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A Committee of the Whole meeting was held in Council Chambers at Baddeck on September 14, 2026, at 2:30 p.m. with Deputy Warden MacLeod in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1 - Donna Matheson-Lefort

District #2 - Perla MacLeod, Deputy Warden

District #3 – Ian Nicholson

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

Kelly Brett, Manager of Public Works

ABSENT

District #5 - Fraser Patterson

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 Donovan the that the Agenda for September 14, 2026, be approved.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 8, 2026, COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Councillor Born to approve the June 8, 2026, Minutes.

Motion Carried.

DILLON ENGINEERING UPDATE – JAMES SHEPPARD AND MICHAEL CORMIER

Dillon Engineering presented an update on the Ingonish wastewater treatment and collection project, including preliminary design work, servicing options, probable costs, and next steps.

- The preliminary design identifies six service zones, with gravity sewer promoted where feasible and five lift stations required due to topography.
- Three options were reviewed for conveying wastewater to the treatment plant; the preferred option is a new wastewater treatment plant on the north side of the harbour, subject to permitting, land acquisition, and easements.
- Key challenges include steep topography, potential geotechnical concerns in the Harbour View Drive area, property acquisition, easements, and the need for an additional outfall.
- Council discussed the need for updated public feedback, as project details have changed since the original proposal.
- Council agreed that another survey should be sent to residents before determining whether to proceed further.

COUNCIL PRESENTATION REQUEST FORM – CAO MACEACHEN

CAO MacEachen presented a proposed Council/COW Presentation Information Form to support consistent intake and review of presentation requests.

- The form asks presenters to provide organization details, the purpose of the presentation, and whether the request is for information, advocacy/support, or financial assistance.
- Financial requests would require details such as the amount requested, type of funding, project budget, other funding sources, financial statements, and previous County support.
- The form also captures organizational information, grant reporting status, municipal tax status, and alignment with Victoria County's Strategic Priorities.
- The appendix provides routing guidance to determine whether a presentation should go to Council or Committee of the Whole, depending on whether a decision, funding request, endorsement, discussion, or preliminary review is required.
- Council was agreeable to the form, and CAO MacEachen noted that charitable organizations would be added.

PROPOSED COMMUNITY STANDARDS BYLAW DISCUSSION – MUNICIPAL CLERK MACLEOD

Municipal Clerk MacLeod introduced the proposed Community Standards Bylaw for Council discussion, outlining the need for a clear municipal framework to address unreasonable disturbances while allowing normal community, business, and essential activities to continue.

- The proposed bylaw would apply throughout Victoria County and would address nuisance, noise, graffiti, exemptions, and enforcement.
- Construction hours were highlighted as Monday to Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., and weekends and statutory holidays from 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- The bylaw uses a reasonableness test, with officers considering factors such as duration, frequency, intensity, timing, location, land use, and whether reasonable steps could have been taken to avoid the impact.
- Standing exemptions would protect essential services, public works, utilities, snow clearing, normal agriculture, forestry, fishing, approved community events, and faith-related activities.
- Enforcement would generally follow a proportionate approach, beginning with investigation and warning where appropriate, followed by compliance orders, Summary Offence Tickets, or prosecution if required.
- Council discussed practical implementation considerations, including construction hours, exemptions, enforcement challenges, fireworks, and the need for further policy/bylaw committee discussion.

PROPOSED MOBILE VENDING BYLAW DISCUSSION – MUNICIPAL CLERK MACLEOD

Municipal Clerk MacLeod presented proposed changes to the Mobile Vending Bylaw for Council discussion, outlining a broader County-wide framework intended to expand mobile vending opportunities while clarifying rules for location, safety, permitting, enforcement, and administration.

- The proposed bylaw would expand beyond food-only vending to include food, beverages, goods, and merchandise from movable or temporary units.
- Home-based mobile vendors, site-specific approvals, community exceptions, and year-round annual permit operations would be recognized under the revised framework.
- The 60-metre separation rule would remain but would focus on similarity of products or services and allow exceptions through business consent, approved events, or administrative review of local circumstances.
- Safety requirements would be more specific, including clear pedestrian and traffic routes, fire protection, propane, generator, electrical, and inspection-related documentation where required.
- Permitting would be tied to the mobile unit and approved locations, with event participation streamlined for annual and seasonal permit holders.
- Council discussed fees, non-resident vendors, event participation, enforcement ranges, comparison with other municipal units, impacts on seasonal communities, and requested one more meeting to review the proposed bylaw before proceeding further.

TRAVEL POLICY DISCUSSION – CFO REDDEN

CFO Redden presented a review of the Municipal Travel Expense Policy, focusing on Councillor mileage within their own electoral district, the history of the current practice, comparable municipal approaches, and decision points for a future policy amendment.

