

November 17, 2025

The Property Services Committee for the Municipality of the County of Pictou met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Administration Building 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. Randy Palmer, Chair of the Property 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. Palmer asked if there were any errors, omissions, or corrections in the minutes for October 20, 2025. The members of the Committee entered no errors, omissions, or corrections. The Chair proclaimed the minutes of the meeting on October 20, 2025, as the official record of the meeting.

Motion Carried

REPORTS NOT REQUIRING A MOTION

PUBLIC WORKS AND DEVELOPMENT

The Public Works and Development Report for the month of October 2025 was received as presented.

Clr. Turner questioned when the sidewalk restoration project in Abercrombie would begin. Mr. McDowell stated that work would start early the following week and that the contractor remained hopeful of meeting the deadline for this year.

Clr. MacDonald asked whether any more permits were submitted for windmills in District 1. Mr. McDowell indicated that no additional permits were received, and there is currently one active file under construction in the Weaver's Mountain area. Clr. MacDonald heard that more were coming to Weaver's Mountain. Mr. McDowell is aware of two other projects, but no applications or recent correspondence relating to the developments have been received to date.

Warden Parker asked for a progress update on the installation of the flowmeters. Mr. McDowell spoke with the contractor, who confirmed the meters would be installed in November and brought online in December.

Warden Parker enquired about the RFPs for the sidewalk lighting on the East River Road. Mr. McDowell noted that two lighting bids were received and are not considered satisfactory; no bids were received for signalization. Mr. McDowell will explore contacting multiple, more direct-to-industry approaches rather than an RFP.

Clr. Boyles asked if additional information was available concerning Narrows Road. Mr. McDowell completed additional research and is working with the Development Officer to provide insights. Mr. McDowell noted that the province's Public Works Department will eventually need to address this as well.

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

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

Warden Parker spoke about receiving a complaint from a resident in a quiet rural area. The resident is disturbed that, in July, a neighbour put in a large garage with a temporary covering, and that there is frequent noise that sometimes continues past midnight. The resident with the complaint was informed that there are no noise bylaws in place, but there are zoning bylaws. Warden Parker asked if anything could be done from a zoning perspective to help. Mr. McDowell is familiar with the property and has also been reviewing the complaints. Under current zoning regulations, the operations being conducted comply with the county's zoning bylaw. Mr. McDowell stated that the best recourse lies between the neighbours and that the municipality has no framework for this. Warden Parker suggested further investigation; Mr. McDowell noted that amendments to the bylaw could be considered in the future.

Warden Parker attended the public engagement meeting regarding the proposed natural gas plant project and indicated that some residents are very upset. The Warden noted that many residents are unaware that this is a provincial project and that Council's role is to attend and speak with residents, but that the province is making the decision on whether to proceed.

Warden Parker asked if rezoning in the area would be required to proceed. Mr. McDowell stated that energy generation sites do not require a specific zoning designation. Mr. McDowell noted that this would come to the county for approval, but the province could overrule the municipality's decision.

Mr. McDowell has been working with the Development Office on a development agreement, and it is mimicking the wind development bylaw. A draft document is currently under review and will be forwarded to the CAO to establish a framework for this development group to follow.

Warden Parker said that many residents are depending on Council to turn this back, and most input heard was negative. Clr. Parker agreed that many people were upset and believed that this was under Council's control. Clr. Parker understood the residents' questions and would be concerned if the family's property were located next to this as well.

Clr. Dewar attended the Eureka meeting and noted that many of the questions residents asked went unanswered by the presenters. Clr. Dewar indicated that the most significant concerns were around people's water, and if a solution for this was presented, then residents might be okay with it. Clr. Parker agreed that water is a significant concern and that residents are seeking a guarantee that, if anything affects the water, the company will fix it.

Warden Parker said that one thing that Council could do is to ensure that there are protections around water and a few of the other issues. The Warden said there is a need

to help residents ensure written guarantees that, if something goes wrong, the company will take action. CAO Cullen noted that the area is near the county's water project and that this water supply could potentially be extended.

STREETLIGHT REPORT

The MOPC Streetlight Report was received as presented.

Clr. Wadden enquired about two streetlights not appearing on the report for Wilson's Hill. Mr. McDowell met with the GIS Analyst to ensure this was monitored, and the lights are expected to be completed in December.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

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

FIRE SERVICES GOVERNANCE REPORT

Mr. Hale provided Council with information on some of the key themes from the Fire Services Governance Study.

Mr. Hale reached out to the province with several questions, and the province is still in the review phase of this study.

Mr. Hale indicated that fire departments in Pictou County are in good condition overall and have no significant issues with capital purchases.

Regarding training and standardization, Mr. Hale said that a couple of years ago, during the issues around the fire training school, Pictou County took this on a municipal basis, and that the model is now of interest to other municipalities. Mr. Hale requested to be on the provincial committee, but our representative was selected from Amherst. Mr. Hale provided a copy of the county's training documents and plan, but has not yet received a response.

Mr. Hale explained that some suggestions have been made regarding recruitment, including potential tax incentives and breaks, recognition programs, and pay. Mr. Hale attended a meeting in Trenton with approximately 28 new firefighters with less than six months of service. The response at that meeting was that the firefighters were not interested in the pay and were there to help the community.

Mr. Hale noted that the county's fire cadet program and social media campaigns have resulted in 60 firefighters entering the county's service, and the towns have also seen an increase in membership during this period.

Mr. Hale requested clarification on governance authority and accountability but has not yet received a response.

Clr. Boyles expressed the seriousness of this and that following discussions with local fire chiefs, Clr. Boyles believes some may leave due to changes to the Chief selection process. Mr. Hale agreed that this discussion is a hot topic and, with the utmost respect for local fire chiefs, that the perspectives of all firefighters are essential. Mr. Hale noted that with this topic, there is a fine line that must be walked very carefully.

Warden Parker voiced that no fire department wants someone else to choose the Fire Chief and noted that there have been cases within the county where people stopped volunteering because of the chief. Mr. Hale said that in conversations with the new firefighters, many members raised concerns about leadership and toxicity in some departments. Mr. Hale agreed that this is a significant issue and that Council should have the authority to make these decisions as needed.

Clr. MacKeil noted that the county has been proactive on this issue, and a lot of good work has been underway. Clr. MacKeil noted significant diversity on this issue across the province and asked what volunteer fire service members should take away from this study. Mr. Hale stated that the province is investing time and energy in implementing changes and listening to members' input.

Clr. Turner stated that insufficient volunteer numbers are a serious issue and that every community deserves optimal fire protection. Clr. Turner said it is troubling that some departmental dysfunction overrides the protection of citizens. Clr. Turner emphasized the importance of this study and noted that life-and-death decisions will result from its completion. Clr. Turner stated that the organizational principle must be the first consideration when determining how best to protect citizens at risk.

FIRE INSPECTOR REPORT

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

BUILDING OFFICIALS REPORT

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

BYLAW OFFICER REPORT

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

Clr. Parker was pleased to know that the vehicles had been removed from the former church in District 7. Warden Parker said it was particularly concerning that the

graveyard was blocked off and chained at both driveways, preventing visitors from accessing the cemetery. The Warden is aware of the procedural steps to follow but expressed concern that it took too long from the start and that there is a need to speed up the process.

Mr. Hale indicated that each case needs to be thoroughly investigated and does not feel that the procedure took too long. Mr. Hale said that when addressing an issue, it must be kept in mind that this is someone's property, and caution must be exercised when removing something. Mr. Hale stands behind the job and always wants to ensure that the municipality is not put in a bad position.

BUSINESS ITEMS OR ITEMS REQUIRING ACTION

MOPC WINDMILLS

Clr. Turner questioned whether the MOPC windmills are a sound financial investment for the county at this time and whether there are financial risks associated with ongoing repairs.

Ms. Cornish indicated that \$12,795 has been spent to date this fiscal year and that revenue to the end of August was \$7,400, with additional revenue to come. CAO Cullen noted that much of the \$12,795 figure was to get the windmills operational. The windmills have not been operational for some time and there was no company that could do the repairs. The last report received stated that the windmills are stable, but that availability of parts is becoming an issue.

The CAO noted that the windmills were a 20-year span, with a lifespan of 30 years, which is not realistic at this point, because the technology has changed and things have moved away from small wind. To get another five years out of these windmills is doable at this point and they will continue to be monitored. The repair team will be coming back this month to do annual maintenance before the snow flies. The windmills will then be monitored on a visit-by-visit basis.

Clr. MacDonald enquired if all six windmills are now working. CAO Cullen indicated that at the time of the last report all were operational as of three weeks ago.

Warden Parker noted that when the windmills were first put in part of the thought was for doing something environmentally responsible. The Warden noted that the world has since moved away from the smaller wind towers. Warden Parker said that the windmills are good to keep going if they are not losing money.

FLOOD PLAIN MAPPING

Mr. McDowell informed Council that the municipality's application for flood mapping submitted by Dr. Tim Webster was unsuccessful.

Mr. McDowell indicated that the application submitted together with the Town of Pictou has not yet been notified, and the town's CAO is currently off for the week.

