A Committee of the Whole meeting was held at the Cultural Centre in Cape North, on June 8, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. with Deputy Warden MacLeod 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 and Executive Assistant

Ursula Melski, Manager of Communications

ABSENT

District #5 - Fraser Patterson

CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Warden MacLeod called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval with the noted addition of an In-Camera session as allowed under the MGA, Section 22 (c): relating to personnel.

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Hennick the that the Agenda for May 4, 2026, be approved.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MAY 4 AND 25, 2026, COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the May 4, 2026, Minutes.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Warden Organ to approve the May 25, 2026, Minutes.

Motion Carried.

DESTINATION CAPE BRETON PRESENTATION – TERRY SMITH

Mr. Smith discussed the closure of the Port Hastings Visitor Information Centre and the impact it could have on Victoria County.

A proposal was presented to Council to help keep the Centre open as a pilot project for the 2026 season. The proposal included:

- Provincial Support
  - Provide the Port Hastings building at no cost for the 2026 season.
  - Cover utilities and basic facility maintenance.
  - Contribute $50,000 toward operating costs.
- Cape Breton Municipalities
  - A combined contribution of $50,000 from the five municipalities.
- Destination Cape Breton
  - Participation in the partnership.

Councillor Born declared a conflict of interest due to serving on the board.

Questions were raised about whether the Province would commit the proposed $50,000 contribution and whether First Nations had been approached to participate. Clarification was also requested on Victoria County's expected contribution, noting that other municipalities had been asked to contribute either $5,000 or $10,000 based on the marketing levy.

Council was advised that the Baddeck Visitor Information Centre may also request financial support in the future.

It was recommended that Victoria County contribute $10,000, provided the other municipalities also contribute. It was further noted that if there is a funding shortfall from the Province, Victoria County will not be asked to provide additional funding.

MUNICIPAL GRANTS DISCUSSION – COUNCIL and CFO REDDEN

CFO Redden went over the previously submitted Recommendation Report that provided information for the revised grant recommendations for the 2026-27 municipal grants cycle, incorporating the results of a thorough eligibility review conducted following Council direction. The original Grant Evaluation Committee recommendations were presented to Council on May 19, 2026. Council referred the matter back to the committee at the May 25, 2026, Committee of the Whole meeting with direction to conduct a thorough review of each application against the eligibility criteria established under the Municipal Grant Policy.

The eligibility review examined each application against three criteria:

- Active registration with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies (RJSC), or equivalent recognized registration, as of March 31, 2026;
- Submission of the most recent financial statements, defined as the organization's prior fiscal year-end financial statements; and
- Submission of a final report for any grant received in the prior year (applicable to community grants only; not required for property tax relief grants).

Applications that did not meet all applicable criteria were deemed ineligible and are not recommended for funding in this revised cycle.

Council reviewed the revised Community Grants recommendations and discussed several organizations that had been removed from the list.

It was suggested that the Giant MacAskill Museum be added back to the list after submitting the required financial statements. There was also discussion about reinstating organizations whose Registered Joint Stock (RJS) filings had been delayed, while maintaining the removal of organizations whose registrations had been revoked and that would be decided by vote.

Several members expressed concerns about funding certain organizations, including the Food Hub, Victoria County Home Support Society, and schools, noting that schools already receive funding through property taxes and questioning the level of service provided to Victoria County residents. It was also suggested that fire departments be removed from the grant list, as they will be considered under a separate funding stream, outside of Municipal Grants.

The Gaelic College was discussed, with comments that the outstanding balance was related to a re-assessment by Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC). It was also noted that the Inverness/Victoria Federation of Agriculture serves relatively few Victoria County residents, while another member disagreed with that assessment. There was further discussion that some organizations may require additional guidance in completing grant applications, and that better education on the application process would be beneficial.

Council voted on several proposed changes to the grant recommendations:

- Victoria County Home Support Society – Removed (4–1)
- North Highlands Nordic – Added (5–0)
- Inverness Federation of Agriculture – Removed (5–0)
- Friends of the Big Bras d'Or Fire Hall – Added (5–0)
- Food Hub – Removed (5–0)
- Ingonish Beach Volunteer Fire Department – Removed (4–1)
- Ingonish Development Society – Not added (5–0)
- Food Hub – Removed (5–0)
- Taigh Curaim (NOS) – Removed (3–2)

Following the revisions, the total Community Grants allocation was $209,952, with existing commitments of $34,000, leaving a remaining balance of $56,048.

Council recommended approval of the revised Community Grants report.

Property Tax Relief:

Council also considered revisions to the Property Tax Relief Program. The following decisions were made:

- St. Ann's Bay Community Health Group – Added (3–2)
- North Highlands Nordic – Added (3–2)
- Giant MacAskill Heirs Association – Added (5–0)
- Baddeck Yacht Club – Not added (3–2)
- Gaelic College – Not added (5–0)

Council recommended approval of the finalized Property Tax Relief list.

An emergency meeting is scheduled immediately following the Committee of the Whole meeting to formally approve the recommendations.

LIGHTING THE WAY SUPPORT

Discussion on the Lighting the Way funding request was deferred to the next Council meeting due to two declared conflicts of interest.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Ken Donovan spoke on behalf of the North Highlands Community Museum, emphasizing the importance of tourism, the value of the Port Hastings Visitor Information Centre as a place for visitors to connect and share information, and the need to preserve heritage buildings as an important part of the region's history and tourism industry.

IN-CAMERA – PERSONNEL

Council went In-Camera in accordance with Section 22 (c) relating to personnel that is permitted to be discussed in a closed session.

Council will accept the recommendations made In-Camera at the May 19, 2026, Council meeting.

Warden Organ made a motion to come out of In Camera and accept the recommendations.

NEXT MEETING

September 8, 2026, 10:00 am.

ADJOURN

Deputy Warden MacLeod adjourned the meeting at 1:25pm.