

A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers at Baddeck on March 24, 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 #6 – Tim Donovan

District #7- Jackie Organ, Warden

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 #8 – Wanda Hennick

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Warden Organ requested an In Camera session be added to the Agenda to discuss a legal matter.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Kerr to approve the Agenda for March 24, 2025, with the noted change.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the February 10, 2025, meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Born to approve the Minutes of February 10, 2025, Regular Council Minutes all the Minutes.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Born to approve the Minutes of February 13, 2025, Special Council Minutes.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Born to approve the Minutes of February 24, 2025, Special Council Minutes.

Motion Carried.

SECOND READING OF THE LAND USE BYLAW AND MUNICIPAL PLANNING STANDARDS

Nathan MacLeod from Upland Studios joined the meeting virtually and listened to the discussion and answered questions from the public that were present.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the Second Reading of the Land Use Bylaw and Municipal Planning Standards.

Motion Defeated.

PRESENTATIONS

Cape Breton Partnership – Tyler Mattheis gave an update to Council.

Neil's Harbour/New Haven Development Association – Sheila Fricker and David Donovan gave a presentation to Council and had the following request:

- \$100,000 for the Lighthouse Rehabilitation Project.

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Donovan to take the request to Budget discussions.

Motion Carried.

Daycare Update - Gwen Jerabek, Liz Morrison and Matt Hart gave an update to Council and had the following requests:

- Cover some of the owner responsible costs of \$194,635.17 at the Ingonish daycare site.

Council had many questions and discussion took place.

CAO recommended that the daycare work with the County's finance department and with Councillor Donovan for his expertise and background in construction.

RECESS

Warden Organ called for a 10-minute recess.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

DISTRICT 1

Invited to the first AGM of the fire department.

Big thanks to our water utility crews.

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Donovan to take \$1,000.00 from District 1 Budget to the Highland Village Youth Players.

Motion Carried.

DISTRICT 2

- Reminder to residents that the Heating Rebate and Senior Care Grants from the Provinces are due March 31.

- Send a letter to MLA Bain on retirement and congratulate him on his years of service.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Kerr to take \$1,000.00 from District 2 Budget to the Middle River Hall.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Born to take \$1,000.00 from District 2 Budget to the Middle River Volunteer Fire Department.

Motion Carried.

- Take \$800.00 out of District 2 Budget for Baddeck Forks Hall.

Deputy Warden MacLeod asked about Heavy Garbage pickup and CAO MacEachen explained that heavy garbage may not be able to take place this year due to staffing issues, it is unsustainable for our staff to do, its very hard on them, it results in injuries. If we need to contract it out, it will be very costly, so we need to be discussed further. Last year it cost the County about \$100,000. Deputy Warden asked staff to prepare recommendations regarding this and have it prepared for the next council meeting if we are not doing it.

DISTRICT 3

- Thanked Provincial Department of Public Works about doing some patching but more needs to be done.
- Local resident, Willie Roberts just turned 98.
- Expressed that his family has been going through some tough times and thanked Council and the community for their support.

DISTRICT 4

- Read a letter from Fire chief Drew Davidson regarding the rescue of two snowmobilers in February. Communications were a major struggle with this rescue and a plea that there is a need for reliable cell service in these areas.
- Garbage at the St. Ann's lookoff. Sent a note about this concern to MLA Timmins.
- CAEP Advocating against fracking in NS and explored if the NSFM would take a stance against fracking. Council had a discussion on the importance of having someone, a consultant perhaps, come to Council to explain fracking.
- Section of Meadow Road impassable and contacted the Provincial Department of Public Works Supervisor.

DISTRICT 5

- Seeing lots of litter and getting some calls on it.

DISTRICT 6

- Had a meeting regarding the proposed Wastewater Treatment Plant project, it was well attended. Have heard from several residents on both sides, some for and some against and some that have changed their minds that are now in support of the project.
- Weekly kitchen parties at Smokey Recreation continue.
- Had a request from a resident for Council to discuss the Keltic Lodge and make note of what our position is for the future of the lodge.

DISTRICT 7

- Requested to contact Bell regarding low hanging wires North of Smokey.
- Thank you to the community of Ingonish for coming to the WWTP meeting.
- Attended the Appreciation dinner for former MLA Bain and congratulations on his retirement.

MOTIONS/RESOLUTIONS

On Motion of Councillor Patterson to move to reconsider motion made at a meeting of Victoria County Council held on January 27, 2025 to rescind a motion made on July 22, 2024, to require live streaming of committee of the whole meetings, motion was not seconded.

Motion Defeated.

On Motion of Councillor Patterson seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to put a motion to reinstate public questions on the table for discussion.

Motion Carried.

Council had a discussion and agreed that having a question period was a good thing but would like to have a format and requested to have a further discussion about at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

On Motion of Councillor Patterson seconded by Councillor Kerr to reinstate public question period will be referred to next Committee of the Whole Meeting for discussion.

Motion Carried

On Motion of Councillor Patterson to allow comments on the Victoria County Facebook page, motion was not seconded.

Motion Defeated.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Patterson to contact Bell, Parks Canada and Build NS to look into upgrading the level of service in Victoria County, particularly between Englishtown ferry and the summit of Smokey.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Matheson-Lefort to direct staff to research cell and internet allowance reimbursement

Motion Carried.

- **MOTION FOR 2024-2025 TAX EXEMPTION FOR ST. MARK'S LODGE**

Councillor Kerr excused himself from Council Chambers, citing a conflict of interest.

Merrill Buchanan, the treasurer for St. Mark's Lodge explained that they missed the municipal grant application deadline last year and as a result were given a tax bill. The lodge is requesting to have their 2024-2025 tax bill exempt.

Council discussed options with Mr. Buchanan, and it was agreed that St. Mark's Lodge be given the residential rate instead of the commercial rate and that the taxes can be paid out of Councillor Kerr's District Budget if he agrees.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Donovan to put St. Mark's Lodge 2024-2025 tax bill down to the residential rate and present Councillor Kerr with the information to see if he would like to take it out of his district budget.

Motion Carried.

Councillor Kerr returned to Council and made the following motion:

On Motion of Councillor Kerr seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to pay for St. Mark's Lodge 2024-2025 tax bill out of District 3 Budget.

Motion Carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FCM Board of directors' report and the two main topics were the tariffs and the upcoming Canadian Federal elections.

NEXT MEETING

March 24, 2025.

On Motion of Councillor Patterson seconded by Councillor Kerr to go In Camera to discuss a legal matter at 3:24pm.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Donovan to come out of In Camera at 3:36pm.

Motion Carried.

ADJOURN

Deputy Warden MacLeod made a motion to adjourn at 3:45pm.