

Town of Digby
Committee of the Whole
April 22nd, 2025
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Mike Bartlett
Deputy Mayor Paul Saulnier (Chair)
Councillor William McCormick
Councillor Rick Foote
Councillor Shane Weir

STAFF PRESENT: Tom Ossinger, Chief Administrative Officer
Leslie Brinton, Executive Assistant
Ed McCormick, Director of Public Works
Matthew Raymond, Director of Finance
Laura Lee Milner, Special Constable
Rob Hartmier, Grant Coordinator

REGRETS:

A. CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Mayor Saulnier called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm

Land Acknowledgment stated by the Chair “We would like to begin by acknowledging that we are in Mi’kma’ki (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional (or ancestral) territory of the Mi’kmaq people”.

B. AGENDA

B.1 Additions/Deletions

H.5 Roadside Signage

B.2 Approval

By consensus, the Committee of the Whole approved the agenda as presented.

C. DELEGATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

C.1 Chris Larsen – Wharf Rat Rally

Presentation was included in the package. Chris Larsen spoke to the event of the Wharf Rat Rally. Rick Allwright is now the event coordinator. They are looking for a \$15,000 investment in the Wharf Rat Rally for this year’s event. They are looking to add a fresh coat of paint to the rally this year, they are looking for the Rally to update its business plan and events. A video presentation was given to councillors. Riding into new beginnings is their catch phrase for this ask. Mr. Larsen spoke to his presentation package and summarized some of the confirmed events that are new to the Rally as well as spoke to some of the as yet unconfirmed events/activities that may be added to the Rally. Deputy Mayor Saulnier asked about volunteer renewal and the strategy for that. Mr. Larsen is looking at social media as well as asking DARC for their help as well.

C.2 Nancy Whalley – Community Navigator

Report from the Community Navigator included in the package. Nancy Whalley spoke to the points provided in her report as it was provided to the Council. Councillor McCormick asked about the next focus and whether that was going to be a focus on nursing. Nancy Whalley is looking at targeting students in the fall.

C.3 Digby Fire Department

Training Proposal Report was included in the package. Mr. Steve Savary came to present on the training proposal package. Mr. Savary is the training officer for the Fire Department. A package was handed out to the Committee of the Whole members. Mr. Savary spoke to the slides that were passed out. Mr. Robert Morgan spoke to the Committee of the Whole that the fire department is not looking financial help, they are looking for a location to be approved. Three locations were given to the Committee. Mr. Morgan spoke to the fact that fire training does not actually create a lot of smoke when there is training. The mayor communicated that he felt the North location on the other side of the fire hall. Councillor Foote suggested that the Committee should understand that this is a professional opinion and the location beside the Fire Hall is the preferred location.

MOTION:

Moved by Councillor Weir and seconded by Mayor Bartlett that the Committee of the Whole recommend to Council to approve the request for the preferred location of the Training Facility for the Digby Fire Department.

Motion Carried

D. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

D.1 March 17th, 2025

MOTION:

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Mayor Bartlett that the Minutes of March 17th, 2025 be approved as presented/amended.

Motion Carried

E. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

E.1 Digby Home and Lifestyle Expo

Correspondence with Rick Allwright over questions the Committee of the Whole had about the event are included in the package. The CAO spoke to the questions that were asked and answered in the information provided.

MOTION:

Moved by Mayor Bartlett and seconded by Councillor McCormick that the Committee of the Whole recommends to Council to support and purchase a booth at the Digby Home and Lifestyle Expo in the amount of \$295 plus tax.

Motion Carried

E.2 Letter – Jennie O’Brien

A letter of respond to resident Jennie O’Brien was included in the package for information purposes for the Committee of the Whole.

F. STAFF REPORTS

F.1 Chief Administrative Officer

a) Report - The Report was submitted with the package. There were three development permits issued. The NSUARB Planning appeal case continues. The Town's motion was denied by the NSRAB (formerly the NSUARB but has had a name change effective April 1, 2025). There were changes to the aggrieved appellants list. The NSRAB applies a 500-foot measurement from the development site with four appellants falling outside this range. NSRAB has encouraged an agreement to be reached between the town and the appellants. It is evident that this process will be prolonged. A preliminary hearing was held on April 17th, 2025 during which procedures for the hearing were outlined for all parties. Dates for the Hearing have been reserved for July 14th – 19th to be held in Digby and the CAO will need to be available for these hearings. The mayor asked what the process is for people who are in support of this process and whether there is an opportunity for those in support to speak. The CAO was unsure on those points and will gather more information in the interim. There were two building permits issued and no fire inspections conducted last month. There was a permit that was denied today as the request was for a structure that did not meet build back requirements and learned that the structure has already been built. The CAO was making the Committee aware of this in case there was inquiries made to Council members as the person requesting the permit stated that they will probably have to bring the structure down. NSRAB appeal of the matter with Fundy Restaurant limited has a hearing set for April 28th and 29th in Halifax which the CAO will need to attend in support of the Fire Inspector. There were 11 fire calls in February and 13 fire call in March. 12 months notice has been given to NSFAM from the Department of Justice over the RCMP annual Multi-Year Financial plan as well as the Biological Casework Analysis agreement. There was also a notice given from the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs over Procurement Thresholds and Free Trade talk agreements. A breakdown was provided in the CAO report. Coastline Protection information was provided from the Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change. Details included; an example of a land-use by-law text for municipalities to use in regulating development along the coast through zoning, land-use planning and building permit regulatory processes, funding to NSFAM (\$1 million) over three years to support adopting and implementing these by-laws, funding for NSFAM to hire a Climate Change Policy Analyst to support municipalities, online tools and resources to support property owners, a partnership with NS Association of Realtors to support education to property purchasers. Request was made that staff look into getting the NSFAM information in relation to information that was provided to them from the Province in relation to the Coastal Erosion policy that the Provincial Government did not institute last year.

