A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Baddeck on September 21, 2026, at 1:00pm with Warden Organ in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1 - Donna Matheson-LeFort

District #3 – Ian Nicholson

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, Recorder

Ursula Melski, Manager of Communications

Jessica Klein, Digital Communications Administrator

ABSENT

District #2 - Perla MacLeod, Deputy Warden

CALL TO ORDER

Warden Organ called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval. With the addition of Councillor Patterson's FCM Report, an In Camera meeting and the Approval of the recommendations made at the September 21, 2026, Finance and Audit Committee meeting that took place prior to the Council meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Councillor Nicholson to approve the Agenda for September 21, 2026 with the noted additions.

Motion Carried.

09-21-1

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The August 17, 2026, were acknowledged and approved with no errors or omissions.

PRESENTATIONS

NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE – STEVE MACDONALD

Steve MacDonald provided an update on Public Works activities throughout the County.

- Most RIM work had been completed, including gravel patching, ditching, and pavement patching, with some additional asphalt work still required. Work was underway on New Campbellton Road, and upgrades had been completed on Steels Crossing Road. Public Works was preparing for the winter season, including hiring spare operators and inspecting salt equipment.
- Mr. MacDonald reported significant storm damage from the September 5 storm, particularly in the Iona and Little Narrows areas. Approximately 10 to 15 roads were closed for multiple days. Public Works worked with REMO to ensure residents were not isolated and to reopen affected roads.
- Council discussed several district-specific matters, including Route 223 culvert work, MacKinnon's Harbour drainage concerns, Red Point Road floodplain issues, washouts on John Neil George Road, J-class road funding, the dip on the Trans-Canada Highway near Baddeck, New Campbellton Road reconstruction, climate change resilience, brush cutting, Sugar Loaf Bridge repairs, North Cape and Bay St. Lawrence road conditions, school bus signage, no-stopping signage near Smokey, White Point parking concerns, and waterline relocation costs.

EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES (EHS) UPDATE – KRISTA DEBAIE AND MIKE GILLIS

Krista Deveau, Acting Regional Manager, and Mike Gillis, District Operations Supervisor, provided an overview of Emergency Health Services operations, highlights included:

- Emergency ambulances, patient transfer units, low acuity transfers, medical transport services, single response units, support vehicles, LifeFlight, and fixed-wing aircraft. They noted that EHS operates 24 hours a day and responds to more than 200,000 service requests annually across Nova Scotia.
- The presentation explained the 911 process, paramedic levels of care, emergency medical responders, patient assessment, triage, transport decisions, specialty programs, LifeFlight, community paramedics, Emergency Preparedness Special Operations, and the palliative care program.
- Council discussed emergency response during road closures and flooding, coordination with EMO and DNR helicopters, ambulance offload delays at hospitals, support from local first responders and fire departments, 911 service disruption communications, ambulance wait times, seasonal tourism pressures, staffing improvements, ambulance coverage north of Smokey, patient transfer wait times, and the Helping the Helpers event scheduled for October 24, 2026.

COMMUNITY PETITION SUBMISSION – PATTI STEPHENSON, GLENDA KAISER AND MARY HUTCHINSON

Patti Stephenson, Glenda Kaiser and Mary Hutchinson presented a petition requesting the return of garbage cans to the Village of Baddeck. The petition was circulated for approximately two weeks and received 429 signatures. The presenters expressed concerns about litter, dog waste, tourism impacts, and the broader importance of Baddeck as a community hub for residents outside the Village boundaries.
Council discussed the historic role of the Village of Baddeck in placing and maintaining garbage cans, village taxation and amenities, and the need for the petitioners to present the matter to the Village. Council noted that discussions between the Municipality and the Village may continue, but no Municipal commitment was made at this meeting.

