A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers at Baddeck on June 16, 2025, at 9:00am with Warden Organ in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1 - Donna Matheson-Lefort

District #3 - Jess Kerr

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

Morgan MacInnis, Recorder

Alix Redden, CFO

Natasha Kochhar, Manager of Communications

Jessica Klein, Digital Communications Administrator

ABSENT

District #2 - Perla MacLeod, Deputy Warden

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On Motion of Councillor Kerr seconded by Councillor Born to approve the Agenda for June 16, 2025.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the May 26th, 2025, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

On Motion of Councillor Donavan seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve the Regular Council Minutes of May 26, th 2025.

Motion Carried.

CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION – PRESIDENT DINGWALL

President Dingwall gave a presentation highlighting CBU's recent infrastructure developments and strategic initiatives, with particular focus on the new medical campus. Key points from the presentation included:

- A new partnership with Dalhousie University to establish a medical school at CBU, designed to train future physicians from rural Nova Scotia, specifically those outside the Halifax Regional Municipality.
- Secured a $12.4 million investment from Research Nova Scotia for the Homeward Bound initiative, which supports healthcare, housing, and social services for aging populations across Cape Breton Island.
- Through the World Tourism Institute, CBU facilitated a $5 million investment in the Community Engagement Van Program, enabling skilled workers to provide services at accommodations across rural Cape Breton.
- Redevelopment of the Canada Games Complex into the Kehoe Forum, which will serve as a hub for women's hockey and health-related activities.
- In partnership with Nova Scotia Health, CBU is establishing a collaborative healthcare clinic at the Marconi Campus, designed to serve up to 10,000 individuals in the community.
- A new partnership with Acadia University will enable Acadia to operate a School of Nursing, with CBU's School of Nursing currently training approximately 166 nurses.
- Since 2018, CBU has invested over $47 million in the modernization of its campus infrastructure.
- Plans are underway for the announcement of a new on-campus Childcare Centre to support both students and staff.

President Dingwall noted that recent government funding reductions and changes to the Federal immigration policy have necessitated budget cuts, affecting both the university and the surrounding community. CBU has launched the Forever CBU Capital Campaign, a $205 million fundraising initiative to support transformational projects including the Kehoe Forum, the Nancy Dingwall Health and Counselling Centre, and enhanced healthcare access for students and the broader community. Furthermore, the construction of the Centre for Discovery and Innovation, a $140 million facility, is scheduled to begin later this year. The Centre will include the Marshall Legacy Centre, named in memory of Donald Marshall.

The president concluded his presentation by asking for Victoria County's support of the Forever CBU Capital Campaign with a one-time contribution (that can be fulfilled over a two-year period) of approximately $5 dollars per resident for a total $35,000.

QUESTIONS

Council requested clarification regarding the university's strategy to ensure that the intake for the medical campus prioritizes applicants from rural Nova Scotia. In response, President Dingwall stated that it has implemented specific pre-entry requirements. These include that applicants must be residents of Nova Scotia, they must sign a five-year return-of-service agreement committing to practice in a designated rural area of the province, and they are required to submit a personal statement outlining their motivation for pursuing medical education and why they want to practice in rural Nova Scotia.

ACAP CAPE BRETON PRESENTATION – KATHLEEN AIKENS

Ms. Aikens, Executive Director of ACAP Cape Breton, delivered a presentation to Council outlining the organization's mission, core activities, and the potential value of a municipal partnership. For over 33 years, ACAP Cape Breton has worked to build resilient and environmentally sustainable communities across the island. Their primary areas of focus include habitat restoration, environmental monitoring and research, education, and waste diversion. Annually, the organization engages over 2,000 students across the CBRM and Inverness County and is actively seeking funding to expand youth outreach throughout Cape Breton.

