

COUNCIL COMMITTEE

The Regular Session of the Council Committee of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted virtually, via Zoom Webinars and in-person on January 16, 2025, beginning at 6:00 pm.

In peace and friendship, and in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, Deputy Mayor Sandeson acknowledged that the Municipality of Colchester is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.

Roll Call

Mayor Christine Blair	
Cllr. Paul Weatherby	District 1
Deputy Mayor Laurie Sandeson, Chair	District 2
Cllr. Sheldon Richardson	District 3
Cllr. Mike Cooper	District 4
Cllr. Tim Johnson	District 5
Cllr. Nigel Leggett	District 6
Cllr. Sherry Martell	District 7
Cllr. Lisa Patton	District 8
Cllr. Marie Benoit	District 9
Cllr. Charlene Fletcher	District 10
Cllr. Allan Kennedy	District 11

Staff Present

Dan Troke, Chief Administrative Officer
 Michelle Boudreau, Director of Public Works
 Phil Redden, Director of Solid Waste
 Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services
 Dennis James, Municipal Solicitor
 Tracey Veno, Recording Secretary
 Jenn Mantin, Economic Development Officer
 Mollie MacBurnie, IT Support Technician
 Kelly MacIsaac, HR Specialist (*for item no. 6*)
 Joanna Burris, Sustainability Planner
 Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager (*for item no. 7*)

Colchester Courage

On behalf of Council and the Municipality of Colchester, Mayor Blair presented the 2024 Colchester Courage awards to Nigel Leggett and Greg Whalen.

During a regular Friday pickup hockey game on March 8, 2024, player John Guinan suddenly collapsed on the ice due to cardiac arrest. The immediate actions of fellow players Nigel Leggett, a Fire Chief and Emergency First Responder, and Greg Whalen, a former RCMP member, along with others who assisted, performed the necessary procedures and successfully revived Mr. Guinan before being transported by ambulance to the hospital, later making a full recovery. If not for the prompt and knowledgeable actions of Mr. Leggett and Whalen, the outcome could have been drastically different. Colchester is proud to recognize both recipients for their life-saving intervention which contributed to saving the life of John Guinan.

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

“That the agenda be approved as presented.” Carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That the minutes of the meeting held on December 12, 2024, be approved as presented.

Business Arising from Minutes None.

ACTION ITEMS

Use of Municipal Vehicles Policy

The purpose of this item is to repeal the existing Use of County Vehicles Policy and adopt the new Personnel Policy Use of Municipal Vehicles. HR Specialist Kelly MacIsaac advised that the new Policy is to ensure safe and compliant use of municipal vehicles; personal use of vehicles is being accurately reported according to Canada Revenue Agency regulation; and to manage the Municipality’s risks and increase compliance associated with use of vehicles. An overview of key components of the Policy was provided.

Discussion was held on reporting violations and violations being as related to this Policy rather than criminally; required authorizations by managers and/or directors; and, discipline and communications around education if violations occur.

Moved by Councillor Weatherby, seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Use of County Vehicles Policy be repealed and the new Personnel Policy Use of Municipal Vehicles be approved as presented.” Carried unanimously.

Matching Funds for Community Solar Garden Feasibility & Design Study

Joanna Burris, Sustainability Planner, advised that this item is to request Council approval of matching grant funding for a Community Solar Garden Feasibility and Design Study.

Confirmation of an approved funding application through the Provinces Low Carbon Communities Program was received in December. This funding represents 50% of project cost, which is estimated to be \$150,000. Colchester is responsible for the remaining 50%. The Municipality has tentatively partnered with the Town of Kentville on this project, pending approval from both Councils and a memorandum of understanding. Should the partnership proceed, Colchester’s required cash contribution would be reduced. Source of funds would be the 2025/26 Community Development planning studies budget.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that \$75,000 be approved in the 2025/26 budget for a Community Solar Garden Feasibility & Design Study, as a matching contribution to the Low Carbon Communities grant of the same amount.” Carried unanimously.

