A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Baddeck on March 23, 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

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, read the following proclamations and acknowledgments:

I Warden Organ would like to recognize that March 21, 2026, was International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It is a day to reaffirm our commitment to confronting and dismantling systemic racism and promoting inclusivity

PROCLAMATION - AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH APRIL 2026

WHEREAS, it is estimated that 1 in 66 people across the country are Autistic/have autism, and 1 in 32 people - approximately 30,000 individuals - in Nova Scotia are Autistic/have autism; and

WHEREAS, many dedicated Autistic individuals/people with autism, parents, teachers, researchers, and professionals, including those at Autism Nova Scotia and other community-based organizations, work tirelessly throughout our province to make the communities where we live accessible and inclusive for Autistics/individuals with autism, and their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, with 11 locations throughout the province and with the support of the autism community, Autism Nova Scotia builds understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for Autistics/individuals on the autism spectrum and their families through leadership, advocacy, education, training, and programming across the lifespan; and

WHEREAS, this month of April marks Autism Acceptance Month, and Tuesday, April 2nd, marked World Autism Acceptance Day, when people across the globe came together as a community to celebrate autism and promote acceptance and inclusion.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, I, Warden Jackie Organ, on behalf of the County of Victoria Council do hereby proclaim April 2025 as Autism Acceptance Month throughout the County of Victoria and encourage all our residents and visitors to

recognize the Autistic individuals/people with autism, family members, caregivers, educators, and other professionals who strive to make Nova Scotia an inclusive and accessible place for us all to call home.

PROCLAMATION NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

April 19-26 2026 WHEREAS, a sense of caring and a desire to share have motivated thousands of Nova Scotians of all ages to volunteer their time and services to the needs of others in the community whether it be by helping the sick, the needy, the disabled, children, students or the elderly, or by enriching the lives of all through the arts, recreation and cultural activities or by serving on boards and committees;

and WHEREAS, volunteer action is a powerful force for the solution of problems;

and WHEREAS, volunteers are increasingly recognized as an important partner with government and industry in providing services to citizens;

and WHEREAS, anyone can be a volunteer and reap the rich rewards that come from doing for others while improving one's own skills and widening one's horizons;

and WHEREAS, volunteering offers all Nova Scotians, young and old, the opportunity to participate in the life of their community and to link their talents and resources to address some of the major issues facing our communities;

and WHEREAS, it is fitting for all Nova Scotians to join in this celebration of our rich volunteer heritage and to give special recognition to the dedicated volunteers and volunteer programs which contribute immeasurably to communities throughout the province; THEREFORE I, Warden Jackie Organ, on behalf of Victoria County council, in recognition of the splendid efforts of our volunteers, do hereby designate the week of April 19-26 2026 as National Volunteer Week in the County of Victoria.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the Agenda for March 23, 2026.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the February 23, 2026, Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

On Motion of Councillor Born, seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve the Regular Council Meeting Minutes of February 23, 2026.

Motion Carried.

PRESENTATIONS

VICTORIA COUNTY HOME SUPPORT/NORTHWOOD – JEN RIPLEY AND LORIANNE MACLEAN

- As of January 1st, Victoria County Home Support is now under the banner of Northwood.
- As a leader in continuing care, we build meaningful relationships with our clients everyday and make a positive difference in the communities we serve.
- People living life to the fullest, flourishing in a community of belonging, dignity and choice.
- Northwood is seeking Expressions of Interest from community members and partners to join a Community Advisory Committee (CAC). This is a forum for community voices to

inform and influence service planning, policies, and programs for Northwood Home and Community Care Programming.
- Assisting people to stay in their homes for as long as they can is our key priority.
- CCA Standardization will support home care agencies to enable CCAs to work to their full standards of practice, both through refresher training to ensure CCAs' competencies and new policies and procedures.
- CCA Standardization will focus on leaning into existing system roles in supporting clients in their homes. These roles will remain consistent for care coordinators and agency supervisors, while leaning into agencies' role to provide them with some autonomy based on their understanding of clients' needs.
- Ongoing programs include Meals Plus, Community Cupboard (shelf stable and fresh ingredients as well as dignity products) Volunteer Supports, Navigation Services, Recreation Loan Program, SenSupport Loan Program
- New programs include Home to Healthcare and Community Champions

PROPERTY TAX INTEREST WAIVAL REQUEST – HILARY FITZGERALD

Ms. Fitzgerald, property owner of Fitzgerald's Restaurant (AAN 07940181) appeared before Council to request they waive the interest accrued on her property tax bill. The amount requested to waive is $174.94.

