

**COUNCIL COMMITTEE**

A Special Session of Council Committee of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted via Zoom Webinars, on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, beginning at 5:00 pm.

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.

**Attendance**

The roll was called with the following Council members 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 *(virtual)*
- Councillor Nigell 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 *(left early @ 6:50 pm)*

**Also Present**

- Dan Troke, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
- Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services
- Paul Smith, Director of Community Development
- Michelle Boudreau, Director of Public Works
- Phillip Redden, Director of Solid Waste
- Tracey Veno, Recording Secretary
- Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager
- Jeanette Himmelman, Systems Analyst

**Purpose**

The purpose of this meeting was for Council to give consideration to additions and/or deletions including grant requests from not-for-profit organizations, community event grants and other miscellaneous items as part of the budget process.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it is anticipated that the operating budget and general tax rates will be set. The decisions made at this Special Council Committee meeting will require Council approval at their next regularly scheduled meeting. For the sake of simplicity, each separate motion will not be considered by Council individually, rather the entire package and tax rates as a whole.

**Non-Profit Grant Requests**

Scott Fraser, Director of Corporate Services, reminded Council of the recent Policy changes regarding the process and approvals for Grants to Non-Profit Organization. A summary of requests and staff recommendations was presented at the March Committee meeting. These requests will be motioned as a whole rather than individually, with the exception of Organizations that Council members may be in conflict on. It was determined that three requests be

extracted from the list to be considered separately – the Cantabile Choral Society, the Colchester Sexual Assault Centre and the Farm Equipment Museum.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve grant funding requests from Grants to Non-Profit Organizations in the amount of \$85,549.59, as presented.” Carried unanimously.

#### **Cantabile Choral Society**

*Deputy Mayor Sandeson declared a conflict of interest and recused herself from discussion on this item. Councillor Martell assumed the role of Chair.*

Moved by Councillor Benoit, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends Council not support the grant funding request from the Cantabile Choral Society.” Carried unanimously.

*At this point, the Deputy Mayor resumed the role of Chair.*

#### **Colchester Sexual Assault Centre**

*Mayor Blair declared a conflict of interest and recused herself from discussion on this item.*

Moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve grant funding in the amount of \$4,000 for the Colchester Sexual Assault Centre.” Carried unanimously.

#### **Farm Equipment Museum**

*Councillor Patton declared a conflict of interest and recused herself from discussion on this item.*

Moved by Councillor Martell, seconded by Councillor Fletcher

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve grant funding in the amount of \$2,771.50 for the Farm Equipment Museum.” Carried unanimously.

### **Community Event Grants**

Similar to Grants to Non-Profit Organizations, the Community Event Grant requests will be motioned as a whole, with the exception of Organizations that Council members may be in conflict with.

Moved by Councillor Martell, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve Community Event Grant requests in the amount of \$20,450 as presented.” Carried unanimously.

#### **Farm Equipment Museum**

*Councillor Patton declared a conflict of interest and recused herself from discussion on this item.*

Moved by Councillor Benoit, seconded by Councillor Martell

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve grant funding in the amount of \$1,376 for the Farm Equipment Museum.” Carried unanimously.

**Other**

A summary of ‘Other Requests’ were included in the package for this evening’s meeting. The Director of Corporate Services noted one additional item – #17 Tendered Refuse Collection Contract.

**TAAC Grounds - \$510,000**

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Kennedy

“That Council Committee recommends that Council not support the request for funding for the TAAC Grounds.” Carried unanimously.

Discussion included Council’s previous commitment of \$350,000 for this project; additional areas where this requested funding could be allocated to, and the asked being over & above what Colchester should be contributing.

**Colchester Historical Society – Increase of \$5,000 Annually**

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That Council Committee recommends that Council support an increase of \$5,000/year for three years to the Colchester Historical Society’s current \$10,000 annual funding.” Carried unanimously.

**Colchester Food Network - \$20,000**

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council Committee recommends that Council support funding in the amount of \$20,000 for the Colchester Food Network.” Carried unanimously.

**Cougar Dome - \$25,000 Annually for Five Years**

Discussion on the request from the Cougar Dome included the facility being successful; support for one year rather than five; other funding sources; previous annual losses of \$100K; the success of pickleball and its continued growth; and, this funding should be put towards our own recreational programs.

*Councillor Martell assumed the role of Chair briefly to allow opportunity for the Deputy Mayor to speak on the matter.*

Deputy Mayor Sandeson commented that this facility was originally put in place for and is greatly used by CEC students and the Department of Education should be asked for funding.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Kennedy

“That Council Committee recommends that Council not support the request for funding from the Cougar Dome.” Motion DEFEATED. *(Councillors Weatherby Richardson, Cooper, Johnson, Leggett, and Benoit opposed).*

Moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council support the funding request from the Cougar Dome in the amount of \$25,000 for one year.” Motion carried *(Mayor Blair opposed).*

**EDIA Coordinator Term Position - \$70,800**

This position is a three-year term position at Range 5 of the Non-union Salary Scale, prorated in fiscal 2025/26.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Martell

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve funding in the amount of \$70,800 annually for the EDIA three-year term position.” Carried unanimously.

