A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Baddeck on August 17, 2026, at 1:00pm with Warden Organ in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1 - Donna Matheson-LeFort

District #2 - Perla MacLeod, Deputy Warden

District #3 – Ian Nicholson

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

ABSENT

District #5 - Fraser Patterson

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Nicholson to approve the Agenda for August 17, 2026.

Motion Carried.

08-17-1

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The July 20, 2026, were acknowledged and approved with no errors or omissions.

PRESENTATIONS

CELTIC COLOURS PRESENTATION – MORA PURCELL AND JASON JARDINE

Celtic Colours International Festival presented a 2026 update to Victoria County Council, marking 30 years of music, culture, and community on Cape Breton Island / Unama'ki. Highlights include:

- Victoria County approved two 2026–27 grants of $10,000 each: a Development Grant for core festival delivery and an Operational Grant for the nightly Festival Club shuttle.
- The 30th edition runs October 9–17, 2026, with 52 concerts, hundreds of Community Cultural Experiences, more than 100 non-profit partners, and 1,700 volunteers.
- 2026 schedule includes 11 concerts across 10 venues in 7 communities, plus 60 community cultural experiences and nightly Festival Club programming at the Gaelic College.
- The Operational Grant funds nine nights of free late-night transportation, running 10:30 PM–3:30 AM, connecting the Gaelic College Festival Club with Baddeck-area accommodations to support safety, access, and local overnight stays.
- In 2025, in Victoria County, the festival hosted 12 concerts, drew 2,974 concert attendees, generated $112K in ticket revenue, returned $19.5K to local host organizations, and involved 207 local volunteers.
- A Sport Tourism Canada assessment reported $18.2M in Nova Scotia economic activity, including $15.8M on Cape Breton Island, $11.2M in direct visitor spending, 143 local jobs, and $5.1M in wages and salaries.
- Festival artists visited 7 Victoria County schools, reaching 628 students, including fiddle instruction at Smokey Elementary and guitar workshops at Cabot High.
- Victoria County's combined $20,000 contribution sits within a total 2026–27 Festival Budget of $2,037,817, alongside federal, provincial, and self-generated/fundraised revenue.

EASTERN DISTRICT PLANNING UPDATE – SEAN DONOVAN

Eastern District Planning Commission presented an information session to Council on Dangerous and Unsightly Premises.

- The session outlined how complaints are submitted, tracked, and followed up through the Dangerous and Unsightly process.
- Complaints can be submitted through the online complaint form, then tracked through TownSuite Permit Tracking.
- A new initial property owner letter is used to open communication and encourage voluntary compliance.

- File outcomes may include owner compliance, clean-up orders, or demolition orders, with owner compliance stated as the preferred goal.

The discussion highlighted concerns regarding a confidential file, which will be addressed separately.

It was noted that files are expected to be transferred to the new system within approximately one month.

The new system generates a file number when a complaint is submitted, and this number can be included in the response to the complainant to help address concerns about tracking and follow-up. There are currently no established timelines from receipt of a complaint to resolution, as each case varies depending on factors such as the number of property owners involved and the complexity of the matter.

Only the information necessary to establish a complaint is required. Complainants are not required to provide photographs. Under the new complaint form, photographs will not be accepted from complainants; photographs used for the file will be those taken by enforcement staff during their inspection of the property.

BADDECK NORDIC – EILEEN WOODFORD

Baddeck Nordic Club presented an operations funding request of $2,900 to Victoria County Council on August 17, 2026.

- The club is a volunteer-led, non-profit society, established in December 2022, focused on promoting cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, winter wellness, social connection, and winter tourism.
- Baddeck Nordic Club is requesting $2,900 in operational funding from Victoria County Council.
- Funding would help cover increased 2026–27 costs, including grooming, fuel, equipment maintenance, snow removal/sanding, insurance, washroom maintenance, and other seasonal expenses.
- The club is a volunteer-led non-profit managing a 14 km winter trail system in Big Baddeck, with about 4 km of new/expanded trails completed.
- In 2026, the club provided 82 skiable days, completed 58 grooms, hosted 13 community events, and saw continued membership/day-pass growth.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Nicholson to take $2,900 out of Council Special Projects to support Baddeck Nordic.

Motion Carried.

08-17-2

Councillors Donovan and Hennick were against.

COUNCIL REPORTS

DISTRICT 1

- On July 31st, I was pleased to attend Clan MacNeil Day at St. Columba Parish Centre in Iona, at the invitation of Clan MacNeil President Patricia MacNeil. It was a wonderful afternoon connecting with MacNeil family members from near and far, enjoying great music from Susan MacLean and Kaj Udby, and celebrating Cape Breton heritage and community. A sincere thank you to the many volunteers who made the event such a success. Clan MacNeil warmly welcomes anyone interested in connecting with their MacNeil heritage.
- The Wagmatcook Powwow is coming up September 12th and 13th. Municipal employees and I will be there again this year with our coffee and tea tent. Stop by, say hello, and enjoy a cup with us. Everyone is welcome!
- Municipal Travel Expense Policy Review and Amendment

