A Committee of the Whole meeting was in Council Chambers in Baddeck, on September 8, 2025, at 10:00am with Deputy Warden MacLeod 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 #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, Recorder

Kelly Brett, Manager of Public Works

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 September 8, 2025, be approved.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MAY 26, 2025, COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Warden Organ to approve the May 26, 2025, Minutes.

Motion Carried.

PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE – KELLY BRETT

Ms. Brett, Manager of Public Works presented Council with an EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) update, and highlights of that presentation include:

- The Municipality will be contracted by Circular Materials to collect recycling curbside and to receive the material at the Baddeck Waste Management Facility.
- Compensation rate for each waste collection stop = $5.65
- Compensation rate for promotion & education per stop = $1.50
- Compensation rate per metric tonne of recycling received = $300.00
- Circular Materials will assist with capital costs related to collection of recyclable material.
- Annual compensation ≈ $350,000.00
- The combined funding will help off-set operational and communication-related expenses for continued residential curbside collection.
- The contract comes into effect December 1st, 2025.
- Extended producer responsibility is for curbside residential recycling only.
- Circular Materials acknowledges that some ICI (Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional) recycling is being received. However, curbside collection may continue as it has in the past.

Expectation from Circular Materials:

- Residents and ICI customers who receive curbside collection must place their recyclables out for collection.
- They are not permitted to drop off their materials at our sites.
- The Municipality may be fined for sending contaminated recycling for processing. As a result, residents/ICI customers may see more materials rejected during curbside pickup if contamination is found.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT UPDATE – MATT MACLEAN

Mr. MacLean, a contracted engineer for the Ingonish Wastewater Treatment Plant gave a presentation providing Council with an update of the project to date, the following are a few highlights:

Project has been divided into two phases:

Phase 1
- Construction of outfall and collection system in South Ingonish Harbour
- Delivery and commissioning of modular wastewater treatment plant
- Detailed Design completed by Strait Engineering
- Construction tender awarded to Zutphen's

Phase 2
- Extension of collection system to Ingonish Beach
- Delivery and commissioning of second modular wastewater treatment plant
- Preliminary and Detailed Design to be completed by Dillon
- Construction tender award TBD

Membrane Bioreactor Treatment Technology:

Mr. MacLean went on to discuss the Membrane Bioreactor Treatment Technology and provided permitting updates from DFO, Transport Canada, NS Environment and the provincial department of Public Works.

Permitting Update:

DFO
- Letter of Advice received September 2
- Includes conditions that must be adhered to in relation to the construction of the outfall

Transport Canada
- Approximately 10 comments received from the public during the comment period
- Those comments did not pertain to marine navigation
- Expecting authorization in the coming days

NS Environment
- Awaiting final design report from Strait Engineering
- Have requested letter of support from Wagmatcook to accompany application
- Requires additional water samples from receiving water, next sampling event to take place in late September
- Anticipating application submission within the week

NS DPW
- Permits will be required for installation of manholes and crossing under the Cabot Trail.

Project Communications:

- Weekly Meeting between Project Team and Cape Smokey Project Team
- Project Updates posted to Engage Victoria County website
- Bi-weekly meetings with NS Environment to keep regulators aware of project developments
- Weekly construction meetings anticipated once construction commences
- County staff have continued to engage with Wagmatcook First Nation throughout the Project

Project Milestones were discussed.

Project Budget:

- Budget developed using Strait Engineering's adjusted Pre-Design Budget
- Actual costs for MBR Treatment Plants 1 and 2
- Phase 1 Site Works estimated based on Zutphen's bid plus anticipated change orders that were not included in original tender documents
- Phase 1 Design is Strait Engineering's fees to plant commissioning
- Phase 2 Design is Dillon's proposed cost for Preliminary and Detailed Design of Phase 2
- Phase 2 Construction costs based on Strait Engineering estimate
- Project Management fees to end of Phase 1 commissioning
- Total committed: $14, 442, 796 and Total Spent: $812, 752.

It was noted during the discussion that the project was originally presented as a single initiative, but it is now being delivered in two phases. Residents may have questions regarding this change. CAO MacEachen explained that Phase 2 had been referenced in the newsletter, and the division into two phases is due to piping considerations and the project being larger than originally anticipated. She also emphasized that there are specific timelines that must be met.

The system itself has changed and will now be implemented in two phases, with the initial focus on Smokey Development. While this represents a shift from the technology originally described to residents, the updated system is an improvement and is expected to deliver better results.

SEASONAL TOURIST BUSINESS TAX ADJUSTMENT – CFO REDDEN

CFO Redden went over a previously submitted Recommendation Report with Council regarding the Seasonal Tourist Business Tax Adjustment. The report provided the following discussion points:

While the STBTA was created to help rural tourism businesses, it presents several challenges for Victoria County:

- Encourages closure: The program provides a property tax break only to businesses that close for part of the year. Those that stay open longer or operate year-round receive no benefit.

- Economic impact: A large share of the County's commercial tax base comes from tourism businesses, many of which qualify for this program. While the direct tax revenue loss to the County is small ($69k in 2025), the program does not support our goal of encouraging year-round operations and stronger local economies.
- Jobs and services: Seasonal closures make it harder for businesses to keep staff and reduce the services available to both residents and visitors, which limits long-term economic growth.
- No local control: Because this is a provincial program, municipalities have no ability to change it or opt out, even when it conflicts with local priorities.

Recommendations from the report that addresses those issues include:

- Short-term: Permit municipalities to opt out of the STBTA through council resolution if it does not fit local needs.
- Medium-term: Introduce a provincial pilot program offering targeted incentives for businesses extending toward year-round operation.
- Long-term: Modernize the MGA to provide municipalities with authority to implement locally designed tax relief programs that align with economic development strategies.
- That Council approve sending the attached letter to the Honourable John Lohr, Minister of Municipal Affairs, asking the Province to review and update the STBTA program.

CFO Redden said the intent is not penalize the businesses that are using this tax credit. This impacts VC more than any other municipality across the province.

On the recommendation of Warden Organ, a letter will be sent from Council.

IN CAMERA

CAO MacEachen requested an In-Camera session to discuss a legal matter.

Deputy Warden MacLeod made the recommendation to accept the recommendations made In Camera and will be brought forward as a Motion to the next Regular Meeting of Council.

Came out of In Camera at 12:31pm

NEXT MEETING

October 6, 2025 at 10am.

ADJOURN

Meeting was adjourned at 12:32pm.