Council discussed this request and used the previously submitted Information Report to support their discussion.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod, seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve to waive the interest for Fitzgerald's Restaurant (AAN 07940181).

Motion Defeated

The motion was defeated and Ms. Fitzgerald was informed that she would have to pay the interest. Councillor Donovan was in favour of waiving the interest.

COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT – SOLANA COURTEMANCHE

Ms. Courtemanche discussed a proposal for the expansion of the Community Garden at the back of the Municipal Building; some highlights of her proposal are below:

- Goal to connect youth and seniors through hands-on gardening and shared learning
- Focus on improving food security, health, and environmental sustainability
- Emphasis on pollinator-friendly plants and local food production
- Funded by the Nova Scotia Food Literacy Fund
- Supported by Community Centre BOLD and Victoria County Home Support Services
- "Seed to harvest" model involving planting, maintenance, and harvesting across community sites
- Educational workshops and activities led by local artisans, teachers, and gardeners

- Strong partnerships with local schools, daycare, and libraries providing garden space and support
- Collaboration with The Big Tree Inc. for garden planning and installation
- Culminates in a community Harvest Soup Festival
- Potential for a central crop (e.g., pumpkins or potatoes) to anchor and scale the project

Council discussed the funding she was applying for through other levels of government and the liability and CAO MacEachen said she would reach out to the County's insurance company to see what the liability would be, but she is expecting it to be low.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod, seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve Ms. Courtemanche and the group to use the space behind the Municipal Building (495 Chebucto Street) to expand and create a garden space for 2026 as a pilot project.

Motion Carried.

RECESS

Warden Organ called for a 15-minute recess.

COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS

1. *WATER PROTECTION SYMPOSIUM – ATTENDANCE DECISION*

On Motion of Councillor Donovan, seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve Councillors Matheson-LeFort and Born to travel to Halifax to attend the Water Protection Symposium on May 12, 2026.

Motion Carried.

2. *COMMITTEE VACANCIES – HOUSING, EDPC, INVERNESS-VICTORIA FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE*

Council discussed the vacancies as a result of the District 3 Councillor resignation and the following were appointed:

Housing: Councillor Hennick and Councillor Matheson-LeFort

EDPC: Councillor Born (Alternate)

Inverness Federation of Agriculture: This will be filled at a later date.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-Lefort, seconded by Councillor Born to approve the Committee Appointments.

Motion Carried.

3. INFORMATION REPORT – DISTRICT 3 BY-ELECTION

Ms. MacLeod, the Municipal Clerk, discussed the District 3 vacancy with Council and provided an Information Report detailing how the by-election will be held and to request Council to select an election day, a date for the first advance poll and to appoint the Municipal Clerk as the Returning Officer for the District 3 By-Election.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-Lefort, seconded by Councillor Born That Council declare May 30, 2026, as the date of the District 3 by-election; that the first advance polling day will be May 21st, 2026, in accordance with legislative requirements; that the Municipal Clerk be appointed as Returning Officer for the by-election; and that Council approve the use of paper ballots as the voting method(s).

Motion Carried.

4. TIP FEE WRITE OFF – BADDECK RINK DEMO

On Motion of Councillor Born, seconded by Councillor Donovan to waive the tipping fees for the rink demo during this fiscal year.

Motion Carried.

5. COMMUNITY SHREDDING EVENT – INFORMATION AND COST

On Motion of Councillor Born, seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the Community Shredding Event for 2026.

Motion Carried.