**After School/Project Coordinator - \$67,672**

This position has been a term position within our Recreation Department, created three years ago. Staff is seeking to make the position full-time permanent at Range 3 on the Non-union Salary Scale. The position has seen increased workload related to events and special projects.

Moved by Councillor Leggett, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve \$67,672 in the budget to change the After School/Project Coordinator position status to full-time permanent, at Range 3 on the Non-union Salary Scale.” Carried unanimously.

**Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Funding Increase - \$64,000 Annually**

Colchester Ground Search & Rescue (CGSAR) is seeking an increase in its annual grant from \$56,000 to \$120,000. In addition to their annual grant, the Municipality provides insurance coverage to the CGSAR valued at approximately \$18,000 annually. A presentation was received from CGSAR requesting the implementation of an area rate as a means of supporting their annual operational budget. At the time of the presentation, a proposal of a flat rate option ballparked at around \$120,000 was suggested by Council as a possible route. It was decided that the request be referred to 2025/26 budget deliberations, however, the option of an area rate was determined to not be an appropriate mechanism for CGSAR funding.

Discussion was held on CGSAR current funding from other sources, Search & Rescue being a provincial responsibility, fundraising challenges, the importance

of the service the organization provides, and the value of their contributions as a service provider. Lengthy debate took place on the funding request with concern expressed about the amount being more than double the amount of their current annual funding allocation. Upon request for clarification, it was confirmed that the requested increase is not a one-time request, it would be allotted annually.

Moved by Councillor Benoit, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve a \$64,000 increase to the annual funding to Colchester Ground Search and Rescue.”

*amendment to motion*

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve an increase of \$14,000 in annual funding for Colchester Ground Search and Rescue.” Motion DEFEATED (*Councillors Cooper, Richardson, Johnson, Leggett, Benoit and Patton opposed*).

The amending motion having been defeated, the original motion was voted on and also DEFEATED (*Mayor Blair, Deputy Mayor Sandeson, Councillors Weatherby, Martell, Fletcher and Kennedy opposed*).

Moved by Councillor Richardson, seconded by Councillor Kennedy

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve an increase to \$80,000 in annual funding for Colchester Ground Search and Rescue.” Carried unanimously.

It was noted that the increase in funding does not include the amount CGSAR receives as a grant for insurance.

#### **Colchester Ground Search and Rescue – Drone Request \$20,000**

It was noted that CGSAR has acquired the Drone through private sponsorship, however, no formal notification has been received from CGSAR.

Moved by Councillor Benoit, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends that Council not support the request in the amount of \$20,000 from Colchester Ground Search and Rescue to purchase a drone.” Carried unanimously.

#### **Assistant Protective Services Coordinator - \$27,503**

Emergency Management/Protective Services has seen significant increase in administrative requirements related to event management and claims management of Fire Services. The position was originally approved as a 60% position and staff is requesting that it become a full-time position remaining at Range 2 of the Non-union Salary Scale.

Moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Mayor Blair

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve \$27,503 in the budget to change the Assistant Protective Services position from permanent part-time to permanent full-time, remaining at Range 2 of the Non-union Salary Scale.” Carried unanimously.

**J Class Road Funding - \$250,000**

As per previous direction of Council, five roads were put forward to the Province for cost sharing of repaving. A response has been received and two projects, MacCallum and Hillvale Drives, have been approved for cost sharing and repaving for 2025/26 with costs to the Municipality estimated at \$215,000. Staff are recommending that \$250,000 be added annually to the Street Paving Reserve on a go forward basis. This would ensure that the reserve is adequately funded for potential contributions to J-Class Road cost sharing projects for re-paving.

Lengthy discussion included roads and sidewalks being the number one concern for residents during election campaigning and the need to step up to deal with the issue; increasing the recommended amount of \$250K to be added to the reserve; taking advantage of the 50 cent funding from the Province while it is still available; and, the process for getting roads added to the list. Further debate was held on the addition of another paving reserve for County owned gravel roads; clarification of intent for an additional reserve; existing budget amounts being set aside not being sufficient for paving of gravel roads; J Class roads being an offloading by the Province; and the unknowns of the Municipal Service Exchange as it relates to roads.

Moved by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve an allocation of \$500K for paving of J Class Roads and that a separate yearly line item be set up in the budget.” Motion carried (*Councillor Cooper opposed*).

Moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Martell

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve a request for a reserve to be built for the paving of gravel roads owned by the Municipality.” Carried unanimously.

**Wastewater Treatment Plant Technician 1 FTE - \$56,977**

The request is to add one full-time Wastewater Treatment Plant Technician to support operations at both the main treatment plant and various satellite facilities and lift stations. Currently, there are three Technicians, and the additional one will enhance maintenance capacity at all locations. It will also help accommodate continued growth capacity in the Municipality. Total cost of the position would be \$66,114 with a portion of the cost associated with the main treatment plant being recovered through cost sharing with Truro, reducing the cost to \$56,977. This is a unionized position.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Leggett

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve \$56,977 for a fourth full-time Wastewater Treatment Plant Technician.” Carried unanimously.

