

COUNCIL COMMITTEE

A Special Session of Council Committee of the Municipality of the County of Colchester was conducted via Zoom Webinars, on Monday, April 20, 2026, beginning at 6:00 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
- 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

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
- Jenn Mantin, Economic Development Officer
- Tracey Venno, Recording Secretary
- Craig Burgess, Recreation Manager
- Mollie MacBurnie-Haas, IT Support

Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was for Council to consider 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, provided an overview of the process for approvals for the Grants to Non-profit and Community Event Grants. Summaries of these requests along with staff recommendations were presented at the March Council meeting. These requests will be motioned as a whole rather than individually, except for organizations that Council members may be in conflict on.

Noted conflicts were with the Rotary Club of Truro's Community Event Grant request and the Sunny Brae Cemetery Grants to Non-profit request. These would be extracted from the list and considered separately.

Moved by Councillor Martell, seconded by Councillor Kennedy

"That Council Committee recommends that grant funding requests from Grants to Non-Profit Organizations in the amount of \$81,630.00 be approved as presented."

Brief discussion took place regarding cemeteries, during which concerns were raised about the challenges of funding them given the large number located throughout the County. It was noted, however, that current policy does not exclude cemeteries from being eligible for funding. Should Council wish to amend the policy to address this issue, such changes should be considered for future funding requests.

amending motion

Moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Johnson

"That the recommended amount of \$2,000 for the Tatamagouche Cemetery Company be removed from the list." Motion carried (*Councillors Richardson, Leggett, Martell, Patton and Benoit opposed*).

amending motion

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Benoit

"That the recommended amount for Canadian Mental Health Association be increased from \$3,000 to the full amount requested, \$4,000." Carried unanimously.

amending motion

Moved by Councillor Martell, seconded by Councillor Patton

"That the recommended amount for Creamery Square Arts Society be increased to the full amount requested, from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Carried unanimously.

The amending motions having carried, the original motion was voted on and carried as amended, with a total amount of \$82,630.00 recommended for approval.

Sunny Brae Cemetery

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

Discussion reflected a lack of support based on the same concerns raised regarding the Tatamagouche Cemetery Company, namely the number of

cemeteries across the County. Another point noted that not all cemeteries are affiliated with churches and are often in need of support.

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Leggett

“That Council Committee recommends Council support the funding request from the Sunny Brae Cemetery in the amount of \$2,000.” Motion **defeated** (*Mayor Blair, Councillors Richardson, Cooper, Johnson, Fletcher and Kennedy opposed*).

For Grants to Non-profit Organizations, a total of \$82,630 is being recommended for consideration during final budget approval by Council at the end of the month.

Community Event Grants

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

Moved by Councillor Patton, seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That Council Committee recommends that Community Event Grant requests in the amount of \$10,500 be approved as presented.” Carried unanimously.

Rotary Club of Truro

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

Moved by Councillor Leggett, seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council Committee recommends that Council approve grant funding in the amount of \$5,000 for the Rotary Club of Truro.” Carried unanimously.

For Community Event Grants, a total amount of \$15,500 is recommended for consideration during final budget approval by Council at the end of the month.

Other

A summary of ‘Other Requests’ was included in the package for this evening’s meeting.

Building Security Contract

This funding would provide for a contracted security position to assist members of the public with visitor reception and provide security access control.

Strong concern was raised around the safety of staff and the Mayor and the requirement for more than a person for security. Points included having access beyond the foyer blocked; having an intercom system and a process to allow access; glass doors being a fobbed door access; and funding being a placeholder for a contracted position. Other comments included the Courts requiring access; layout of the building being challenging; ownership of the building and Court lease; and video/CCTV cameras being a deterrence.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Richardson

“That Council Committee recommends that funding in the amount of \$60,000 be included in the budget for contracted building security.” Carried unanimously.

Administrative Restructuring - \$330,572

Restructuring of the Administration Department includes the addition of a Deputy CAO; a new Director of Economic Development, Marketing, and Communications; and an Administrative Support position. This funding would serve as a placeholder with recommendations being brought to Council before being finalized.

Moved by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

“That Council Committee recommends that funding in the amount of \$330,572 be included in the budget for Administrative Restructuring.” Carried unanimously.

MIS Desktop 1FTE - \$69,541, Range 3 on Salary Scale

Due to significant growth in the Municipality, there is increased workload and complexities in the IT Department resulting in the need for an extra position to meet and maintain service expectations.

Moved by Councillor Weatherby, seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That Councillor Committee recommends that funding in the amount of \$69,541 be placed in the budget for a Full Time MIS Desktop Support position at range 3 on the salary scale.” Carried unanimously.

Leased Office Space - \$115,000

Office space at the Municipal Building at 1 Church Street has reached capacity. Staff are exploring leased space options to accommodate existing and future staffing needs as well as enabling future building renovations which may increase long-term capacity. Staff researched space requirements and market rates for commercial space in the Truro area.

During discussion, concerns were raised on price per square footage being high; exploring options for space in the County rather than in the Town; and ease of accessibility for staff. It was noted that current pricing appears to be comparable with market rates.

Further discussion took place on leased space being an interim solution and emphasis on the urgent need to address the need for a new municipal building.

Moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Mayor Blair

“That Council Committee recommends that \$115,000 be placed in the budget for leased office space.” Carried unanimously.

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Association – request for increased annual funding from \$80,000 to \$97,000

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue (CGSAR) has requested an increase of \$17,000 to its annual funding. In addition to its current annual contribution of \$80,000, the Municipality provides a tax exemption and insurance coverage and has also issued a loan guarantee to support improvements to the organization's operations centre in Debert.

Discussion included support for CGSAR, noting the importance of the organization and the valuable service it provides to the community. Increased funding was viewed as an investment that would enhance team capacity, training, and equipment. It was also noted that the organization's facility serves as a warming centre. Additional funding would assist with rising operational costs, including propane and electricity.

While all members agreed on the importance of CGSAR and the services it provides, further discussion addressed several considerations, including previous increases in funding; the organization's ability to bill for certain services, unlike fire departments; that not all calls for service occur within Colchester; and the limited financial contributions from other municipal units. The view that the Province of Nova Scotia should be providing greater funding rather than being the responsibility of the Municipality was also discussed.

It was also noted that while CGSAR provides services outside of Colchester, other ground search and rescue organizations also respond within Colchester when required.

Moved by Councillor Benoit, seconded by Councillor Patton

"That Council Committee recommends that annual funding for Colchester Search and Rescue be increased by \$15,000, from \$80,000 to \$95,000." Motion carried (*Mayor Blair and Councillors Fletcher and Kennedy opposed*).

Public Transit Funding

The Regional Transit Study for Truro-Colchester is completed and will be presented to Council on April 27th. A budget of \$100,000 is proposed with \$50,000 being towards Colchester's share of a Regional Coordinator and \$50,000 for soft costs related to setup of a transit system.

Moved by Councillor Leggett, seconded by Councillor Benoit

"That Council Committee recommends that funding in the amount of \$100,000 be included in the budget for Public Transit Funding." Motion carried (*Councillor Patton was not available during voting on this item*).

Cougar Dome – request for \$50,000 annually for five years

The Cougar Dome is requesting an annual grant of \$50,000 for five years with the same request being made of Truro. It is staff's understanding that Truro

provides a grant in lieu of taxes for the Cougar Dome however, no other grant was approved.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Cooper

“That Council Committee recommends a grant in the amount of \$25,000 for one year.” Carried unanimously.

Creamery Square Association (The Grace Arts Centre) – request for \$15,000 annually

The Creamery Square is requesting an annual grant in the amount of \$15,000. The funding would be used for theatre production programming, youth drama camps, and capital upgrades.

Clarification was provided on this being an annual grant request for \$15,000. This annual funding request is in addition to the grant in the amount of \$5,000 previously discussed under grants to non-profit. The organization has not been granted annual funding in the past, however, have requested and received funding each year.

Discussion regarding support for this request included the organization being a tremendous asset in the community; it being the only performing arts centre outside the Truro core; and vast variety of shows and programming offered.

Moved by Councillor Martell, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends that the Creamery Square (The Grace Arts Centre) be granted annual funding in the amount of \$15,000.” Motion carried (*Mayor Blair opposed*).

Debert Legion - \$30,000 for Roof Repairs

The funding request from the Debert Legion was withdrawn.

Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre – request for \$750,000-\$1M

The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre (MDCC) is requesting a one-time capital investment of between \$750,000 and \$1M from the Municipality. During their presentation to Council, it was suggested the funding would be used to support the construction of their fire protection system which includes on-site emergency water storage.

Council could consider earmarking funds to construct a publicly owned fire protection system on Lancaster Crescent, which would service not only the needs of the MDCC, but would also be available for use by other area businesses.

The Municipality is supporting the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre by providing an annual property tax exemption.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Benoit

“That Council Committee recommends that funding in the amount of \$500,000 be set aside to support the construction of a municipally owned fire protection system on Lancaster, which would serve not only the needs of the Mi’kmawey Debert Cultural Centre, but would also be available for use by other businesses in the area.” Carried unanimously.

Staff will bring forward information on a municipally owned fire protection system at a future meeting of Council for consideration.

Truro Colchester Welcome Network

The Truro Colchester Welcome Network is requesting an operating grant of \$7,500 towards funding the coordinator salary and programming to assist newcomers to the community.

Points of discussion included the policy requirement that funding not be provided for salaries. Concern was also raised regarding the absence of budgets and financial statements, which are required when considering grant applications.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Patton

“That Council Committee recommends that \$7,500 be included in the budget for the Truro Colchester Welcome Network.” Motion **defeated** (*opposed by all members of Council*).

The Director of Corporate Services provided an overview of funding remaining in the budget, \$315,500, following recommendations from this evening. With requirements for a balanced budget, options were provided for consideration such as adjusted tax rates or transferring the balance to a reserve.

Moved by Councillor Leggett, seconded by Councillor Weatherby

“That the excess funds in the amount of \$315,500 be put in reserve for future repairs for the RECC.” Motion carried (*Councillor Martell opposed*).

During discussion on the transfer of funds to the RECC reserve, concern was raised that a budget has not yet been received from the RECC, and that a Joint Council meeting—required under the new operating agreement for the presentation of budgets—has not yet taken place.

Clarification was provided that the additional funding to the RECC reserve does not represent an increase to the annual operating grant but rather is intended to support capital repairs to the facility.

The CAO advised that the Society is currently in the process of preparing its budget. It was further noted that there would be no change to the annual operating grant of \$750,000. Instead, the allocation to the RECC Capital Reserve would increase from \$200,000 to \$515,500 in the current budget.

Summary

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 2026/27.

Moved by Mayor Blair, seconded by Councillor Kennedy

“That all recommendations as discussed this evening be advanced to Council at their meeting on April 27, 2026, for approval.” Carried unanimously.

Adjournment

On a motion by Councillor Patton, the meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Tracey Veno
Recording Secretary