With support from the Canadian Water Agency, ACAP recently launched the Riparian Zone Ready program, which includes youth groups in monitoring, habitat restoration, and environmental education in each county. The organization is primarily funded through competitive federal grants and maintains partnerships with several federal agencies, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the Canadian Water Agency. In addition, ACAP hosts 15 to 18 paid youth interns annually who support project delivery and gain hands-on environmental experience.

ACAP currently maintains eco-partnerships with two municipalities, including a long-standing collaboration with the CBRM. Through these partnerships, the organization supports initiatives such as source water protection, water conservation, and solid and wastewater management. Recent programming has focused on protecting at-risk pollinators and restoring forests to enhance ecosystems, waterways, fish habitats, and local tourism. ACAP currently has 17,000

trees in storage, with plans to plant between 50,000 and 70,000 trees this year, and a long-term goal of planting 1.5 million trees over the next eight years. They are also engaged in freshwater research, including studies on fish habitat connectivity, and offer educational summer field trips and camps.

The Trashformers initiative, a youth-led team, travels across Cape Breton—primarily in the CBRM—conducting community clean-ups, educational outreach, and direct trash removal. Ms. Aikens emphasized that litter and environmental degradation pose serious threats to tourism, public health (including mental well-being), and the environment. She highlighted how ACAP could support Council in addressing these challenges through cleanup programs, education, and environmental planning. Additionally, ACAP can assist in writing and securing funding from federal sources not typically accessible to municipalities. Aikens emphasized while 25% of ACAP's funding comes from municipal partnerships, approximately 50% of their overall funding goes towards helping municipalities.

QUESTIONS

During the discussion, Council inquired about ACAP Cape Bretons involvement in forest management, particularly regarding forest fire risks and related issue such as downed trees. Ms. Aikens noted that while ACAP supports research in forest preservation and policy, there is currently no dedicated funding to advance work specifically related to forest fire management. When asked whether ACAP received tourism-related funding from Nova Scotia or other businesses,' Ms. Aikens responded that they do not at this time, but it remains a future possibility. Council also asked about the Transformers program, specifically their involvement in schools and beach cleanups. While the Transformers primarily only work during the summer, ACAP has educators who could provide education during the school year. Beach clean ups are also a part of their regular activities.

Council expressed an interest in partnering with ACAP Cape Breton and will continue to discuss the matter, and if interest continues, invite them back at a later date.

RECESS

Warden Organ called for a 10-minute recess.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

DISTRICT 1

- Small victories matter! The worn-out sign for MacCormack Park has been replaced! Big thanks to MLA Dianne Timmins for working with me last week to get it done. Sometimes it's the little things that show progress is possible.

- Congratulations on another successful Àros na Mara World Oceans Day Festival! From the vibrant opening on June 1st to the final celebrations on June 8th, this year's festival was a fabulous week of activities, interactive learning sessions, music, food, and inspiring presentations. We're incredibly grateful for the enthusiasm and support from our community. This annual festival would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of amazing volunteers, exhibitors, and partners. Your contributions help bring ocean awareness to life in such a meaningful and engaging way. Thank you for making the 9th Annual Festival a true celebration of our oceans!

DISTRICT 3

- Congratulating all graduates in Cape Breton and Victoria County this year. Wishing them all the best on their future endeavors.
- The state of the streets and parking is becoming a concern for residents, especially over the busy summer months.
- The Boardwalk Project is continuing well, and they are making great progress.
- Rink committee and residents are still trying hard to get the federal portion of the funding needed to get our rink off the ground.
- A new restaurant is opening in town -- The Main Street. We wish them well on their future endeavors. They are hoping to be open by the end of the month.
- There was a birthday celebration at Alderwood for Ms. Florence Shaw, who just turned 102. We congratulate her, and she is as sharp as a tack!