F.2 Director of Public Works

a) Public Works Report - The Report was submitted with the package. The Digby Water Commission 2024 Annual Report was completed and sent to NSECC for review. Report being worked on in relation to 8-inch force main that pumps wastewater from Lift Station #3 to Admirals Walk. The Conditional Management Report has been started and is due by end of April 2025. Site visits have been completed for airports, municipal offices and arena for the accessibility committee with reports to follow soon. Completed the following; 9 locates for NSP, discussed CIP with CAO and DOF, ordered new gutter brush and broom for sweeper, getting an estimate for exterior door upstairs for firehall, hydrant map was given to the CAO for the Fire Hall, Fire Hall annual Fire and Sprinkler inspection was completed, surplus tractor plow was

sold, attended Emo training, received quotes for panel upgrades that four lift stations will require. Digby Water Commission – starting to see batteries from digital water meters starting to fail. If they fail in first 10 years then replacement is free, 10-20 years is half price and anything after 20 years is full price. Ordering is six months wait time. Muffin Monster has been rebuilt and installed in main lift station. Pumps two and four at main lift station are both not working and expected repairs will be completed in mid April. Very little snow removal in March. 94 bags of cold patch were used in March. SUV still has outstanding recall with repairs in second quarter expected. New tractor and attachments have arrived. Smart Thermostats installed at Fire Hall and heat pumps in the building have been cleaned. Ramp and door at the entrance of the food bank will need major repairs due to some major wind which swung the door open and bent the metal frame as well as the ramp needs to be replaced along with an exterior paint job needed. Able Electrical is expected to start installations of generators in June of 2025. Design for Third Avenue and West Street Extension has been updated so a tender document can be completed and reviewed in mid to late April. A draft request for proposal for project management has been sent to the CAO for review. Summer hours are back for the Transfer Station. There are upcoming safety courses for the member of the Public Works team including Lock Out/Tag Out and Transportation of Dangerous Goods. There is work being done to identify a team building exercise for the Public Works Team. DOPW completed a course on Municipal Law which introduces the laws as it affects municipalities. Course was intensive and required a lot of personal time to complete but provided valuable knowledge that pertains to by-law development, amendments or consolidations of by-laws.

F.3 Director of Finance

a) Report - The Report was submitted with the package. A rough draft of the capital budget is ready for input from the budget committee. The operating draft budget is being drafted with input from other departments, which a draft not yet available for review by the budget committee. Insurance renewal was completed with an increase of 6.5% over last year. Fuel tank storage liability coverage decreased. HST dropped from 15% to 14% on April 1st. Town lot on Queen Street adjacent to Digby Justice center needs to be addressed in regards to winter maintenance. Council should consider options of; signage or provide winter maintenance or block off lot. Deputy Mayor Saulnier asked what the solution was for the parking lot near the hospital and the CAO communicated that it was to block it off so the Deputy Mayor suggested the same should be done at this lot. The CAO agreed. Pension questions were presented to the DOF and some preliminary investigation has been done of the pros and cons of switching the Town employees from defined contribution pension plan to defined benefit plan. Municipality of Digby has done this and conversation with the Digby Municipality CAO were very positive. This may help with retention and hiring of employees. Does council wish the DOF to continue with this investigation to determine pros, cons and costs to employees and the town? Committee members suggested that the investigation should continue. The information of what the Town employees are looking for needs to be addressed. The CAO made the suggestion that an outside consultant should be retained to get this information so that there is an unbiased information gotten. Attended a Blue Route Stakeholders meeting to focus on how to integrate the approaches to the town of Digby. Deputy Councillor Saulnier questioned the DOF on why there was no Councillor attending this meeting. DOF responded that the meeting request was presented to him very late. DATS rent is over due as of April 8th, 2025. All other rent is up to date. Need to verify the rental agreement with DATA can continue. Waiting for final invoice from project manger to wrap up Mount Street project and to be able to consider

the project itself complete. The mayor was questioning whether DATA still wanted to rent out the Town building. Councillor McCormick was unsure if they still wanted the location. The suggestion was made to ask DATA for a commitment or else the Town would look for a RFP to have the building used by another user.