6. SCHEDULING TRAINING AND OTHER MEETINGS

There was discussion around scheduling meetings and some of the challenges this poses and Council agreed to share their calendars with Administration to try to ensure that meeting times are accommodating. Administration would look for both day and evening times that best suit.

COUNCIL REPORTS

DISTRICT 1

- Council approved Councillor Donna Matheson-LeFort to attend and participate in the Basic Income Guarantee Nova Scotia (BIG-NS) one-day conference in Halifax on April 17, 2026, in her capacity as a panel speaker representing the Municipality.
- The community is invited to attend the grand opening of the Wagmatcook Lifelong Learning Site on Monday, March 23, beginning at 1:00 p.m. at the Wagmatcook Learning Centre. This new space will provide residents with access to free WiFi, public desktop computers and MacBooks, as well as printing services and a range of learning resources. Designed as a comfortable and quiet environment, the site aims to support adult learning and skills development. The facility will be available for residents seeking to build new skills, access online services, or simply use a quiet space for focused work or study. Light refreshments, including tea, coffee, and snacks, will be provided.
- Weekly work parties at the Legion will resume on Wednesday, March 25 at 10:00 a.m. Participants will gather to set priorities for 2026 before continuing with ongoing tasks and community upkeep efforts. These weekly sessions provide an opportunity to address small projects, share ideas, and work collaboratively in support of the community. All residents who are interested in contributing are welcome to attend and lend a hand.
- Residents are invited to a Family Dance Night on April 4 from 7:30 to 10:00 p.m. at the Little Narrows Community Hall. The evening will feature live music by youth musicians from around the island. This all-ages event offers a fun and welcoming atmosphere for families and community members to come together and enjoy live entertainment. Admission is $5, and attendees are encouraged to bring their dancing shoes for a lively, family-friendly night.
- Spring flooding is affecting parts of the Washabuck Peninsula, where two properties are currently experiencing significant impacts. The situation has been brought to the attention of the area manager, and site evaluations are expected to take place this week, weather permitting. Updates will be provided as more information becomes available.

DISTRICT 2

- Requested to invite Steve MacDonald, with the Provincial Department of Public Works, to Council or COW.

DISTRICT 4

- Received the sad news that the Wreck Cove General Store will not be reopening under its current owners, Jenn and Brent. For many in our community, this store has been more than just a place to shop—it has been a gathering spot, a friendly face, and part of daily life for years. I want to sincerely thank Jenn and Brent for their dedication and service and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

- On March 4th, I attended the Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network event in Membertou. As a board member of Destination Cape Breton, it was a great opportunity to learn about the important work happening in Indigenous tourism. Councillor Matheson-Lafort also joined me, which made it even better to connect and learn together.
- A reminder that a free tax clinic is being held every Thursday in March and April at Knox Hall from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., except March 26th. It's available for seniors and low-income residents.
- The Health Group continues to be a strong advocate for community health. Their last senior lunch had over 60 attendees, showing how much the program is needed. They also offer weekly guided hikes, foot clinics, yoga, and more. You can check their Facebook or event page for upcoming activities.
- On March 18th, I attended the Annual General Meeting of the North Shore & District Volunteer Fire Department. Congratulations to the newly elected officers and Chief Macdonald. I want to sincerely thank all the volunteers for their dedication—your hard work and commitment make our community safer every day.
- Community breakfasts are coming up soon: Englishtown on Sunday, March 22, and South Haven on Saturday, March 28.
- A resident reached out about road washouts on Meadow Road after the recent heavy rains. I followed up with Nova Scotia Public Works, sending pictures and details to the area manager.

On Motion of Councillor Born, seconded by Councillor Donovan That Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to:

1. Draft a formal advocacy letter requesting improved and reliable cellular service along the Cabot Trail and in rural areas of Victoria County and across Nova Scotia, for signature by the Warden on behalf of Council;

2. Ensure the letter outlines public safety risks, economic and tourism impacts, the need for equitable rural telecommunications infrastructure, requests confirmation of timelines and commitments for announced projects, including consideration of advancing the Oregon Tower prior to the 2026 tourist season, and invites municipalities across Nova Scotia to endorse and co-sign the letter as part of a coordinated, province-wide advocacy effort, with support from the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM), Destination Cape Breton, and the Cape Breton Partnership;

3. Circulate the draft letter to all municipalities in Nova Scotia for consideration and endorsement;

4. After municipal endorsements are received, distribute the final letter to a list of relevant provincial and federal departments, agencies, and elected representatives.