DISTRICT 4

- It is with great joy and admiration that I congratulate Joanne and John MacDonald of Englishtown on their 65th wedding anniversary, which they will celebrate on July 2nd. They are a truly lovely couple and long-standing members of our community. It is a privilege to recognize this remarkable milestone, and I wish them continued happiness and good health in the years ahead. As such, I would like the Municipality to prepare an official certificate of recognition to be presented to Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald in honour of their 65th wedding anniversary. I will be proud to present this certificate on behalf of Council.
- I'm proud to share that former District 4 Councillor Barbara Longva has been selected as the featured artisan for the 2025 *Craft Capital Cape Breton* flyer. This widely distributed artisan trail map for tourists and locals highlights the exceptional craftsmanship found in our region, and Barbara's work will be showcased on the front cover. Additionally, I'm pleased to note that 11 artisan shops from District 4 are included in this year's flyer. Congratulations to all featured artisans, and I wish everyone a successful and rewarding tourist season.
- I've been in direct contact with our Public Works Manager regarding the remaining bridge remnants and debris in the Barachois River, including old timbers. I'm pleased to report that this issue is being addressed and should be resolved soon. I appreciate the follow-up by the area supervisor and glad to have supported efforts to move this forward

for the benefit of the community. Road work is ongoing in the district, with recent improvements near Little River. Once the road line painting is completed, crews will proceed with the installation of signage that had been reported missing or damaged.

- I've received several reports from residents concerning speeding along the Bay Road. In response, I've spoken with MLA Timmins, and the RCMP have indicated they will increase patrols in the area. Additionally, Public Works will assess the road to determine whether a speed limit reduction is appropriate. I appreciate the community's engagement on this issue, and I will continue to follow up to ensure appropriate measures are considered.
- A concern that has been raised by several residents involves impaired driving, in particular instances involving children as passengers. This has been a difficult topic to bring forward, but it is important. Reports have included the discovery of liquor bottles discarded along the roadside, and growing concern about road safety. I have spoken with Constable Jennifer Williams to share these concerns. We discussed increasing police visibility through more frequent stops, and potentially engaging schools in awareness and prevention efforts. I will continue to follow up and keep Council informed of any progress or recommendations.
- As we move into the summer season, I'd like to wish everyone a safe, enjoyable, and restful summer. Thank you.

DISTRICT 5

- A Canada Day celebration will take place on July 1st at the Marine Park in Ross Ferry, featuring live entertainment by local musician Daryl Kagan. Additionally, the Marine Park offers food service on Sundays, including hot dogs, sausages, and fries, making it a welcoming space for community gatherings and socializing.
- On July 19th people can look forward to the Big Wave Festival in Big Bras d'Or.
- Paving is taking place on part of the Kempt Head Rd. on the south side of Boularderie.
- Looking forward to summer.

DISTRICT 6

- On June 16th from 2:00pm to 8:00pm Nova Scotia Power hosted a session at the Royal Canadian Legion in Ingonish to assist customers enrolling in the free credit monitoring required because of a recent cyber attack which may have compromised customer personal information. Hosted from 2:00pm to 8:00pm
- Was informed that the scheduled opening for the Ingonish Day Care has been pushed from August to October. The daycare will provide further information as it becomes available.

DISTRICT 7

- CAO MacEachen and I met with Chief Bernard last week and it went very well. We look forward to working with him in the future so that our two councils can be brought together.

- We are now in the middle of an exciting, emotional month for all students, but especially our graduates and their families. Picking out prom outfits, filling out college and bursary applications, suppers and parties to prepare for. A lot of questions are being asked, "where are you going, what are you doing next year, what career are you choosing?" There are some big decisions and a lot of emotions for these students.
- Councillor Hennick and I attended the Grad Supper at Cabot Education Centre, what a lovely evening, a lot of happy excited people there. You could see the pride in the faces of all the parents/guardians. I also had the privilege to attend my own Granddaughter's graduation from the Halifax West International Baccalaureate program and will be travelling back up to see her graduate from High School.
- So now I would like to take this opportunity to wish all the graduating students congratulations, and good luck on any of the career paths you have chosen. The world is yours to discover, go out and make your mark; Behind you- all your memories. Before you- all your dreams. Around you- all who love you. Within you- all you need.

