

COUNCIL COMMITTEE – PRESENTATION MEETING

The Council Committee/Presentations Meeting of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted virtually via Zoom Webinars and in person, on Tuesday, March 4, 2025.

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

Roll Call

The roll was called with the following Councillors in attendance:

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

Others Present

Dan Troke, CAO

Tim Smith, Manager of Computer and Information Systems (for Technical Support)

Crystal Deuville, Recording Secretary

Nova Scotia Health – Introducing Public Health Vinitha Nair and Liaquat Shaikh

A presentation was made to introduce Public Health and its active role in promoting and protecting the health of all communities throughout the province. Public Health focuses on three core areas; Health Protection through immunizations and control of infectious diseases; Early Years with support for pregnancies and families with young children; and Healthy Communities where needs and opportunities are identified to promote and support health and wellness.

Healthy Communities is a team of professionals who work together to achieve a common goal of health equity. This requires support services from many different external stakeholders and service providers including health promoters, nutritionists, youth engagement coordinators, and dental hygienists. The team takes an upstream approach to identify and address the core root problems that are causing inequity issues with a main contributor being inadequate affordable housing.

8.4% of households in Colchester County are living in '*core housing need*' in which their homes either require major repairs, are overcrowded, or require more than 30% of their net income on rent/mortgage payments.

16% of Colchester's population is also living in poverty, which has significant impacts in all aspects of life including early childhood development, mental and physical health, food securities, and housing.

Discussion was held on the Public Transportation Pilot Program for the Northern Zone. The program started in August 2023 and has provided over 22,000 rides for individuals to access medical care in our region. Capacity has been reached with limited resources in which over 3,000 rides were completed in January alone. Existing funding expires March 31, 2025 in which Public Health is exploring options on what the future structure will look like and is having discussions with NS Public Works and EHS. Collected data has been passed along to be used in the Truro-Colchester Feasibility Study.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

“That the presentation from Nova Scotia Health be received.” Carried unanimously.

Colchester Food Network Shelly DeViller

The Colchester Food Bank started in 1984 as a temporary source to provide emergency food for those in need. Over the years, the needs of communities have changed and food insecurities is a major concern.

The Colchester Food Bank has implemented many different programs including:

- Sharing Kitchen – cooking classes with a staff member on site;
- Client Choice Market – free monthly shopping based on a points system;
- Food Bank Garden – located in Old Barns for over 35 years and operated by the Old Barns Men’s Club and Knights of Columbus.

In 2022, the Department of Community Services selected three communities to pilot a ‘Collaborative Food Network’ (CFN) project to evaluate existing strengths, build food security for its residents and bring the community together through education and relationship building.

In 2024, the Colchester Food Bank became a Collaborative Food Network focusing on how to improve food insecurity issues while maintaining human dignity, providing choices and nutritional options, adaptability and improving efficiency. There are now seven CFN across the province.

Since becoming a CFN and receiving funding through the province, additional programming and a full-time staff member has been added including:

- Cooking on a Shoestring Budget – offered on and off site where participants cook a meal together and then receive the ingredients to make it at home
- Kids Kitchen Adventures – for ages 5 to 10 teaching them how to make after school snacks and safety in the kitchen
- Pantries – accessible to the public and located in various rural communities
- Meal Kits – includes ingredients to make a family meal for 4 with printed recipe cards or access through you tube videos and QR codes
- The Teaching Community Garden – relocation of the existing garden in Old Barns to a permanent, accessible location at NS Provincial Exhibition site. Planting to begin Spring 2025

- Expansion of the existing Client Choice Market eliminating the need for online appointments, changing from monthly frequency to no limits, and personal shopping experiences.

26% of those living in poverty are not utilizing resources through CFN for various reasons and the CFN is continuously exploring options to reduce the stigmas surrounding food banks while maintaining dignity for its users and tackling food insecurities.

A request for additional funding will be sent to Council as part of budget deliberations.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Kennedy

“That the presentation from Colchester Food Network be received.” Carried unanimously.

At 6:49 pm, Councillor Kennedy left the meeting.

Following the presentation, discussion was held on:

- The CFN approaching the province to request having food nutrition and education implemented back into the school curriculum starting at the pre-primary level;
- Pantries are driven by the needs of the communities they represent so they are different from one another;
- Continue to evolve and grow pantries to explore what works for each community;
- Majority of the food provided in the pantries are from the CFN with small donations from the communities;
- Volunteers in some communities who assist with meal kit preparations;
- Aside from QR codes and online videos for meal kit preparations, written recipe cards are also included in the kits for those without online access;
- Geo Nova Scotia program to provide affordable electronic devices and internet access for low-income families.

Adjournment

On a motion by Councillor Patton, the meeting adjourned at 7:02 pm.

Crystal Deuille
Recording Secretary