Motion Carried.

DISTRICT 6

- The Sunday Afternoon Jam Sessions at The Smokey Recreation Center are wrapping up.
- Cape Smokey Ski Cape Smokey are going to be open into mid to late April, provided the snow holds up. They tell me they have about a four-foot base of snow man made, so they may still be there skiing in April.
- On Good Friday. There will be a homemade beans fish cake supper at the Royal Canadian Legion in North Ingonish.
- I received an e-mail regarding the septic system at the new daycare center. I have asked a few questions. I spoke with the head of Smokey Recreation, and he tells me that he is not aware of any issue whatsoever with septic.

DISTRICT 7

- Once again, the Young at Heart social was a success with a banger and mash meal and chair yoga, this Wednesday, Victoria County Recreation Coordinator, Chris Woodford will be there for fun and games and the meal will be Hamburger Casserole, come on out to enjoy.
- I had the pleasure of a breakfast with Councillor Born and her husband at the Englishtown Hall it was quite delicious.
- A Fish and Chip supper was held on Sunday as a fundraiser for the Neil's Harbour\New Haven Vol Fire Dept. Great turn out.
- Reminder the deadline for Municipal Grants is March 31.
- I would also like to remind the residents in District 3 that I am taking over the Councillor duties of the district until a new Councillor is elected for District 3. I will be at the Municipal Building the first Monday of May, from 12-1 if anyone would like to meet with me or they can email me.

DISTRICT 8

- Cabot Fire Auxiliary will be having an Elementary aged Dance along with Easter Bunny pictures. March 27th from 6to 8 pm at the Cabot Fire Hall
- North Highland Nordic will be having A spring Market and Breakfast every Saturday in April from 10 am to 1 pm. please message Nordic to book a table.
- Bay St Lawerence Community Center will be having their 2nd Annual Spring Health Fair. Wednesday April 29th from 1pm to 4. Please see there Facebook page for more information.
- Reminder for District 8 that the municipal grants deadline is March 31st. Thank you to everyone that had there say in doing the municipal survey.

SUBMITTED REPORTS

a. CAO Report

Deputy Warden MacLeod asked about drones and the funding for it. CAO explained that there were other drones in the area and that the licence and operating fees are quite significant and CAO will be bringing REMO items to the Budget meetings, as well as to our newly formed REMO.

Council agreed with the CAO to change to 2 weeks per non-profit group versus 3 weeks for the Re-Use Centre.

Deputy Warden MacLeod asked about trails and signage and Dan Coffin, Manager of Tourism explained that it is being planned right now.

CAO discussed website updates, including the Government landing page, this page now includes a new Council Meeting section that has, among other items, the Council package for Council and COW meetings.

b. Senior Safety Update

Any Senior Safety Officer related projects will be brought to Budget.

Warden Organ asked for a report for the 24-week program that she had.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no committee reports.

CORRESPONDENCE

Warden Organ read the letters of support from Antigonish and Digby regarding the coalition to end poverty and suggested that Victoria County also send a letter in support of this coalition.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-Lefort, seconded by Councillor Born to send a letter of support for the Antigonish Coalition to end Poverty.

Motion Carried.

IN-CAMERA

On Motion of Councillor Donovan, seconded by Councillor Matheson-Lefort to go In-Camera to discuss:

a) Real Estate

b) Personnel

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan, seconded by Deputy Warden MacLeod to come out of In-Camera.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-Lefort, seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve the In-Camera recommendations on the options to move forward with pursuing a potential opportunity for development.

Motion Carried.

QUESTIONS FROM GALLERY

No members of the public were present.

NEXT MEETNG

April 20, 2026, at 10:00am.

ADJOURN

Warden Organ made a motion to adjourn at 12:49pm