DISTRICT 8

- St. Margaret's CWL Auction ends June 16th at 6:00pm.
- Canada Day celebrations will be held throughout District 8 beginning at the Bay St. Lawence Community Center with breakfast from 10:00am to 11:30am and then fun and games from 12:00pm to 2:00pm. North Highlands Community Museum will be having cake and activities from 1:00pm to 3:00pm, then ending with a BBQ, games, and entertainment at Northern Waves Development Society from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.
- Upcoming Events include Cabot Day on July 6th from 12:00pm to 3:00pm. Come out for a fun afternoon with entertainment, cake, BBQ and the reenactment of the landing of John Cabot at John Cabot Landing.
- On July 20th the Bay St. Lawence Fire Department will be having their annual fishing Derby and Crab Fest.
- Cape North Farmers Market will be starting their season soon on Saturdays at the Cabot Fire Department.
- I had a request to put a streetlight at 27340 Cabot trail, which is out Big Intervale, across from Maple Ridge Cabins. The resident said that the road is very dark with the sites of coyotes and people walking. It is a safety issue and would like to see a streetlight put there. (All NS streetlights will be put on hold until security breach is resolved)
- Lobster fishing season is about halfway through, and I've been hearing great reports—catches have been very strong this year.
- Last, I would like to Congratulate all the Graduates from Cabot High and Baddeck Academy 2025. All your hard work has finally paid off.

MOTIONS/RESOLUTIONS

CFO Redden presented the Municipal Grants Recommendation Report to Council:

Key recommendations included:

- $240,431 in grants as outlined in the allocation summary.
- $20,000 committed to the Cape Breton Hospital Foundation (Year 4 of 5).
- $4,000 for annual student scholarships.
- A three-year funding commitment to Theatre Baddeck at $10,000/year, starting this year.

Not recommended for funding:

- CLANS, due to alternate funding through the Seniors Safety Social Network.
- Harbour Authority of Little River, due to low evaluation score and no active registration on the Registry of Joint Stock Companies.

Conflicts of Interest:
Several councillors declared conflicts related to specific organizations prior to discussions, including Councillors Organ, Born, Patterson, Matheson-Lefort, Kerr, Donavan, and Hennick.

Discussion Highlights:

- Council withdrew a previously submitted support letter for Raising the Villages.
- Requests were made to increase funding for several organizations, including Highland Village, Baddeck Bay Golf Society, South Haven Community Hall, Englishtown Community Hall, and the Ingonish Legion.
- Concerns were raised about incomplete applications. Mandatory fields and additional applicant support will be implemented in next year's process.

Following these discussions, the following motion was made.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Kerr to approve the Municipal Grants of $272,052 for 2025-26 with the noted changes.

Motion Carried.

CFO Redden went over the Municipal Tax Exemption Recommendations Report submitted to Council and provided recommendations for Council considerations. Those recommendations were:

The committee recommends awarding $68,012.26 in property tax relief grants, as detailed in the attached summary. This includes two revenue-generating organizations recommended for a rate reduction from commercial to residential (North Highlands Nordic and Bras d'Or Yacht Club).
One organization is not recommended for relief:
• Cape Breton Bible Camp – Ineligible under the policy exclusion for organizations that promote or require adherence to a faith.

On Motion of Councillor Patterson seconded by Councillor Donavan to change the Cape Breton Bible Camp from commercial to residential for the Municipal Tax Exemption Recommendations for 2025-2026.

Motion Defeated.

On Motion of Councillor Donavan seconded by Councillor Matheson Le-Fort to approve the Municipal Tax Exemption Recommendations of $68,012.26 for 2025-2026.

Motion Carried.