WHEREAS the Municipality of the County of Victoria has a Municipal Travel Expense Policy governing travel and mileage expenses incurred in the course of municipal business;

AND WHEREAS Councillors have been advised that mileage incurred within their own electoral district is not eligible for reimbursement;

AND WHEREAS the authority for this restriction has not been identified;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Chief Administrative Officer be directed to:

Review the Municipal Travel Expense Policy, including its historical amendments and related Council resolutions respecting Councillor travel and mileage;
Identify and report the authority for the restriction on mileage incurred by Councillors within their own electoral district, including any applicable policy provision, Council resolution, administrative directive, or other documented authority;
Review the corresponding travel and mileage practices of comparable Nova Scotia municipalities; and
Prepare proposed amendments to the Municipal Travel Expense Policy and present them to the September 8, 2026, Committee of the Whole meeting or the next Regular Council Meeting for Council's consideration.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-Lefort seconded by Councillor Born to direct the CAO to review the Municipal Travel Expense Policy.

Motion Carried.

08-17-3

DISTRICT 2

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Matheson-Lefort to take $1,000 out of Council Special Projects for Northwood for senior support.

Motion Carried.

08-17-4

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Matheson-Lefort to direct CAO to contact the Provincial Department of Public Works to have "no parking" signs on the side of the road at the Irving garage in Baddeck.

Motion Carried.

08-17-5

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Nicholson to contact the RCMP to request a presence near the Irving between 8am-11am, it is very busy there with the Newfoundland ferry traffic and speed signs are not being adhered to.

Motion Carried.

08-17-6

DISTRICT 3

- Anna MacDonald, the Chair of Village of Baddeck, thanked Council for their support for their SCCF grant application but noted that they could not apply as the timelines were too tight on their end.
- Bras D'or Yacht Club is running another successful Junior Sailing Program plus a great Regatta Week. Very nice to see all those sails on the water great for tourism in the area. Thanks to all the hard work of all the volunteers.
- Festiville was another great success and thanked volunteers for their commitment.
- Received a thank you card from the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department for the County's contribution toward the Canada Day fireworks display.

DISTRICT 4

- I'd like to start by acknowledging the many community events and activities I've had the opportunity to attend throughout the summer. It has been great getting out into the community, meeting with residents, and seeing the support people continue to show for the many organizations and events throughout our district.
- One of the highlights for me was attending the Giant MacAskill's Museum fundraiser. It was great to see so many people come out to support such a great cause and to see the community come together to support the museum.

- I'd also like to thank all the volunteers and community organizations who continue to put so much time and effort into making these events happen. They are an important part of what makes our communities so special.
- Jersey Cove Side of the Englishtown Ferry – Public Washrooms. A resident raised concerns about the removal of the portable public washrooms on the Jersey Cove side of the Englishtown Ferry. The resident contacted the Captain in Charge of the Englishtown and Little Narrows Ferries and shared the response with me. The ferry service explained that the portable toilets had been provided as a courtesy but were removed following vandalism and misuse last season. They noted that the toilets were left unclean, tipped over, and had garbage put into them, and that the cost of continuing to provide them was no longer sustainable. I don't think removing the washrooms is the only solution. There are portable washrooms at other ferry locations, and people can experience extended waits at Englishtown, particularly during busy periods.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Donovan to direct the CAO to follow up with the Province to see what options are available for providing washroom facilities at Jersey Cove, particularly during the busy summer season, and whether another solution can be found.

Motion Carried.

08-17-7

- Big Harbour Road – Road Conditions. A year-round resident has again raised concerns about the condition of Big Harbour Road, including both the paved and unpaved sections. The resident referenced case number from September 2025 and said they understood that major repairs to the main road were planned, including stripping and repaving, but that this work has not taken place. The resident also reports that the gravel section requires ditching, gravel and grading, and that a washout approximately 3–4 kilometres from the Big Harbour end is currently preventing through traffic. Four families live along this section year-round, including two families of seniors.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Nicholson to direct the CAO to follow up with the Provincial Public Works for an update on the planned work, the reported washout, and the maintenance needed on the gravel section, and to bring that information back to Council.

Motion Carried.

08-17-8

- Rear Barachois – Unsightly Premises. I will follow up with concerned residents following the EDPC presentation and the information provided.
- Damaged and Missing Road Signs. Several concerns have been brought forward regarding missing or damaged road signs throughout District 4. I have emailed Provincial Public Works regarding these concerns and asked that the affected signs be reviewed. These concerns have been ongoing, and residents are becoming frustrated with the lack of action. I will follow up with Provincial Public Works, and if we are not seeing resolution, I will bring the matter back to Council to discuss further action, including whether a formal letter should be sent on behalf of Council.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to direct the CAO to review the previously proposed Mobile Food Vending By-law, consider the feedback and concerns previously received from Council and the public, make any necessary revisions, and bring a new proposed by-law back to Council for consideration.

Motion Carried.

08-17-9

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Donovan to direct the CAO to investigate options and costs for upgrading the Council chamber microphone system to include an electronic speaker request and queue function, allowing Council members to indicate when they wish to speak and providing the Warden with a visual speaking order, and report back to Council with recommendations.