2025 FCM Conference – Ottawa, ON

The CAO provided a summary of this item noting that past practice of Council has been to allow three members of Council, along with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and CAO, attend the annual FCM Conference. This would allow each member opportunity to attend a conference during the term of Council. If more than three wish to attend, the attendees will be determined by draw.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that Councillors Cooper, Fletcher, and Kennedy attend the 2025 FCM Conference and Trade Show, in addition to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and CAO; and,

That Councillor Leggett serve as an alternate in the event that any of those selected are unable to attend.” Carried unanimously.

Flag Flying Policy Amendments

The Director of Public Works presented proposed amendments to the Flag Flying Policy in response to a request from the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee. The changes aim to allow special purpose flags to be flown, promoting inclusivity, awareness, signify acceptance and emphasize the Municipality’s role in protecting and promoting the rights of all citizens. The fundamentals of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion acknowledge equality, but the Municipality should be striving for equity. A review of 11 municipalities found that all permit a number of community or special purpose flags, with an application process for other requests and exclusions for religious or political organizations. It was recommended that such flags be flown on a separate flagpole.

Debate over the proposed policy amendments included concerns about flying flags other than the Canadian, Provincial, and Municipal flags, as these represent all citizens equally; allowing other flags might imply these three are not inclusive; and, fairness of excluding religious organizations when consideration is being permitted for other requests. However, support was also shown for flying flags of underrepresented groups and organizations; the Municipality having an obligation to help educate and bring awareness; and flying other flags not subtracting from patriotism.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Johnson

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the amendments to the Flag Flying Policy be approved as presented.” Motion carried (*Councillors Cooper, Leggett and Kennedy opposed*).

Mi’kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Tax Exemption Request

This item deals with a request for a tax exemption request for the Mi’kmawey Debert Cultural Centre (MDCC) lands and future building. The Director of Corporate Services advised that the projected costs for the MDCC property is \$35.9M with potential tax revenue of \$818,520. The MDCC is a registered Society with NS Registry of Joint Stock Companies, meeting requirements under the MGA for tax exemption. Staff recommends approval of the tax exemption request.

Moved by Councillor Benoit, seconded by Councilor Patton

“That Council Committee recommend to Council that the request for a tax exemption to Mi’kmawey Debert Cultural Centre be approved, effective for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.” Carried unanimously.

Council expressed an interest in receiving a presentation with an update on the MDCC at an upcoming meeting.

Colchester Strategic Priorities

Jenn Mantin, Economic Development Officer, presented the 2024-28 Strategic Priorities document for adoption consideration. Council met in November 2024 for a strategic priorities session to review a draft document as prepared by staff. Council engaged in a working session and were given opportunity to provide additional feedback via email to provide insights, feedback and voice additional priorities. This information was incorporated into the Strategic Priorities document which resulted in five key pillars – Livability & Community Connectivity; Sustainable Community Infrastructure Planning; Service Delivery & Organization Excellence; Community Resilience; and, Business Development & Growth, as presented.

Discussion was held on the overall process for Strategic Priorities setting. Further discussion took place on inclusion of areas of advocacy such as homelessness, effects on encampment lands/protection of marsh body and agriculture lands; future considerations of a new municipal building located in the County vs. the Town under Service Delivery & Organizational Excellence; and, in addition to advocacy, homelessness also being under Community Resilience/Housing pillar.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Kennedy

“That Council Committee recommend to Council to adopt Colchester Strategic Priorities Document for the Council term of 2024-2028 with amendments as requested by Council.” Carried unanimously.

2025-26 Schedule of Meetings

The CAO presented the Schedule of Meetings for fiscal year 2025-26 indicating that holidays, conferences, and graduations have been factors into the proposed meeting dates.

Moved by Councillor Weatherby, seconded by Councillor Fletcher

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that the Schedule of Meetings for Fiscal Year 2025-26 be approved as presented.” Carried unanimously.