- The current policy was adopted in 2014 and applies to both Council and staff, with mileage reimbursed for authorized municipal business.
- The review found no explicit policy clause, Council motion, amendment, or administrative directive excluding Councillor travel within their own district.
- The in-district travel restriction appears to have been a longstanding practice rather than a formally adopted policy provision.
- Other municipalities showed a range of approaches, including full exclusion, no exclusion, distance thresholds, flat nominal fees, and flat travel allowance models.
- Council discussed whether in-district mileage should be reimbursed, what types of travel should qualify, how claims should be approved, and whether meal allowance rates should also be reviewed.
- Council agreed that Councillors should be reimbursed for travel within their own districts when travelling on Council business under the current Travel Policy, and that the approval process should be written into the policy.
- Council also noted that meal allowance per diem rates should be reviewed.

WAYFINDING DISCUSSION – COUNCIL

Council continued discussion on the Victoria County Wayfinding Strategy, originally presented in June, following Deputy Warden MacLeod's request for further discussion at the next Committee of the Whole meeting. Dan Coffin, Manager of Tourism, participated in the discussion.

- The presentation outlined a County-wide wayfinding strategy intended to create a simple, consistent signage system for visitors and residents.
- The review identified several challenges, including provincial road jurisdiction, limited decision points, low-density destinations, lack of clear Cabot Trail coherence at entry points, and complicated road directional signage.
- Recommendations included improving consistency, working with regional partners, strengthening Cabot Trail signage, directing visitors to amenities and destinations, improving trail and park signage, and using interpretation and placemaking to share community stories.
- The strategy also recommended simplifying road directional signs with the Province, assigning responsibility for messaging, maintenance, locations, and implementation, and delaying digital integration until mobile coverage improves.
- The full implementation estimate included 274 signs, with an estimated budget of approximately $906,000 for fabrication, installation, consulting, and staff time.
- Council discussed the overall value of the project, the significant cost, and the need to identify a practical funding approach.
- Dan Coffin will review the strategy in phases, prepare options with annual phase budgets, and bring the information back to Council for further consideration.

CELL SERVICE LETTER – COUNCIL

Council discussed a regional letter regarding concerns with cellular service in the Strait Region and the need for improved connectivity for residents, businesses, visitors, and emergency response.

- The letter raises concerns about inconsistent cellular connectivity and declining service as network technology changes continue.
- Reliable cell service was identified as important for public safety, emergency response, severe weather communication, economic development, remote work, virtual appointments, business operations, education, and daily communication.
- The letter requests an update on the timeline for proposed towers and plans to address service gaps through Build Nova Scotia.
- Victoria County agreed to be added to the letter, supporting the initiative and the request for improved cellular connectivity across the region.

FUNDING REQUEST – TAIGH CURIAM DAYCARE

Council reviewed a funding request from Taigh Cùraim Day Care Society for financial assistance to complete the Bay St. Lawrence day care project, specifically related to an unforeseen septic system replacement required before the centre can open.

- The Society requested $67,140 to support completion of the septic system work at the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre.
- The septic replacement was identified during final Public Health review and is required before the licensed day care centre can open.
- The project would create 18 licensed childcare spaces for Bay St. Lawrence and surrounding communities and help support families, workforce participation, local employment, and long-term community sustainability.
- Council discussed responsibility for the septic system, including whether the request should have come from the Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre as the building owner rather than from the daycare society as the tenant.
- Council noted that Victoria County has public washrooms in the facility and that any support would also help protect access to an important community service.
- Council also discussed the difference between the contractor quotes, the Society's request based on the higher estimate, and the possibility that choosing a lower quote could reduce the overall cost.
- Council wanted time to review the full funding package before making a decision on whether to support the request.
- If Council supports the request, a decision would need to be made soon, and CAO MacEachen could contact the Province regarding a potential cost-sharing agreement.
- CAO MacEachen will follow up with the daycare society on next steps once Council has had an opportunity to review the proposal.

J-CLASS ROAD DISCUSSION – COUNCIL

There was limited discussion on this item. Council will have a more detailed discussion with Steve MacDonald, Supervisor for the Provincial Department of Public Works, when he attends the Council meeting on September 21. CAO MacEachen will request the list from Mr. MacDonald and circulate it to Council.

PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD

Athol Grant requested clarification regarding J-class roads and was advised that all roads, except highways, are classified as J-class roads.

Mr. Grant also asked whether there are any plans to construct new roads and inquired as what the associated costs might be. He further noted that the controlled-access highway designation should be removed for the Baddeck area and requested an opportunity to present to Council once his report is complete.

Deputy Warden MacLeod had to leave the meeting early and handed over the Chair to Warden Organ.

IN-CAMERA – MGA SECTION 22(2)(c): PERSONNEL MATTERS

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

Councillor Matheson-LeFort made a motion to come out of In Camera and there were no recommendations made.

NEXT MEET

October 5, 2026, 10:00 am.

ADJOURN

Warden Organ adjourned the meeting at 5:17pm.