SOLAR FIELDS

Clr. Wadden enquired as to whether the Climate Change Advisory Committee has sought information about solar fields in the county. Clr. Turner indicated that solar fields have not been brought up at the committee level but there is no reason that it could not be discussed. Clr. Turner noted that item could be put on the agenda.

CAO Cullen stated that over the years there have been developers who have come through the county looking at solar fields, typically in search for land to put them on. Summer Street Industries also came a few years ago. The CAO noted that there has been general interest but is uncertain of the number provincially. CAO Cullen indicated that this can be looked at further to obtain more information.

Mr. McDowell noted that solar options have been identified as part of the Efficiency One Report for the municipal administration building, which is actively being explored.

Clr. Thompson stated that there is a program available for residents who may not have a good location and the resident is given a premium to invest in solar fields.

COASTAL PROTECTION FUNDING

Clr. Palmer indicated that the NSFM has announced the Coastal Planning Support Program and funding opportunities. Clr. Palmer said that Council needs to decide if there is interest in applying for the funding from this program.

Warden Parker participated in a discussion with the CAO and Deputy Warden Murray following the presentation by Mr. Smith. The Warden stated that \$20,000 would only go so far. The Warden noted that part of the discussion was input from residents to see if the county should move ahead with this or leave it alone, as the province has done. Warden Parker stated that it would be nice to have a better idea on where residents stand on this issue.

CAO noted that the first step would be community engagement to determine if there is interest and to what level of regulation to be put in place. The CAO noted that the province had developed a model bylaw. The CAO stated that the \$20,000 could support the public engagement and communication strategy.

Mr. McDowell noted that part of Ms. Hodgson's role as the Environmental Specialist would be to work with the Communications Officer, Mr. MacInnis on the engagement with the community. Mr. McDowell noted that Ms. Hodgson will be attending the session in Truro.

MOTION

It was moved by Warden Parker and seconded by Clr. Turner to send an application for the funding from the NSFM to support the study to determine where the residents of Pictou County are on Coastal Erosion.

Motion Carried

Nay Vote: Clr. Darla MacKeil

Clr. Ronald Baillie

Deputy Warden Wayne Murray

Clr. Andy Thompson

Clr. Chester Dewar

Clr. MacKeil enquired as to the level of participation taken on surveys that have recently been done. CAO Cullen noted that the participation rate with Imagine MOPC was a very good rate, as well as successful community engagement meetings with the Climate Change Advisory Committee. The CAO noted that part of the funding could be used to engage with a consultant, the NSFM does have a list of pre-qualified consultants.

Clr. MacKeil expressed that while the community meetings have been successful but said that Council cannot gauge success on such a small percentage of residents. Clr. MacKeil has hesitation because of the need to have further discussion on this before deciding. The Warden noted that many surveys are limited in the amount of feedback received. Warden Parker stated that if a consulting firm is hired, it will be addressed at different angles, and it would not be just an open survey.

Clr. Baillie noted that it is worrisome to have the engagements, as residents can expect too much from Council and wondered whether the county afford to take this on. Clr. Baillie questioned whether at the end of the day if there is anything that Council can do for the residents. Clr. Wadden believes it is important to get the information and get the consultation done to know either way if anything can be done.

Clr. Thompson noted that there are already rules and regulations about what can be done on the shoreline and that permits are required. Clr. Thompson expressed that this is a private property issue and that residents must protect their properties. Clr. Thompson expressed uncertainty as to how this would help to solve anything along the coastline and believes this to be an overreach.

Clr. Turner said that this exercise would simply be a community engagement to get out and speak to residents and ask the questions. Clr. Turner stated that there is no harm in listening to residents and then deciding if Council would implement something on coastal protection.

Clr. MacKeil noted that the province had been all set to proceed with coastal protection and now it is being passed on to municipalities. Clr. MacKeil questioned what Council can do to help homeowners and feels that a survey is not the way to go.

Clr. Baillie questioned whether this process would be done as a survey online or community engagements, Clr. Palmer noted that it would be done through the process of public consultation.

SEWER CHARGES

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. MacKeil and seconded by Deputy Warden Murray to approve the updated Sewer Charges By-Law as presented. **Motion Carried**

JANUARY COUNCIL MEETING

MOTION

It was moved by Clr. MacKeil and seconded by Clr. Wadden to hold the January Council meeting on Monday, January 12, 2026, as opposed to Monday, January 5, 2026, to allow time for the meeting package to be distributed in advance. **Motion Carried**

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 9:51 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON

MUNICIPAL CLERK