Community Event Grant Request – Under 20 Provincial Junior Curling Championships

The Recreation Manager indicated that a request has been received for a community event grant for the 2025 Provincial U20 Junior Men’s and Women’s Curling Championships being held from February 5-9, 2025, at the Truro Curling Club. The amount being requested is \$1,500 and this request meets the criteria under the Community Event Grants Policy.

Brief discussion was held on concerns with the ice at the Truro Curling Club. Mr. Burgess noted that if anything changes, information will be brought back to Council for the end of the month before final approval is given on this funding.

Moved by Councillor Benoit, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that funding in the amount of \$1,500 for the 2025 U20 Provincial Junior Curling Championships be approved.” Carried unanimously.

**Community Event Grant
Request – Provincial Policy
Curling Championships**

Similar to the previous item, the Recreation Manager indicated that a request has been received for a community event grant for the Provincial Police Curling Championships being held from January 24-26, 2025, at the Brookfield Curling Club. The amount being requested is \$500 and this request meets the criteria under the Community Event Grants Policy. It should be noted that the event is taking place before final approval can be granted by Council. As such, the group has been notified that if approved, no funds will be released until after the event.

Moved by Councillor Benoit, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends to Council that funding in the amount of \$500 for the Provincial Policy Curling Championships be approved.”
Carried unanimously.

**Grants to Non-Profit Policy
Amendments**

The Recreation Manager advised that this item is to consider amendments to the Grants to Non-Profit Organizations Policy as a result of concerns expressed during the 2024-25 budget deliberations. Proposed amendments include emphasis on maximum requests; addition of ineligibility of political organizations; addition of deed requirements for grants of a capital nature; process for review and reporting to Council; requirements around presenting to Council; process for reporting final recommendations to Council for approval; and general housekeeping improvements.

During debate, concerns were expressed around who determines ‘sufficient funds available’ and clarification sought around approval process.

Moved by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommend to Council that the amendments to the Grants to Non-Profit Organizations Policy be approved as presented.” Carried unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEMS

**Brown Road Streetlight
Request – Petition Results**

This item presents the results of a request to Council for streetlights on Brown Road in Upper Economy. A mailout petition, as approved by Council, was sent on October 31, 2024, with a deadline of December 6 for responses with unreturned petitions being recorded in the negative. Results were 11 responses not in favour and 2 in favour, resulting in a failed petition.

**Regional Public Transit
Feasibility Study – Award of
RFP**

This item is to inform Council of the award of the Regional Public Transit Feasibility Study. The Request for Proposals was issued on October 10, 2024, with five proposals being received by the deadline. The successful submission came in under budget and was awarded to Aracdis.

**Central Nova Scotia Civic
Centre Society – Loan Request**

Staff noted that this item is to provide information regarding a request from the Central Nova Scotia Civic Centre Society (CNSCCS) which will be brought forward for consideration at January Council.

The CNSCCS received \$1.29M in support through the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) determined the Society was ineligible due to its relationship with municipal units and is now charging interest on the

outstanding amount. CNSCCS has appealed this decision but expects a lengthy process. To prevent further interest accumulation, it is requesting a loan from the Municipality of Colchester and the Town of Truro to repay the debt. Further details will be discussed in a January Council meeting. Under Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) standards, the loan could be treated as a grant and expensed by the Municipality without affecting its operating fund.

Director's Report

A report from the Director of Corporate Services was circulated in the package for tonight's meeting.

CLOSED SESSION

Moved by Councillor Leggett, seconded by Councillor Benoit

"That the meeting go into closed session at 7:53 pm." Carried unanimously.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Cooper

"That the meeting reconvene in open session at 8:53 pm." Carried unanimously.

Contract Negotiations – SPCA

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

"That Council Committee recommends Council approve a new 5-year contract for Animal Control Services with the SPCA as outlined in Closed Session." Carried unanimously.

**Contract Negotiations –
Biosolids Disposal**

Moved by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Patton

"That Council Committee recommends to Council that staff be authorized to enter into an agreement with Envirem Organics Inc. for the hauling and disposal of biosolids for the 2025 and 2026 calendar years." Carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Councillor Patton, the meeting adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary