A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers at Baddeck on May 5, 2025, at 11:00am with Warden Organ in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1- Donna Matheson-Lefort

District #2- Perla MacLeod, Deputy Warden

District #3- Jess Kerr

District #4- Rosella Born

District #5- Fraser Patterson

District #7- Jackie Organ, Warden

District #8 – Wanda Hennick

STAFF PRESENT

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

Steff MacLeod, Municipal Clerk and Executive Assistant, Recorder

Alix Redden, CFO

Natasha Kochhar, Manager of Communications

Jessica Klein, Digital Communications Administrator

ABSENT

District #6 – Tim Donovan

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 May 5, 2025.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the April 14, 2025, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve the Minutes of April 14, 2025, Regular Council Minutes all the Minutes.

Motion Carried.

NSHA UPDATE– BRETT MACDOUGALL, ANDREW HEIGHTON, GLENN COX, MEGAN MORRISON AND LYNN GILBERT

- The team went over UTC and staff statistics and provided updates on the new facilities and renovations to existing facilities.
- They are actively recruiting doctors.
- Struggling to retain and recruit ED physicians.
- Bed capacity at the Regional Hospital is 113%.
- Mental Health is accessed virtually 7 days a week, if appropriate for the patient.
- CBU timeline for new doctors the new group starts this spring and it's a 4-year program, with a 2-year residency so those doctors will be available in 2030.

Questions from the public:

- Dr mary Hutchinson asked if another UTC can open on the northside. Also mentioned the UTC closes at 4pm which is unacceptable. Brett said they are looking into a UTC on the northside and Sydney, also asking doctors to work more UTC shifts. They are also exploring virtual medical care after the UTC closes for the day.
- Shirley Fraser asked if Cheticamp still has an ER, and yes they do.
- Patricia MacDonald asked about locums at Strait Richmond, they have one position doing a locum at Strait Richmond and confirmed that Inverness municipality hired a health recruiter.
- Betty MacAulay asked how confident they are that they will get the ER back? Mr. MacDougall said his opinion is having the ER is what they are striving for and will continue with recruitment efforts, he's optimistic but it is challenging.

VICTORIA HIGHLANDS CIVIC CENTRE UPDATE – JOHN TRICKETT, DAVE PARKINSON AND JEANNE CAMPBELL

- Still at a standstill and waiting on the federal funding portion, approximately, 55% of the project.
- Please continue to champion the project.
- The committee did look at other areas to have a rink, and there wasn't appropriate land that would suit this project. Wagmatcook was also consulted but there wasn't any land committed after those consultations.
- $24 Million dollar project with contingency. 37% contribution, 4% from VC, and a $1 million from the community and 55% from the community.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Kerr to invite MP Battiste to Council to meet the new Councillors and to discuss the rink.

Motion Carried.

NORTH HIGHLANDS NORDIC PRESENTATION – PAULA MICHAELS AND KATIE FITZGERALD

- The group requested $140,000 funding for a new building to house their new groomer.
- They looked at other areas for funding.
- The organization is putting in about $6,000.

Council will discuss the request.

RECESS

Warden Organ called for a 10-minute recess.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

DISTRICT 1

- Darby's Old Church Kitchen is now open in MacKinnon's Harbour.
- The Harbour Greenhouse will be ready for business May 8th.
- The Sacred Turtle will be ready for business May 10th in Jamesville.

DISTRICT 3

- Happy with the South of Smokey food bank drive.
- Work on the boardwalk will begin next week.
- The local hospital group are doing a great job advocating to get the ER open again.
- Wish the rink committee all the luck getting the last bit of funding.
- The Village is getting ready for the Cabot Trail Relay Race.

