

November 17, 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, November 17, 2025, at 7:00 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

Rhiannon McNair, Director of Business Operations, Broadband Initiative

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
Evan Hale, Director of Emergency Services
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

No emergency resolutions were brought forward.

MINUTES

Clr. MacKeil asked if there were any errors, omissions, or corrections in the October 20, 2025, minutes. The members of the Committee entered no errors, omissions, or corrections. The Chair proclaimed the minutes of the October 20, 2025, meeting as the official record of the meeting. **Motion Carried**

CORRESPONDENCE

- a. Thank you from Karma Closet for support of the NRHS greenhouse project.
- b. Thank you from NNEC for the grant for food programs.

REPORTS NOT REQUIRING A MOTION **COMMUNICATION REPORT**

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

Warden Parker noted that the photo of the young girl at the hardwood tree giveaway was an excellent choice for the cover of the Rural News and Views publication. The Warden was pleased to see that the photo was in the top 10 posts for the month.

RECREATION REPORT

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

WARDEN'S REPORT

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

Warden Parker stated that the November 19, 2025, governance meeting, hosted by the province, will be held in the Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m. The Warden urged Councillors to attend the meeting and noted that there would be essential points of discussion.

INTERNET REPORT

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

Clr. Parker indicated that residents in District 7 who now have internet service are very pleased, but some are very unhappy that fibre has not yet been installed on certain

roads. Some residents were told service would be available in the fall of 2025, and now they are being told it will be in the first half of 2026. Cllr. Parker said the goalposts keep moving. CAO Cullen stated that the simple answer is permitting: the MOPC Network is built when permits are granted and the section is then released for construction. The other areas are a matter of time; once permits are received, construction will continue.

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr. Wadden provided an update from the Audit Committee and noted that the 2024-2025 financials may be completed for December for the Audit Committee to approve. Cllr. Wadden stated that although the financials were not ready to meet the September deadline, they are on track to be an improvement this year.

Cllr. Wadden stated that the first tax sale will be delayed until January due to the recent Canada Post strike, and the second batch is still awaiting title searches.

Cllr. Wadden said the province's requested report on the MOPC Network is awaiting input from Municipal Affairs.

New Staffing additions are in progress, but the Administration Building renovations must be completed first.

The Pictou County Wellness Centre's financials were reviewed, and the Audit Committee recommends that Council send a letter to address the concerns about the deficit.

MOTION

It was moved by Cllr. Wadden and seconded by Warden Parker for Council to send a letter to the Pictou County Wellness Centre Authority to express concerns with the financial performance of the centre in meeting budgets and financial targets, as the municipality does not budget for \$100,000 cost overrun. **Motion Carried**

PARL REPORT

Cllr. Wadden provided the Financial Services Committee with an update on the Pictou Antigonish Regional Library Report. Cllr. Wadden stated that the funding timeline and the impact on the libraries are very concerning.

Cllr. Wadden noted that each Council will be asked to support a letter to be submitted to the province, with signatures from all Wardens and Mayors, including the towns of Antigonish, New Glasgow, Westville, Stellarton, Trenton, and Pictou, as well as the counties of Antigonish and Pictou. Cllr. Wadden expressed that one letter signed by all eight may send a stronger message. The letter will be drafted by PARL Board Member, Nicole LeBlanc. Library staff will be working on an awareness campaign for the public.

Motion

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. Turner for Council to sign a letter to the province, along with the other seven municipalities, expressing concerns about the funding timeline. Nicole LeBlanc, PARL Board Member, will draft the letter.

Motion Carried

Warden Parker expressed support for the motion and noted that work is needed to raise public awareness of the funding shortfall and that people are working well below pay levels. Clr. Wadden agreed that what is happening to libraries is very concerning and noted the number of services provided to residents through public libraries, which would be a shame to lose.

HEALTHY PICTOU COUNTY REPORT

The Healthy Pictou County Report was received as presented.

TAX RECEIVABLE REPORT

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

TAX RECEIVABLE REPORT

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

DEED TRANSFER TAX

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

REPORTS REQUIRING A MOTION **ACCOUNTS PAID – OCTOBER 2025**

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Turner and seconded by Clr. Wadden that the Accounts Paid Report for the month of October 2025 be received as presented.

Motion Carried

INTERNET ACCOUNTS PAID

It was moved by Clr. Turner and seconded by Clr. Baillie that the Internet Accounts Paid Report for the month of October 2025 be received as presented.

Motion Carried

BUSINESS ITEMS OR ITEMS REQUIRING ACTION
TAX WRITE OFF FOR 589 JOHN MUNROE ROAD

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. MacDonald and seconded by Clr. Palmer to approve the Antigonish Sno-Dogs Snowmobile Association's request for a tax write-off for 589 John Munroe Road, Marshy Hope, Account #10779278, in the amount of \$136.29.

Motion Carried
Nay Vote: Clr. Peter Boyles

MOPC BRANDING

Clr. Turner, a member of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, put this discussion forward to Council, and noted that during a visit to the Pictou County Wellness Centre, a review of the MOPC Logo through an accessibility lens indicated it would not be easy to read. Clr. Turner stated that the logo is small and not distinct, making it challenging to identify from a distance. Clr. Turner noted that some brand elements could be retained, but the logo needs to be updated to serve people with visual impairments better.

While attending the NSFM conference, Clr. Turner searched for the MOPC flag but could not find it, noting that some others had very distinctive flags. Clr. Turner believes it is time to update the message to standardize it, noting that the MOPC Network has an entirely different logo. Clr. Turner suggested bringing these together to create a single, forward-facing brand that is not confusing to the public and considers accessibility.

