

October 20, 2025

The Financial Services Committee for the Municipality of the County of Pictou met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Administration Building by videoconference and teleconference on Monday, October 20, 2025, at 7:40 p.m.

**PRESENT**

- 1 Clr. Joe MacDonald
- 2 Clr. Deborah Wadden
- 3 Clr. Darla MacKeil
- 4 Clr. Ronald Baillie
- 5 Deputy Warden Wayne Murray
- 6 Warden Robert Parker
- 7 Clr. Donald Parker
- 8 Clr. Larry Turner
- 9 Clr. Peter Boyles
- 10 Clr. Randy Palmer
- 11 Clr. Andy Thompson
- 12 Clr. Chester Dewar

**ABSENT**

Evan Hale, Director of Emergency Services

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Brian Cullen, CAO, Municipal Clerk-Treasurer  
Sueann Musick, Director of Corporate Services/Deputy Clerk  
Karen Cornish, Deputy Municipal Treasurer  
Logan McDowell, Director of Public Works & Development  
Rhiannon McNair, Director of Business Operations, Broadband Initiative  
Adam MacInnis, Communications Officer  
Shellie Pettipas, Administrative Assistant

**CALL TO ORDER & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Clr. MacKeil, Chair of the Financial Services Committee called the meeting to order and acknowledged that we are on the ancestral territorial lands of the Mikmaq people.

**AGENDA**

It was moved by Clr. Boyles and seconded by Clr. Turner that the agenda be approved as presented.

**Motion Carried**

## **EMERGENCY RESOLUTIONS**

Clr. Dewar expressed concern that there has not been milk available at the local schools for six weeks. Clr. Dewar stated that milk has not been available since the new program came into effect. Clr. Dewar said that the school no longer want to have cash registers and stated that the bigger schools do have vending machines. Warden Parker agreed that this is an emergency and said this needs to be urgently investigated to determine why milk is not being offered in the schools.

## **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. Dewar and seconded by Warden Parker to direct staff to investigate the reason why the children in schools have no milk available. **Motion Carried**

## **MINUTES**

Clr. MacKeil asked if there were any errors, omissions, or corrections in the September 15, 2025, minutes. The members of the Committee entered no errors, omissions, or corrections. The Chair proclaimed the minutes of the meetings on September 15, 2025, as the official record of the meetings. **Motion Carried**

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

- a. Thank you from Pictou Antigonish Regional Library for one-time funding assistance.

## **REPORTS NOT REQUIRING A MOTION** **COMMUNICATION REPORT**

The Communication Report for the month of September 2025 was received as presented.

Clr. Boyles expressed concern about not receiving some of the communications being sent via email and questioned whether this could be checked on. Clr. Boyles was instructed to bring the iPad into the Administration Building to have it looked at.

## **RECREATION REPORT**

The Recreation Report for the month of September 2025 was received as presented.

## **WARDEN'S REPORT**

The Warden's Report for the month of September 2025 was received as presented.

Clr. Turner requested more information regarding the meeting with Little Harbour residents concerning alternative housing ideas. Warden Parker stated that the resident had requested the meeting to explore alternative housing options. In this case, it was a family, and two to three houses were planned for that one lot.

Mr. McDowell noted that there is a bit of flexibility in the new bylaw for multiple dwelling units. Mr. McDowell stated that funding options are available for residents over the age of 65 for granny suites.

Clr. Parker inquired about the purpose of the meeting with the Empire Company. The Warden said it was more of a courtesy invitation to the AGM and noted that Empire Company is a major employer in the county. The AGM was very well done.

### **INTERNET REPORT**

The MOPC Network Sales and Marketing Report for the month of September 2025 was received as presented.

### **HEALTHY PICTOU COUNTY REPORT**

The Healthy Pictou County Report was received as presented.

Warden Parker noted that there is now a full complement of emergency room doctors, and three psychiatrist positions are scheduled to be filled within the county. The investment made was a good one and is the only way to compete for healthcare professionals.

### **TAXES RECEIVABLE REPORT**

The Taxes Receivable Report for the month of September 2025 was received for informational purposes.

Clr. Turner requested that Council be updated on the progress of establishing a governing body to oversee the internet project. CAO Cullen said that it is being worked on. A framework will be presented within the coming months.

Clr. Turner asked for an update on the commercial portion of the internet project. Ms. McNair noted that the commercial side is going very well. At least 50 different commercial services are generating \$10,000.00 per month in commercial revenue. Ms. McNair said that there are several other businesses awaiting phone service. It is expected that there will be much higher numbers in the new year when full service is available. Ms. McNair stated that a mass marketing approach has not yet been taken because it is essential to ensure that the commercial phone is in place and all necessary requirements can be met.

Clr. Turner inquired about the expected timing of the project's regular financial reports. The CAO noted that the formatting and overall business plan have been finalized, and Council should expect to see quarterly reports beginning in December.

Clr. Turner asked if the TV service would have the ability to record, pause, and restart programming and explained that there is hesitation to switch from Bell because Bell's TV service provides this feature. Ms. McNair said that there is currently a partnership with VMedia, provider of home phone, TV and security packages. A new partnership is coming to the TV service, backed by TiVo; this is a very high-end platform and works very well.

