family fun day earlier in the day.
- It’s been busy in District 8, with North Highlands Community Museum seeing large amounts of tourists using the restrooms, they keep track of how many people come into the doors and one day they were at least 246.

- Received lots of messages about campers on Dingwall Beach. I have messaged and called RCMP and DNRR Several times, but it still continues.
- I also received word from DNRR that they are going to be hopefully putting proper stairs or ramp at the Cabot's Landing Provincial Park. They are waiting approval from Bell as there is a cable there that's connected to Newfoundland.
- I received messages from residents and business owners in Cape North inquiring about the water line, as wells are running low the last few years. Staff will provide some numbers on this.

MOTIONS/RESOLUTIONS

Councillor Matheson-LeFort discussed poverty and basic income in relation to the previous presentation and made note of:

- Income insecurity is a growing concern across Canada and within Victoria County, affecting residents' access to essential needs such as housing, food, transportation, and healthcare; and

- Rural communities like those in Victoria County face unique economic challenges, including seasonal employment, outmigration, and limited access to social services; and

- A basic income would provide a regular, predictable, and unconditional income to individuals, ensuring that everyone can meet their basic needs and live with dignity, regardless of their employment status or location; and

- Pilot programs in Ontario and other jurisdictions have demonstrated that basic income can improve mental and physical health, reduce poverty, promote educational attainment, and stimulate local economies, particularly in rural and remote areas; and

- Municipalities, including those in rural Nova Scotia, are bearing the costs of poverty through increased pressure on local services, housing supports, and emergency services; and

- The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the value of direct income supports such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), and highlighted gaps in the existing social safety net; and

- Studies have shown that the combination of Canada’s OAS (Old Age Security) and GIS (Guaranteed Income Supplement) have reduced food insecurity, lowered healthcare utilization and improved overall health for individuals 65 and over; and

- A guaranteed basic income program would work alongside existing public services and help streamline and simplify income supports across all levels of government;

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Deputy Warden MacLeod that the Council of the Municipality of the County of Victoria requests that the government of Canada to implement a national guaranteed basic income program to ensure income security and dignity for all Canadians.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Donovan that the Council of the Municipality of the County of Victoria requests that the Provincial Government establish an all party committee to examine the effectiveness of implementing a basic income guarantee program, and that the findings of this committee should be formally communicated to the Province and Municipalities, with consideration given to potential implementation and collaboration with the Federal Government.

Motion Carried.

CAO AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Property tax deadline was August 1. Have been very busy processing payments. They are continuing to roll in past the deadline. Interest will be run September 1.
- 6 properties remaining on the August 26 tender sale.
- Notice has gone out indicating that “W” should be added at the beginning of water account numbers, especially for online payments, starting for next bill.
- Newsletter has gone out.
- 1 pager for the WWTP information that will be sent at the same time as the newsletter.
- EXP has sent their proposal for upgrades to our leachate wells $65,000.
- Received one bid on the waste collection truck tender. $540,000? Haven't awarded it yet because it's approximately $100,000 more than budgeted. Delivery is a year away.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Born to purchase a new waste collection truck for $540,000.

Motion Carried.

- MIP (Municipal Innovation Fund) tender closes August 15th. To date, two consulting firms have expressed interest.
- Surplus assets tender closes August 15th.
- Received facilities agreement from Circular Materials. It's been sent to legal for review.
- We will keep a close eye on the Neil's Harbour Surface water supply and if necessary, implement water conservation measures.
- Report and recommendations expected this fall on signage and wayfinding strategy.
- STGI – Sustainable Tourism Growth Initiative received 6 applications in the first round.

- Successful applicants will be notified by August 13, 2025.
- Work continues on planning full community engagement process in preparation for planning the 100th anniversary of the completion of the road named the Cabot Trail.
- Work continues on curating and posting events happening in Victoria County.
- Big Hill Road project almost complete, but now on hold due to the woods ban. A work permit will be sought to continue.
- Assisting with Ingonish Development Society's Freshwater Cove Committee to facilitate the community engagement, site growth and improvement plans including the placement of our Shipping Container washroom at this location. Work is underway to finalize the plans for this, and we hope that this can be up and operating by the Spring of 2026.
- The summer students have been visiting community centres and locations and preparing a community centre asset inventory with a lens on Accessibility, Diversity and inclusion.
- Had another meeting with Mile Brook, and Eastern District Planning. We are reaching out for quotes to have the road brought up to provincial standard, and to pave the remainder
- Inverness County Asylum Commemoration - next steps, what would Council like to do?
- Councillor Born had concerns over graphics for a FASD campaign - I have reached out to NSHA, who have directed us to those involved in the campaign. It may be a letter expressing our concerns?

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to write a letter to the FASD campaign organizers to express Council's concerns.

Motion Carried.

- I was asked to contact the Village regarding Benches, garbage cans and Dog poop locations. I received this back from Village Manager:
- *Benches: Village PW put the benches out to usual locations in town.*
- *Garbage Cans: The village PW put garbage bins on the village properties and maintains these bins. BABTA, St. Michaels Parish Hall and Library Society requested garbage bins, and these organisations are taking care of the garbage in these bins.*
- *Dog Waste Bins: To my knowledge the Village PW is still refilling the bags and clears the bins.*
- Had a meeting with Becky Druhan, Minister of Justice to discuss Policing Review. A summary is in your Council Package.

QUESTIONS FROM GALLERY

None.

NEXT MEETNG

August 11th, 2025, at 9:00am.

ADJOURN

Councillor Organ made a motion to adjourn at 12:30pm.