DISTRICT 4

- Public Session at “Take a Break! Weekly Gathering,” Indian Brook Firehall
- As Councillor for District 4, I held a public session during the weekly community gathering. I engaged with nearly 40 residents in meaningful conversations about local issues, priorities, and opportunities to strengthen our community.
- Attended the South of Smokey Food Drive, a well-supported event that brought the community together in support of those in need. A heartfelt thank you to the Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department, the Lions Club, and Knox Presbyterian Church for their dedication. The South of Smokey Food Bank plays a vital role in supporting residents throughout the county.
- Upcoming: Your Healthcare: Need to Know Expo in Baddeck
- Nova Scotia Health will host a community information session on May 7 at the Inverary Inn from 6–8 p.m. The session will feature a presentation on local healthcare services, a Q&A, and booths from healthcare and community partners. All are encouraged to attend and learn more about health services in our area.
- Community Benefit Dinner at North Shore & District Volunteer Fire Department, Indian Brook
- Supporting a neighbour who lost their home in a fire, the community is coming together for a benefit spaghetti dinner at the North Shore & District Volunteer Fire Department in Indian Brook. The event features live music by Darrell Keigan and friends. Admission and dinner are by donation, with seasoned volunteers in the kitchen. A wonderful display of community support!
- Ongoing issues with garbage buildup at the St. Anns Look-Off and recurring flooding on the Bay Road have been raised by residents. Both concerns have been formally submitted to the Department of Public Works, and I will continue to advocate for appropriate and timely responses.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to send a letter to the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs and Wagmatcook First Nation: 1. Thanking them for their leadership and advocacy on environmental issues, including hydraulic fracturing. 2. Expressing our solidarity and shared commitment to protecting land and water resources for current and future generations.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Kerr that Council will send a letter to the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM), encouraging them to support municipalities in advocating for more information and transparency on fracking and to uphold the principle of informed local decision-making.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Hennick to that Council formally requests the Province of Nova Scotia to withhold the development of fracking until 1. Transparent, evidence-based studies on environmental and public health impacts are made available to municipalities and the public. 2. Meaningful consultation with municipalities and First Nations has taken place. 3. That Council send a letter to the Premier of Nova Scotia requesting this precautionary approach and emphasizing the need for full and transparent disclosure of risks and consultation processes.

Motion Carried.

DISTRICT 5

- Safe season to the lobster fisherman.
- Grading done in New Campbellton and Kempt Head Road, thanks to Public Works for that.
- Sending along well wishes to former MLA Bain who is currently in hospital.

DISTRICT 7

- Lily and Jack Sullivan in my thoughts and prayers.
- Community clean up is happening soon,
- Heavy pick up went well, a few items still left out that will have to be moved by those residents.
- Neils Harbour/New Haven Development Association received $100,000 for Phase 1 of the lighthouse project.

DISTRICT 8

- Bay St. Lawrence community cleanup this weekend.
- North Highlands community museum will open June 1, washrooms will be opened May 11th
- The cleanup is complete at the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre.
- Received an update from the community health fair and it was a great success.
- Safe fishing season to all.

COUNCIL MEETING DISCUSSION – COUNCIL

- Schedule COW one week and then 2 weeks later Council and schedule them from 9-12 and to travel around the County for COW.
- For the months of June, July and August there will be no COW, only Regular Council Meetings, once per month.

MOTIONS/RESOLUTIONS

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-Lefort seconded by Councillor Born to develop a campaign to reduce litter.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Patterson seconded by Councillor Kerr to allow Councillor Patterson to run for FCM Board elections for a two-year term. If he is successful, financial considerations will be made at the time of meetings.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to approve the First Reading of the Bylaw Repeals, the following bylaws are up for repeal:

1. ***AUCTIONEERS, PEDDLERS, HAWKERS AND TRADER OF GOODS BYLAW (1982)***
2. ***BUILDING PERMIT FEES BYLAW (2010)***
3. ***2020 ELECTRONIC VOTING BYLAW (2020)***
4. ***EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS TAX EXEMPTION BYLAW (2014)***
5. ***SMOKING BYLAW (2002)***

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Born to approve the Frist Reading of the Land Use By-Law and Municipal Planning Strategy.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Kerr to approve the approve the following tax rates for fiscal 2025-2026:

- ***Residential and resource tax rates of $1.15 per $100 of assessment***
- ***Commercial tax rate of $2.09 per $100 of assessment***

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to approve Victoria County's Operating Budget for fiscal 2025-2026 with revenues of $15,560,858 and expenses of $15,560,858.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve Victoria County's five-year Capital Budget for fiscal 2025-26 of $23,659,260.

Motion Carried.

Water Utility Accounts discussion will be moved to COW meeting.

QUESTIONS FOR THE CAO

- Warden Organ requested an update following the meeting with the local fisherman in Ingonish and CAO MacEachen said there were fisherman in attendance, along with councillor Donovan and Strait Engineering led the meeting. It was a productive meeting.
- CAO MacEachen asked residents to please fill out the survey. Anyone that is between the ski hill and the Keltic Lodge, so we can determine the route of the sewer system.
- CAO MacEachen was asked about the selection of a Code of Conduct Investigator, as per the new provincial Councillor Code of Conduct regulations and to date, CAO MacEachen has only received one quote.

NEXT MEETNG

May 26, 2025.

ADJOURN

Councillor Donovan made a motion to adjourn at 2:08pm