LITTER AND ILLEGAL DUMPING STAFF REPORT – NATASHA KOCHHAR

Ms. Kochhar went over the Litter and Illegal Dumping Recommendations Report submitted to Council and provided recommendations for Council considerations. Those recommendations were:

That Council direct staff to begin implementing the short and medium-term actions outlined in the report. We are prepared to publish the survey as a first step.

Staff will also explore longer-term opportunities, including potential funding sources, volunteer programming, and will revisit enforcement options if a by-law officer position is considered.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

During the discussion, questions were raised regarding the absence of a dedicated by-law enforcement officer, particularly in relation to addressing illegal dumping and littering. It was suggested that, once hotspot areas are identified, installing cameras could serve as an effective deterrent.

Council recommended bringing these ideas to ACAP for consideration and exploring the potential for a partnership. In addition, Council suggested evaluating the feasibility of installing waste bins in key areas across the County.

There was also interest in supporting community initiatives such as “Adopt-a-Spot.” It was confirmed that funding for signage may be available through programs like Divert NS, which could assist with material costs.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-Lefort seconded by Councillor Born to approve to implement short- and medium-term actions, as well as explore long-term opportunities.

Motion Carried.

NORTH HIGHLANDS NORDIC REQUEST – COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Councillor Hennick initiated a discussion regarding North Highlands Nordic's request for development funding, specifically to support the construction of appropriate storage for their groomer. It was noted that the North Highlands Community Centre has not yet been secured, creating uncertainty around long-term infrastructure needs. The organization requires funding to proceed with building a suitable facility to house the groomer, which is essential for ongoing operations and preparations for hosting events such as the 2028 Special Olympics. Council was asked to consider making a decision on the funding request to allow planning and development efforts to move forward.

During Council discussion, several questions and recommendations were raised regarding the funding request. Council inquired whether the organization had developed a fundraising plan and asked about the potential to renovate and heat the current building. Staff advised that the building is in poor condition, lacks power, and has significant accessibility concerns, making it unsuitable for renovation or heating in the near future. Suggestions included relocating equipment such as snowshoes until fall, at which point provincial grant opportunities may become available. Council also requested an official manufacturer's recommendation confirming whether the groomer must be stored in a heated environment.

The importance of promoting outdoor activity and community engagement was emphasized, and a proposal was made to consider a conditional funding commitment, contingent on the organization securing additional funds through grants or fundraising. Council ultimately decided that they will follow up with North Highlands Nordic to confirm their fundraising plans, identify grants they are pursuing, and invite them to return to Council for further discussion to establish a clear funding goal.

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Councillor Donavan to approve the $125,000 request from North Highlands Nordic for infrastructure to house their groomer.

Motion Defeated

WATERFRONT BADDECK INVOICE – COUNCIL DISCUSSION

It was previously requested that tipping fees related to the construction of the Baddeck Boardwalk be waived. An invoice from the Municipal Transfer Station was submitted for this project, totaling $5,633.24.

An update was provided on the progress of the Boardwalk project, noting that construction is advancing well. Approval has been received from Public Works to close the street for approximately one month to allow for cross-cutting related to water supply installation and culvert replacement. Additionally, an issue with the power cable supplying the island was

identified. The cable will be taken out of service, and the island will transition to being fully powered by solar energy.

On Motion of Councillor Kerr seconded by Councillor Born to approve write-off tipping fee for Boardwalk Project in Baddeck

Motion Carried

TAX WRITE OFFS – CFO REDDEN

CFO Redden presented a recommendation to write-off taxes for two property tax accounts. The first account, 06395635 assessed to Bounty Bay Shellfish Inc., has an outstanding balance of $1,455.20. This account was mistakenly paid over the years by an unrelated individual who believed they were responsible for the taxes. Once the error was discovered, Property Valuation Services was contacted, and the account is being made inactive.