Ms. McNair noted that the phone service coming can also be bundled and will allow the MOPC Network to be a strong competitor in the market. There will be the ability to bundle and provide better prices.

Clr. Turner noted that one of the programs to be offered will be a differentiator, and that is the service to be provided to seniors. Ms. McNair noted that 33% of Pictou County residents are seniors. In recognizing the learning curve with digital platforms and it has been proposed to put together a seniors' plan which would include longer installation appointments to make sure that everything is hooked up and setting up the tv and phone services, priority response times, bi-annual reach outs to make sure everything is working as it should, additional payment options to include personal cheques, allowing another family member on the account to help manage the service. Ms. McNair is hopeful that providing this additional white glove service will help seniors in the community.

Clr. Wadden questioned if there was any new information regarding service to Pictou Landing First Nations community. Ms. McNair noted that there had been no new information on building fibre into the community, but hopefully, this can be revisited. Clr. MacDonald asked for the expected installation dates to begin in District 1. Ms. McNair said that installations are expected to begin early in 2026.

Clr. Baillie questioned why the project would involve home phone services and commented that, based on the last election, it seemed to be more a result of people disconnecting their home phone service. Clr. Baillie questioned whether this service is worthwhile to get involved in. Clr. Baillie requested a list of the roads in District 4 that the fibre runs through.

Clr. Parker asked how well the new wireless system has been working. Ms. McNair is pleased with the performance to date and said that the next couple of towers will be prioritized for completion. Clr. Parker noted that this service will be vital to many residents in the county.

Clr. Boyles asked about a tower for Anderson's Mountain. Ms. McNair noted that the soil test had been completed and an application for a permit had been submitted. Ms. McNair is hopeful that the tower will be up by the end of the year.

### **TAX RECEIVABLE REPORT**

The Tax Receivable Report for the month of September 2025 was received as presented.

### **DEED TRANSFER TAX**

The Deed Transfer Tax Report for the month of September 2025 was received as presented.

### **REPORTS REQUIRING A MOTION** **ACCOUNTS PAID – SEPTEMBER 2025**

#### **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. Dewar and seconded by Clr. Palmer that the Accounts Paid Report for the month of September 2025 be received as presented. **Motion Carried**

Clr. Turner noted the significant amount of money spent on garbage removal from Pictou Island, totalling \$12,000 last month and \$12,255 for the current month. Clr. Turner questioned whether that is a typical month's worth of garbage. Ms. Cornish noted that garbage removal from Pictou Island is only done twice a year, and that is the second one.

Clr. Wadden questioned the reason why invoice #24809 was on the accounts payable report instead of the internet financials. Ms. Cornish had been instructed to pay that invoice out of general revenue.

### **INTERNET ACCOUNTS PAID**

It was moved by Clr. Turner and seconded by Clr. MacDonald that the Internet Accounts Paid Report for the month of September 2025 be received as presented. **Motion Carried**

### **BUSINESS ITEMS OR ITEMS REQUIRING ACTION** **DISTRICT 2 LITTLE HARBOUR COMMUNITY CENTRE REQUEST TO REPURPOSE GRANT FUNDING**

#### **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Deputy Warden Murray to approve the Little Harbour Community Centre's request to repurpose the grant funding. **Motion Carried**

### **DISTRICT 3 PICTOU ISLAND VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT REQUEST FOR TAX EXEMPTION**

## **MOTION**

It was moved by Warden Parker and seconded by Clr. Turner to approve the Pictou Island Volunteer Fire Department's request for tax exemption. **Motion Carried**

### **DISTRICT 1: 589 JOHN MUNROE ROAD, MARSHY HOPE, PICTOU COUNTY** **REQUEST FOR TAX EXEMPTION**

## **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. MacDonald and seconded by Clr. Palmer to approve the Antigonish Sno Dogs Snowmobile Association's request for property tax exemption.

**Motion Carried**  
**Nay Vote: Clr. Peter Boyles**

Warden Parker questioned if the association uses the building solely for storage. Clr. MacDonald confirmed that it is used only for storage to maintain the trails.

Clr. Boyles expressed concern that this would set a precedent. Clr. MacDonald responded that other snowmobile clubs in the county have also been granted exemptions. The supplies in the building are for the trails in Pictou County, and it is very beneficial to have that machine available during snowstorms.

### **PICTOU LIBRARY FUNDING**

CAO Cullen detailed that the agreement had no significant change from the one distributed initially the previous year. The library has been in operation for a year, and the projections have come in exactly as predicted. The CAO noted that the municipal share is \$40,000.00, and the budget allowed for \$42,000.00. The project is performing as intended.

The CAO stated that the overall budget came in on budget, and there is a projected surplus of approximately \$113,000.00. The library committee recommended putting that surplus into a capital reserve.

Clr. Boyles expressed concern over giving money to other towns and not to more events in the rural parts of Pictou County.

## **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Warden Parker to approve the funding agreement between the Pictou Antigonish Regional Library, Town of Pictou and the Municipality of the County of Pictou.