COUNCIL REPORTS

DISTRICT 1

- I want to offer my heartfelt condolences to the families, friends, and community of Wagmatcook First Nation following the tragic losses over the past month.
- The Wagmatcook Powwow has been cancelled this year out of respect for the families and the community during this time of mourning. I hope those who are grieving find comfort and strength in the days ahead, and that the memories of those who have passed bring peace to those who knew and loved them.
- In recognition of Truth and Reconciliation, Municipal Council raised the flag at half-mast today to honor and remember the lives recently lost in Wagmatcook First Nation. This gesture serves as a reminder of the importance of remembering, reflecting, and continuing the work of truth and reconciliation.
- The severe storm and resulting flooding during the first week of September caused significant disruption throughout the County, and neighboring municipalities, with several areas in my district directly affected.
- I know many residents are now facing the difficult process of dealing with damage and beginning the road to recovery. I will continue to advocate for those impacted and assist wherever I can, including helping residents access available supports and bringing their concerns forward.
- I also want to recognize the first responders, municipal crews, volunteers, neighbors, and other departments that stepped forward to help during and after the storm. Their efforts and compassion were greatly appreciated.
- I received an update today from CGC Inc. regarding the Little Narrows quarry revitalization project. The company expects to reach an important milestone in the coming weeks with its first test shipment and the start of commissioning, marking the transition from construction to operational testing. During this phase, quarry, dock, and ship-loading systems will be tested under real operating conditions before regular commercial operations begin.
- CGC has emphasized that this milestone should not be viewed as the project's official opening, but rather as the beginning of a phased testing and ramp-up period. The company continues to target an official opening in spring 2027.

- The $104 million project is expected to create more than 100 long-term jobs once fully operational and represents a significant economic development initiative for Victoria County and Cape Breton.

DISTRICT 3

- Recent state of emergency: I would like to thank our CAO Leanne and REMO for all the information updates and for the great work done by everyone.
- My area was hit the least, so I received many complaints from business owners about the length of the landfill closure when there was no visible impact in the area.
- A week earlier, the Baddeck area received 70 mm of rain in 45 minutes, which flooded and closed businesses, flooded many basements, and affected residents.
- I visited the arena property, and everything has been cleaned up except for the cement slab.
- For the record, the number one complaint in the district are garbage cans and the condition of roads and streets. We need to be part of a solution.
- In closing, I would like to recognize local businessperson Laura Dixon on her retirement from Needs and thank her for 17 years of service to the area. I wish her the best of luck.

DISTRICT 4

- I would like to begin by acknowledging the excellent work carried out following the significant rain and storm event on September 5th.
- The repairs were completed very quickly, particularly in the areas of River Bennett and Black Head Road, and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Nova Scotia Public Works and the REMO team for their efforts and for keeping residents informed throughout the response.
- I would also like to recognize the North Shore Volunteer Fire Department for supporting Public Works with road safety and traffic-related concerns during the event.
- Most importantly, I want to thank the residents of our district who stepped up to help their neighbours. Many people assisted with flooded basements and provided food, supplies, and other support to those who were affected. That community spirit was greatly appreciated.
- All concerns brought forward by residents have been submitted to Public Works for follow-up. These concerns include missing or damaged road signs, bridge concerns involving guardrails, as well as potholes and dips along the Cabot Trail. I will continue to follow up on these matters and keep residents informed as updates become available.
- On September 15th, we were invited to tour the Wreck Cove Generating Facility and learn more about the facility's operations and upcoming priorities.
- The visit included discussions on reliability initiatives, storm response, and infrastructure investments. I was joined by Councillor Donovan, who arranged the site visit, as well as Councillor Hennick and Warden Organ. It was a very informative and worthwhile experience. I would like to thank Nova Scotia Power for hosting us and for providing such an excellent tour and overview of the facility.
- I am pleased to report that the outstanding concern regarding an unsightly premises in the district has now been resolved.

- I would like to thank Sean Donovan of the Eastern District Planning Commission for his work and assistance in bringing this matter to a resolution.
- I would also like to recognize a special milestone in our district. Henry Fuller of Big Harbour recently celebrated his 80th birthday. On behalf of the district, I would like to extend sincere congratulations to Henry and wish him continued health, happiness, and many more wonderful years ahead.
- Looking ahead, the North Shore & District Fire Department will be hosting a Haunted House on October 24th and 25th. The doors will be open from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.
- This event will coincide with the Cabot Truck Food Truck Rally. Residents are encouraged to follow the Fire Department's Facebook page for updates and for information regarding the possibility of an evening event.
- There are also several regular community activities taking place in the district.
- Cribbage is held every Monday evening at the Indian Brook Fire Hall, beginning at 7:00 p.m.
- Take a Break continues every Wednesday at the Indian Brook Fire Hall from 10:00 a.m. until noon. This program will lead into the return of the Senior Lunches in October.
- I encourage residents to take advantage of these opportunities to get together, connect with neighbours, and continue building a strong and active community.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Donovan to direct the CAO to establish a consistent process for the submission, approval and public disclosure of expense claims for municipal management, department heads and other senior staff, similar to the process currently used for Council and the CAO. Approved expense claims would be posted on the Municipality's website.

