A Committee of the Whole meeting was held in Council Chambers in Baddeck, on May 25th, 2026, at 1:30 pm. 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 #5 - Fraser Patterson

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

CALL TO ORDER

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

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Hennick that the Agenda for May 25, 2026, be approved.

Motion Carried.

REVIEW OF MUNICIPAL GRANTS RECOMMENDSATIONS – CFO REDDEN

CFO Redden explained that the grant recommendations were originally scheduled for approval at the May 19 Council meeting; however, due to clarifications and questions from Council, additional discussion was required. As a result, Council met as a Committee of the Whole to review, clarify, and discuss the Grant Committee's recommendations before Council make a final decision.

CFO Redden reviewed the current Grants Policy, noting that it is scheduled for review in January. While the policy provides guidance, Council retains the authority to approve funding outside of the policy if it chooses. It was suggested that following the discussion, the Grant Committee reconvene and prepare revised recommendations for Council's consideration.

Key topics discussed included:

- Interpretation and review of applicants' most recent financial statements.
- Grant eligibility criteria and application requirements.
- The role of letters of support.
- Issue of religious affiliations.
- The need for a comprehensive policy review.
- Assessing financial need and situations where organizations request more funding than required.
- Improving the grant verification and review process.
- Applications from organizations located outside Victoria County.
- Understanding the level of support organizations receive from other levels of government.
- Whether applicants should be required to provide confirmation of funding from other sources.
- Balancing support between smaller organizations, and larger organizations.
- Council's role in reviewing and evaluating applications.
- Potential improvements to the online application process.
- Ensuring fairness and consistency in applying eligibility criteria.
- Possible changes to the evaluation and scoring process.

Specific discussion points included whether schools, fire departments, and organizations based outside Victoria County should be eligible for funding. Some councillors expressed the view that organizations not based in Victoria County, such as the Food Hub, should not be considered, particularly if local organizations may not receive funding due to budget limitations. Other organizations were noted as not having main offices in Victoria County but serving Victoria County in some capacity, such as Celtic Colors and the Inverness/Victoria Federation of Agriculture.

Council also discussed whether organizations that score highly and meet all criteria should automatically receive their full requested amount. One councillor suggested removing all applications that did not fully meet policy requirements before reassessing the remaining applications. Another councillor recommended accepting the current grant recommendations and focusing on policy revisions for future years.

There was general agreement that organizations must fully meet policy requirements, including being active on the Registry of Joint Stock as of March 31, to be considered eligible. Council also discussed whether greater weight should be given to geographic location within the evaluation process and sought clarification on what constitutes "most recent" financial statements.

CFO Redden advised that the community grants and property tax relief allocations are approved as separate budget lines, and funds cannot be shifted between them directly. Council may

approve an over-budget expense, or any unspent amounts from either line would flow to surplus and the operating reserve at year-end, from which Council could authorize a withdrawal to fund additional grant requests, consistent with past practice.

Council agreed that policy review discussions should begin in November, with consideration given to clearer eligibility requirements, revised scoring criteria, and options for full, partial, or tiered funding reductions. Staff will prepare information identifying which organizations meet policy requirements and present funding options for Council's consideration.

The matter will be discussed further at the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 8, followed immediately by a Special Council Meeting to make final decisions on the grant allocations.

ADJOURN

Deputy Warden MacLeod adjourned the meeting at 3:15pm.