Clr. MacKeil asked whether this request was coming from a Councillor point of view or from the Accessibility Committee. Clr. Turner noted that this had been a topic of discussion amongst the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Warden Parker noted the historical significance of the aspects of the logo and voiced not being in favour of changing the logo at this time but remains open to discussion.

Clr. Palmer expressed concern about branding the Municipal logo with the MOPC Network and feels the internet is separate from the municipality. Clr. Palmer noted that the two are very different and should not be conflated with what is done as a Council.

Mr. MacInnis stated that several other programs, including the MOPC Alert, Imagine MOPC and MOPC Switch, would also be included and that the MOPC logo is becoming better known.

Clr. Wadden said it would be a good idea to have an estimate of the costs before deciding.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Turner and seconded by Clr. Boyles to instruct MOPC staff to look into a branding exercise for the MOPC logo, then to have a cost estimate prepared for an agency to handle this work and provide professional input and recommendations.

Motion Carried

REQUEST FOR ROB WOLF TO PRESENT TO COUNCIL

Clr. MacKeil said that Mr. Rob Wolf is the Manager of Special Programs at Access Wellness Nova Scotia, a Telus Health company. Mr. Wolf recently presented at the NSFM Conference on mental wellness for elected officials.

Clr. Wadden said that Mr. Wolf gave a very good presentation and made it known that there is a willingness to come and present to Council. Clr. Wadden was asking Council to extend an invitation to Mr. Wolf to present at a Committee of the Whole meeting. All members of Council agreed to invite Mr. Wolf to attend and present at a Committee of the Whole meeting.

DREAMERY GARDENS PROJECT

Clr. Baillie indicated that Ms. Sheree Fitch will present to Council on December 1, 2025. Clr. Baillie said that Ms. Fitch's husband, who has passed away, had a dream of creating a dreamy garden. Ms. Fitch has professional assistance handling the project's legwork, and people have been asking how to help with donations. Ms. Fitch, an author who moved to River John 15 years ago, was appointed the Order of Canada last year and recently received the top author award in Canada.

Ms. Fitch requests that the municipal administration office issue receipts for charitable donations.

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Baillie and seconded by Clr. Parker that the Municipal Administration Building issue receipts on behalf of the Dreamery Garden, provided that the agreement presented to the CAO is agreeable.

Motion Carried

Clr. Boyles asked whether the garden would be private or community-owned. Clr. Baillie indicated that the garden would belong to the community, that Ms. Fitch would donate the land, and that the work would be done through donations. The presentation is not intended to solicit funding but to inform the Council about the project. Clr. Boyles stated that it sounds like a good project and would be helpful to hear the details from Ms. Fitch.

Warden Parker attended prior events and noted that the bookstore was very popular. Warden Parker said that Ms. Fitch has already made a name for herself and the county, and that a light needs to be shone on those involved in the arts community.

Clr. MacKeil noted that the municipality could only collect donations for a nonprofit organization, and CAO Cullen confirmed this. The CAO indicated that the plan is to designate this as a community entity, with donations returned only to a not-for-profit society, which they are currently in the process of doing.

MOPC COMMUNITY HALL INTERNET PROGRAM APPLICATION

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Baillie and seconded by Clr. Parker approves the Melville-Seafoam Community Hall's request for the MOPC Community Hall Internet Program.

Motion Carried

Clr. Baillie expressed uncertainty about whether the hall is used enough to warrant high-speed internet and questioned whether the policy guidelines should be reviewed to determine whether they are too lenient.

READ BY THE SEA REQUEST FOR GRANT EXTENSION

MOTION

It was moved by Warden Parker and seconded by Clr. Turner to approve the Read by the Sea's extension request for the Municipal Service Grant.

Motion Carried

Clr. Baillie stated that the Read by the Sea program has a strong committee that will deliver an excellent experience. Clr. Baillie is pleased that Read by the Sea will return to rural Pictou County.

SWITCH MOPC EXPANSION

CAO Cullen said this had been presented to the Climate Change Committee and the notion of this initiative is to fund climate resilience projects for homeowners. This program addition would come with low interest rates, allowing homeowners to reduce costs. The uses of the funding are broad and could cover any impact of climate change. A business case would need to be developed and submitted to the FCM for approval.

CAO Cullen indicated that partnering with another municipality in the province would result in a higher evaluation score. The two municipal units would contribute \$20,000 each, and the FCM would contribute \$150,000 to start the program.

Warden Parker pointed out that a lot of discussions around the table involved the risks of wildfires as well as drought and believes this program would be worth the risk.

The Warden noted that West Hants is also a rural community and feels it would be a good idea to partner. Warden Parker stated that this would be worthwhile if residents could borrow funds to make properties more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Clr. Turner noted that there will be future droughts, hurricanes, and other weather events and said that, as Chair of the Climate Change Committee, it is necessary to weigh the risks and benefits, but believes the benefits would outweigh the risks of participating.

Motion

It was moved by Clr. Turner and seconded by Clr. Wadden to develop a climate adaptation component to the existing Switch MOPC program. **Motion Carried**

MOPC STAFF BONUS

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. Wadden and seconded by Clr. Palmer to keep the MOPC staff Christmas Bonus at \$200.00. **Motion Carried**

DEFERRED BUSINESS

There was no deferred business.

MOTIONS OF RECONSIDERATION

There were no motions of reconsideration.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business before the meeting, so the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON

MUNICIPAL CLERK