The second account, 05358787 assessed to David and Jacqueline MacKinnon, pertains to a mobile trailer. Under a longstanding policy, trailers can be assessed separately from the land they occupy. Although the trailer has since been removed, the account continued to accrue taxes. The issue came to light during preparations for a potential tax sale, where the trailer was mistakenly believed to be land. The account currently shows an outstanding balance of more than $31,000. Staff recommends writing off this amount, as the asset no longer exists.

On Motion of Councillor Donavan seconded by Councillor Born to approve to write-off taxes for two property tax accounts

Motion Carried

CAO AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Staff have reached out to Parks Canada and are coordinating a joint meeting with Council, Parks, and the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (DNRR) to discuss wildfire preparedness and other related park issues. A proposed date is the week of July 14, potentially July 15. Councillors are asked to indicate their availability for this meeting.
- The Municipality has received up to $70,000 in funding from the FCM Climate Risk Assessment division to develop a Flood Risk Assessment Plan. Work will begin shortly.
- The Cape North Community Centre has been officially purchased by the Municipality but could be redeemed within 6 months.
- EPR/Circular Materials is currently negotiating with the Eastern Recyclers Association to expand the list of materials accepted at recycling depots. Proposed additions include Styrofoam, glass jars and bottles, and film plastics (e.g., bread bags, plastic wrap, and

snack packaging). The Municipality will be compensated for accepting and processing these materials.

- Thanks to support from Inverness and the VC Truckers Association, recyclable material movement has continued uninterrupted over the past several months.
- Several new staff members have recently joined the Municipality and are integrating well. In addition, some long-term absences have concluded and returning staff are back on duty.
- A tender for the demolition of the old tower in Dingwall has been posted to the procurement site and the Municipality's website. The tender closes on June 18.
- Water meter reads will be conducted in the coming weeks.
- Bruce and JD have either completed or are in the process of installing stairs at the New Haven beach.
- The Sustainable Tourism Growth Initiative (STGI), administered through Cape Breton Partnership, has launched. Several strong applications and expressions of interest have already been received. The deadline for submissions is June 13.
- The Victoria County Walking Series is currently underway.
- Multi-activity sessions for residents are ongoing, including opportunities to play Tarabish, Cribbage, and Hearts.
- The next IDEA Committee meeting is scheduled later this month. Current initiatives in progress include:
    - Launching Engage site to showcase work and collect community feedback.
    - Improving accessibility around the Municipal Building, including railings and designated parking.
    - Assessing and improving acoustic treatment in Council Chambers.
    - Planning a workshop on IDEA for both Council and staff.
    - Advancing various smaller initiatives to enhance overall accessibility.
- The Engage Victoria website officially launched on Friday, June 13, 2025.
- Thanks to the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department and other responding departments for their efforts during the Richmond County wildfires. As wildfire season approaches, residents are urged to remain vigilant. Lyle with EMO are currently mapping the Highlands in preparation for future winter rescues.

As part of the ongoing initiative to assess and improve acoustic treatment within Council Chambers, a company was recommended for the project to investigate their brochure.

A vacancy will soon be available on the board of Destination Cape Breton, as a current Council representative is stepping down. Council members interested in joining are encouraged to attend the next board meeting, scheduled for June 18th at the Inverary Inn from 10:00am to 3:00pm

As part of the annual student bursary program, Council representatives will present awards to graduating students at various schools across the County.

The Municipality has expressed interest in acquiring a parcel of surplus land located in front of Highland Manor, currently listed for $3,600. There was a suggestion to explore the possibility of negotiating the sale price with the province.

On Motion of Councillor Donavan seconded by Councillor Kerr to purchase the land in front of Highland Manor, to a max of $3,600.00.

Motion Carried.

QUESTIONS FROM GALLERY

An informal request was received from the Village of Baddeck, indicating their intention to collect donations, which will be processed through flowers to allow for tax receipts to be issued. They are also inquiring if other districts would be interested in participating in this initiative.

NEXT MEETNG

July 7th, 2025, at 9:00am.

ADJOURN

Councillor Organ made a motion to adjourn at 11:39am.