Further, that the CAO bring any necessary changes to the Municipality's Expense Policy back to Council so that the policy reflects this process.

Motion Carried.

09-21-2

DISTRICT 5

- Celtic Colours concert scheduled for October 10 in Boularderie.
- Tinker Dan's General Store opened a Mini Putt.
- New Campbellton Road reconstruction is underway.
- Provided an FCM report, noting sessions on equity, diversity and inclusion, resolutions related to public safety, forestry, mental health and homelessness, defence collaboration, agricultural research centres, and support for small businesses. He highlighted discussions on bright vehicle headlights, EV charging, Rogers Communications service solutions during outages, Fogo Island and Shorefast, Alberta

independence discussions, and Canada–U.S. trade concerns. The report can be found in the Council meeting package.

DISTRICT 6

- Attended the Wreck Cove Generating Facility tour.
- Recognized the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion and the 80th anniversary of the local Legion branch in Ingonish.
- Noted that the tourism season was beginning to slow down and wished local businesses well during Celtic Colours.

DISTRICT 7

- Extended condolences to Chief Norman Bernard, his family, and community.
- Reminded residents to follow school-zone speed limits, obey school bus flashing lights, and watch for children walking and boarding buses.

DISTRICT 8

- First, I would like to thank our CAO, Leanne, and the EMO team for all the hard work and updates provided during the recent storm, which helped us keep our residents informed.
- I attended the Buchanan Memorial Hospital Foundation Gala at the Markland. Although the weather kept a few people away, it was a great success. Thank you to the Foundation for the invitation. It was a fulfilling evening honouring long-time board members Bernie Vassello, Peggy Morrison, and Dr. Ken Murray.
- I attended a tour of the Wreck Cove Hydro Plant, along with Warden Organ, Councillor Born, and Councillor Donovan. Thank you to Councillor Donovan for organizing this tour. It was very interesting to go underground to see the operations and meet with NSP to hear about the upgrades coming to our area.
- I attended the Wellness Fund Celebration hosted by the Victoria County Community Health Board, along with Warden Organ and Councillor Born. It was great to see organizations receiving funding for their projects. I am also proud to announce that I am a new board member.
- This week is National Legion Week. This year also marks 100 years of the Royal Canadian Legion.
- For a full century, Legions have supported veterans and their families. Across Nova Scotia and Victoria County, our local branches do so much for our communities. Please join me this Legion Week in congratulating every member and volunteer on this 100-year milestone. Thank you for a century of service to Victoria County, Nova Scotia, and Canada.
- September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day to honour residential school survivors, their families, and communities, and to recognize the tragic and lasting impacts of Canada's residential school system. Every child matters.
- The Cape North Farmers Market will run for the next few Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Cabot Fire Hall in Cape North.

- The Celtic Colours concert will be held at North Highlands Elementary School on October 14 at 7:00 p.m.
- I would like to congratulate former District 8 Councillor, paramedic, and friend Norman MacDonald on the release of his CD, *That Old House*. Anyone interested in a CD can contact me.

RECESS

Warden Organ called a 15-minute recess at 2:30pm

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

a) STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE TRAINING

On Motion of Councillor Patterson seconded by Councillor Donovan to table this discussion until the next regular meeting of Council with Deputy Warden MacLeod in attendance.

Motion Carried.

09-21-3

SUBMITTED REPORTS

a) CAO REPORT

- **Council decision / direction:** Determine the future designation of Lot 86A New Haven and the Baddeck property being transferred by the Province.