Motion Carried.

08-17-10

DISTRICT 6

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Born to enter into a cost sharing agreement with the Highland Manor to complete a review of their bylaws.

Motion Carried.

08-17-11

- Attended a NSP event at Cape Smokey, installed EV stations.
- Provincial Public Works concerns: Speeding through Ingonish and no crosswalk by the daycare and also would like options for traffic safety measures near beach crossing road and Main Street Restaurant.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to contact the Provincial Department of Public Works to address road safety concerns in Ingonish.

Motion Carried.

08-17-12

- Picnic shelter at Freshwater Lake is popular and the Dories and Stories event is going well.
- Highland's Link Golf Club held its Club Championship and congrats to: Men's Division - Grant Hawley, Senior Division - Bob Hussey, and Ladies Division - Susan Cochrane

DISTRICT 7

- Summer is in full swing as restaurants, beaches, accommodations, and campgrounds are very busy. I would like to urge all residents to be alert when travelling for pedestrians and traffic on our roads.

- Please check out the Victoria North Library Facebook page for event going on all summer.
- Branch 105 Legion is hosting a monthly merchandize Bingo.
- St Andrew's ACW will be holding a Tea and Sale September 13th with live music performed by former Councillor Norman MacDonald. Come out and enjoy a pot of tea homemade sweets, music and pick yourself up a little goody at the sale.
- Velo Guided Bike tours every Thursday 9am at the Periwinkle Café.
- Water Aerobics at Freshwater Lake: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at 10 am.
- For the residents that have complained about the overgrowth on our roadsides, they have been reported to Provincial Public Works and also MLA Timmins. I have received word that some brush cutting will be done. No timeline.

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Matheson-Lefort to invite the Supervisor of the Provincial Department of Public Works to Council for a fall projects update.

Motion Carried.

08-17-13

DISTRICT 8

- The busy summer is closely coming to an end, and the students will be heading back to school. I can see some of the leaves changing already, I hope everyone enjoyed their summer.
- I would like to thank Morgan MacInnis, Solid Waste Educator, and her wonderful team for all the efforts that they have done so far with the community clean ups, they will be in Cape North this Friday starting at the Fire Hall from 10 to 12 come out and lend a hand.
- This summer in District 8 there were a lot of activities, thank you to all the volunteers, it's greatly appreciated, from all the fun at the Bay St. Lawerence Community Center, to youth Basketball done by Samual and Gracie Scott at the Dingwall Park. Also, to all the volunteers young and old for all their hard work and dedication to fix up the Dingwall Ball Field. They played ball just about every night, it's so great to see.
- The Cabot Trail Lions Club will be holding their annual in-person auction on Saturday September. 5th at 1 pm at the United Church Hall in Cape North, viewing starts at 12pm.
- Great News Scouts are starting north of Smokey, please contact Gracie MacKinnon Scott for further details.
- I spoke with many tourists; the main topic was that we live in a beautiful place but too bad that we can't see too much with all the growth covering up beautiful scenery.

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Councillor Born to direct the CAO to send a letter to NSHA regarding a timeline for the dialysis unit opening at Buchanan Memorial Hospital.

Motion Carried.

08-17-14

RECESS

Warden Organ called a 15-minute recess at 2:30pm

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

a) ROAD NAME PETITION –

A road name change petition/request was sent into EDPC for consideration. Current name is Off St. Columba Road, Grass Cove, the requested name is Lindor Lane.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the name change to Lindor Lane.

Motion Carried.

08-17-15

SUBMITTED REPORTS

a) CAO REPORT

Things of note from the report:

- We have a call out for Housing and Planning Advisory Committee members, please see our website and applications will be open until August 31.

It was noted that Councillor Nicholson is already on the Housing Committee.

- The VCWU and VC Capital Budgets have been recommended for approval by the Finance & Audit Committee. See motion on Agenda.
- The ad for the September tax sale by tender is now posted on our website, with a sale date of September 14. The November tax sale will proceed as a public auction.

MOTIONS

a. FIRST READING OF COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT BYLAW AMENDMENT:

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Councillor Mactheson-LeFort to approve the First Reading of the Commercial Development District Improvement Bylaw amendment.

Motion Carried.

08-17-16

b. AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Born to approve the recommendations made at the August 7th Audit Committee meeting, approving the Victoria County Water Utility 2026-27 Operating and Capital Budgets, as presented, operating budget reflecting $1,281,348 in revenue, $1,208,675 in operating expenses, $68,248 in non-operating expenses, and a projected surplus of $4,425.

Motion Carried.

08-17-17

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Born to approve the recommendations made at the August 7th Audit Committee meeting, approving the Five-Year Capital Budget for the 2026-27 to 2030-31 municipal capital plan, totaling $21,254,760, with the potential rink funding removed pending further information.

Motion Carried.

08-17-18

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reminder to complete the survey for VCT.

CORRESPONDENCE

Read and received as part of the Council package.

QUESTIONS FROM GALLERY

One member of the public was present, no questions.

NEXT MEETING

September 21, 2026, at 10:00am.

ADJOURN

Warden Organ moved to adjourn at 3:05pm.