**Construction & Demolition Site Operator 1 FTE - \$74,819**

This request is for a new unionized position at the Construction & Demolition (C&D) site to assist with sorting divertible materials for market or recycling, increasing sales revenue and diversion credits. The position will also save handling materials multiple times, will help in preserving space in the C&D landfill and extending its operational lifespan. This approach will further conserve air space, lower equipment operating costs, and enable more frequent site covering to help reduce litter and ensure compliance with approval requirements.

Moved by Councillor Martell, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve \$74,819 in the budget for a full-time Construction & Demolition Site Operator position.” Carried unanimously.

**Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Lead Hand 1 FTE - \$59,704**

This is a full-time unionized position located at the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) acting as a working leader and intermediary between employees and supervisors. This position would provide guidance to staff in times when Supervisors are not directly involved or available in production.

Responding to a query about whether this position would enable existing employees opportunity for growth within the organization, the Director of Solid Waste confirmed the position would be an internal posting.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve \$59,704 in the budget for a full-time Materials Recovery Facility Lead Hand position.” Carried unanimously.

**Climate Action Studies - \$120,000**

Funding is being sought by the Sustainability Coordinator for three climate action studies. The studies include a Fleet Electrification Study, a Climate risk assessment, and a Sustainable Procurement Strategy.

Brief discussion was held on existing staff not being qualified to conduct these studies, and the studies being a requirement in accessing other provincial and/or federal funding.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Kennedy

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve \$120K in the budget for three Climate Action Studies, namely a Fleet Electrification study, a Climate Risk Assessment, and a Sustainable Procurement study.” Carried unanimously.

**TCPEP Funding Request - \$36,558 Increase in Annual Funding**

TCPEP is requesting an increase in annual funding in the amount of \$36, 558, increasing annual funding from the Municipality of Colchester from \$69,350 to \$105,908. Funding increases from other municipal partners are also being requested.

Discussion was held on the Town of Truro’s commitment to increased funding, and the value of this organization.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Johnson

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve the request for increased annual funding in the amount of \$36,558 for the Truro Colchester Partnership for Economic Prosperity.” Carried unanimously.

*At this point in the meeting, 6:50 pm, Councillor Kennedy left the meeting.*

**RCMP Increasing Staff Complement - \$740,956**

A request has been received from Staff Sgt. Marc Rose for an additional seven (7) officers. The increase is warranted to provide adequate police service for the Municipality. Following a review of police services in the County, concerns related to response time in rural areas, the need for increased community engagement, and 24-hour policing were raised. In consultation with the S/Sgt. Rose, it was agreed that the increase in officers would undoubtedly be phased in over several years. The Province provided an estimate based on current 70/30 cost sharing would be \$214K per officer based on 2024/25 costing. Staff built in a contingency for increased costs for the 2025/26 fiscal year.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Fletcher

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve \$740,956 in the 2025/26 fiscal budget for three additional officer positions.” Carried unanimously.

At this point, the Director of Corporate Services advised that \$733,220 remains in the budget.

**Tendered Refuse Collection Contract - \$610,085**

The Director of Corporate Services advised that with increased costs associated with the solid waste collection contract and increased rates to residents to be phased in over three years to \$220 (\$140 in 24/25, \$175 in 25/26 & \$220 in 26/27), it was suggested that a portion of the funds remaining in the budget be allocated to offset the increases to residents. An allocation of \$610,085 to a Tendered Refuse Collection Contract reserve would hold the collection rate to residents in 25/26 at \$140.

During debate, concerns were raised about subsidizing or holding the rate. Due to continued increasing costs, the situation would be similar in facing increased rates to residents and it would be better to have gradual increases rather than incurring a larger increase at one time. As balanced budgets are required under the Municipal Government Act, a reserve for the solid waste collection contract was suggested as an option for handling a portion of the surplus.

Further discussion was held on the surplus of funds and the possibility of changing the decision on the request from Colchester Ground Search and Rescue for increased annual funding to \$120K. The CAO advised that this would be a reconsideration and with the exception of the excess fundings, there is no new information being presented that would support the request for reconsideration.

Moved by Councillor Leggett, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve \$610,085 be placed in the Tendered Refuse Collection Contract fund.” Motion *DEFEATED (all opposed with the exception of Councillors Weatherby and Patton)*.

Moved by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Richardson

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve funds to the Special Operating Reserve be increased by \$733,220.” Carried unanimously.

With no further budget items for discussion, Mr. Fraser advised that this concludes the budget process with a balanced budget and no increases to the residential or commercial tax rates. Rates will remain at \$.885 and \$2.28 respectively for fiscal 2025/26.

Council agreed that the budget with motions as recommended throughout this evening’s meeting be brought forward at the end of the month for final approval.

With this coming weekend being the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mass shooting, Council observed a moment of silence in honour of those lost during the tragic event.

## Adjournment

On a motion by Councillor Patton, the meeting adjourned at 7:27 pm.

Tracey Veno  
Recording Secretary