Council discussed the future designation of Lot 86A New Haven and the Baddeck property being transferred by the Province. For the Baddeck property, Council requested additional information on possible uses, including bus parking and compatibility with potential recreation or playground plans.

For Lot 86A New Haven, Council agreed to defer further direction at this time.

Council discussed the Upside-Down Bridge near Uisge Ban Falls, which is set for removal by the Province. The CAO explained that the bridge could potentially support trail connectivity if it could be brought up to appropriate safety standards. Council discussed possible costs, liability, multi-use trail access, provincial demolition funding, and the need for a safety study. A motion to pursue a report was rescinded after discussion, and the CAO advised that staff would proceed administratively with a safety study within the approved trails budget.

- **Council direction:** Provide direction on the Justice Department savings plan for community safety measures. Can this be added to a COW?

Council directed that the Justice Department savings plan for community safety measures be added to a Committee of the Whole agenda.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Born to add discussion of the Justice Department savings plan for community safety measures to a Committee of the Whole agenda.

Motion Carried.

09-21-4

Council direction: NSFM has requested that I be part of a CAO focus group for Code of Conduct for Elected Officials review. Does Council want me to be part of this group?

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Hennick to approve the CAO's participation in the NSFM CAO focus group regarding the Code of Conduct for Elected Officials review.

Motion Carried.

09-21-5

Warden Organ noted appreciation for the updated format of the CAO report, including the key projects, capital initiatives, upcoming meetings, dates, and deadlines.
Council also requested that the emergency debrief include discussion of tour buses entering the County during the state of local emergency and Parks Canada reopening the Skyline Trail during that time.

b) INFORMATION REPORT ON WARDEN AND DEPUTY WARDEN ELECTIONS – MUNICIPAL CLERK MACLEOD

The Municipal Clerk's information report on Warden and Deputy Warden elections was received for information. Council discussed the current practice of two-year terms, the absence of a formal policy, and the possibility of including this matter in a future Council procedural policy.

On Motion of Councillor Nicholson seconded by Councillor Donovan to continue with the current practice and develop a Council procedural policy going forward, including provisions related to Warden and Deputy Warden elections.

Motion Carried.

09-21-6

MOTIONS

a. SECOND READING OF COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT BYLAW AMENDMENT:

We had a Public Hearing prior to Council for this amendment, and no members of the public were present.

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Councillor Mactheson-LeFort to approve the Second Reading of the Commercial Development District Improvement Bylaw amendment.

Motion Carried.

09-21-7

b. AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS (FINANCIAL UPATES)

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Nicholson to approve the recommendations made at the September 14th Audit Committee meeting, approving the Victoria County and Water Utility Q4 and Q1 updates.

Motion Carried.

09-21-8

On Motion of Councillor Nicholson seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the recommendations made at the September 21st Audit Committee meeting, approving the Audited Financial Statements for the Water Utility and Victoria County.

Motion Carried.

09-21-9

c. AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS (OTHER)

Councillor Patterson will be not be voting as he was not present at this meeting.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Nicholson to approve the recommendations made at the September 14th Audit Committee meeting, approving a resident survey for Ingonish property owners in proposed phase A Wastewater Catchment Area.

Motion Carried.

09-21-10

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Born to approve the recommendations made at the September 14th Audit Committee meeting, approving Councillor Travel Reimbursement for travel in their districts and to include the expenses approval process within the Travel Policy.

Motion Carried.

09-21-11

Councillor Hennick was not in favour.

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the purchase of a commercial shredder from the 2027–28 capital budget to the current 2026–27 fiscal year.

Motion Carried.

09-21-12

COMMITTEE REPORTS

No reports at this time.

CORRESPONDENCE

Read and received as part of the Council package.

Councillor Hennick discussed the response back about the dialysis unit letter and she will be reaching out to the administration at the hospital before bringing it back to council for further discussion.

QUESTIONS FROM GALLERY

No members of the public were present at this time.

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.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Hennick to move In-Camera.

Motion Carried.

09-21-13

On Motion of Councillor Matheson-LeFort seconded by Councillor Born to accept the recommendations made In-Camera.

Motion Carried.

09-21-14

NEXT MEETING

October 19, 2026, at 1:00pm.

ADJOURN

Warden Organ moved to adjourn at 4:23pm