**Motion Carried**  
**Nay Vote: Clr. Peter Boyles**

Clr. Wadden noted that the library serves 40% of Pictou County residents and stated that it is a real asset for the whole county. CAO Cullen stated that the prior library had 21,000 visitors, and the new library has had 69,000 visits to the facility in the first year.

Deputy Warden Murray inquired whether the endowment fund was based on a fixed percentage or if that amount would change yearly. CAO Cullen stated that the fund requires an annual review. The fund will pay a minimum of 3.5% and has been performing much better than it has over the last number of years.

Clr. Boyles questioned the need for such an elaborate library and noted that there are already several libraries in the other municipal units in the county.

Clr. Palmer asked if this had been budgeted for the current fiscal year. The CAO stated that it had been allotted for in the budget.

Clr. Parker asked about the percentage of costs that the county is covering. CAO Cullen stated that the endowment fund is used first, the deCoste covers its share of the cost, and the MOPC and the Town of Pictou each pay 50% of the remaining cost.

Clr. Wadden pointed out that there is a need to understand that libraries are the backbone of communities. Clr. Wadden stated that the libraries are well-utilized and not a waste of money; they are beneficial to the economy and the residents. Clr. Wadden is pleased to support the libraries of Pictou County.

Clr. Turner stated that there are not only economic returns on investment, but tourists and people who come into the town to use the facility also spend money throughout the county. There is also a significant cultural component to the facility. Clr. Turner said that the library is worth the investment and is a way to invest in people's education.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS COMMITTEE STUDENT APPOINTMENTS**

### **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. Turner and seconded by Clr. Parker to approve the appointment of Ellie Oritt and Aaron Michelin as members of the MOPC Climate Change Advisory Committee.

**Motion Carried**

Warden Parker expressed interest in having two students from North Nova Education Centre join the Climate Change Advisory Committee as well. Clr. Wadden will reach out to contacts from NNEC to discuss this.

## **PROPOSED DROUGHT RELIEF BYLAW**

Warden Parker noted that this has been a particularly dry summer, with many rivers running low, and farmers have had great difficulty with crops. The Warden said that the MOPC has 4-litre bottles of water available for residents in need. There is a limit of one bottle per person per household per day. CAO Cullen noted that approximately 10-15 residents are collecting the bottled water weekly.

Warden Parker questioned whether there were other ways to help residents, such as a program that could assist a resident in financing a well through the SWITCH Program. The Warden noted that other municipalities are currently doing this, and most have combined that to include sewer systems as well.

CAO Cullen noted that there is a combination of how the program is administered, with some municipalities handling it directly, while others have partnered with the Clean Foundation. Many of the loans are based on a 10-year loan period, and the amounts vary from \$15,000.00 to \$30,000.00, with varying interest rates. Clr. Parker spoke in favour of this program and stated that it would be beneficial to many residents who are in desperate need of water. Clr. Parker noted that the Town of Yarmouth has a bulk water station where residents can fill up water containers.

Clr. MacDonald fully supports the motion and stated that some residents in District 1 have also run out of water, and the local spring has been very busy. Clr. MacDonald recommended passing out water at a location on the other side of the county in the future, should the same need arise.

Clr. Palmer voiced that if a new well is drilled and is unsuccessful in obtaining water, the concern would be who would be responsible for paying the bill.

### **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Warden Parker to recommend that staff prepare a draft drought relief bylaw to present to Council. **Motion Carried**

Clr. Thompson would like more information and would like an understanding of the financial impact on the MOPC. Clr. Thompson received an email from a resident and agrees that this is a significant problem for residents, noting that there are many areas in the county with challenging geography and that the solution is not as simple as drilling a hole to bring usable water into a home.

Clr. Baillie questioned the workload that a program like this would put on the county, and the Councillor would like to see the cost of doing this in-house with a lower interest rate. CAO Cullen noted that East Hants has had 37 participants in the program since its inception, one year ago. Warden Parker agreed that it would be beneficial to have the cost information to do this in-house.



## **HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY**

CAO Cullen noted that the government released regulations on September 1, 2025, and this is a legislative requirement. The MOPC is compliant, as a policy exists; however, it requires updates to incorporate new criteria.

### **MOTION**

It was moved by Clr. Palmer and seconded by Clr. Wadden to approve the Harassment and Violence in the Workplace Policy. **Motion Carried**

Clr. Turner questioned whether the policy applies to Councillors outside the Administration Building, particularly if they are threatened in the community. The CAO stated that this policy meets the municipality's obligations as an employer.

Clr. Turner stated that the safety of elected officials was a topic of extensive discussion at the FCM and asked if there had been any consideration of developing a policy regarding the safety of elected officials. CAO Cullen noted that an overall assessment is being moved forward, and there will be conversations about this with the company that has been retained.

### **DEFERRED BUSINESS**

There was no deferred business.

### **MOTIONS OF RECONSIDERATION**

There were no motions of reconsideration.

### **COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Community Announcements were given.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business before the meeting, so the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

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CHAIRPERSON

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MUNICIPAL CLERK