Motion:

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Weir that the Committee of the Whole recommend to Council to retain a financial advisor to pole the staff of the Town of Digby to see if they are interested in changing to a different style of Pension plan.

Motion Carried.

b) Operating and Capital Budget Report. Operating fund statement was provided up to period ending March 31st, 2025 in the package as was Capital Budget Statement.

F.4 Special Constable

a) Dangerous and Unsightly - The Report was submitted with the package. Complaint over retaining wall ownership has moved to a civil dispute so case now considered closed. 10 Carleton Street has been issued a SOT for failing to comply with order to remedy and has 30 days to pay fine. Syndey street property has order to remedy over debris and needs to be monitored. Raquette road demolition is concerning over possible asbestos of house. Neighbor is concerned that demolition will cause health issues. Discussed in Senior Management and conclusion that the home owner is ultimately responsible. This may cause issues as cost of demolition is what has held up the property demolition already. Currently no contractor is willing to be involved with the demolition until question of asbestos have been answer. The Deputy Mayor inquired to the CAO about the taxes owing on 10 Carleton Street and where the Town stands. The CAO communicated that all taxes have not been paid on that property and that with it being in arrears, there is an upcoming date where the property can go back into a tax sale.

b) Protective Services – The Report was submitted with the package. CCTV outage updates have been installed so that there is no down time in recording. Painted handicapped parking in spot by Scotia Bank has been removed eliminating confusion. No parking signs have been ordered near Post Office and will be monitored once installed. Report of a put bull biting 2 RCMP officers during a call was made. Owner was issued a SOT for owner failing to control dog. Crossing guard informed bylaw officer about an incident with a school official. School Official did not heed direction of crossing guard and then questioned the guard on their code of conduct and scope of duties. Crossing guard informed on the incident and will be filing a report to the RCMP. There were taxi owners who questioned how the repeal of the Taxi bylaw would affect their business and what the requirements would be moving forward. Queen street solid waste issue has been solved so case is closed. Received a complaint about rat infestation on 59 first avenue. After investigation it was deemed that the complainants actually had the infestation and was ordered to solve the issue with solid waste in their yard. Was requested to speak to Conway Workshop resident to stop loitering and panhandling in downtown area. Received a complaint from Carleton Street over Rooster. Found original complaint was not at the address given but at neighboring address. Instructed offender to removed birds from property and will need to be followed up on.

F.5 Grant Coordinator Report

a) Report - The Report was submitted with the package. PCAP grant application will be submitted by end of April. Approval of 16-week business administration student grant was received. PCAP final report was submitted for engineering design for south end extensions. HAF first report was submitted. CMHC currently in caretaker mode until federal election is complete. Rebuilt front end of website to help promote the Community Engagement event for the Municipal Planning Review. Story put together for Tri-County Vanguard for HAF grant success. Put together interview questions and conducted interviews for Administrative Specialist position. Completed REMO evacuation training.

Motion

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Foote that the Committee of the Whole accept the reports as presented.

Motion Carried.

G. CORRESPONDENCE

G.1 Correspondence – Minister Masland and Minister Lohr

A letter was received from Minister Lohr and Minister Masland informing Mayors, CAO's and Wardens of a comprehensive governance review of fire services by the Fire Services Association of Nova Scotia. The mayor talked to this and will receive this report and communicated that he will be bringing it forward once we receive it.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1 Communication Strategy

Report on Communication Strategy was submitted with the package. Deputy Mayor Saulnier spoke to this report as he is the one who created it. There is another section to this as there is a policy to go with this. Four key goals with targeted audiences as well as main channels that could be used. Considerations for implementations should be looked at.

Motion

Moved by Councillor Weir and seconded by Councillor McCormick that the Committee of the Whole recommend to Council to approve the Communication Strategy.

Motion Carried.

H.2 Mount Street School

The mayor talked to the fact that perhaps the Mount Street school could be used as potentially a rental for offices. Councillor Foote suggested perhaps they could be used by DARC for when the renovations happen at the Arena.

H.3 Banners for the 135th Celebration

The mayor suggested that there should be some funding approved for the purchase of banners for the 135th Celebration.

Motion

Moved by Mayor Bartlett and seconded by Councillor Weir that the Committee of the Whole recommend to Council to approve spending \$400 plus tax for banners for the 135th Celebration.

Motion Carried.

H.4 Request for decision – Public Works Administrative Assistant

Request from the CAO to fund the continuation of the PW Administrative Assistant has been submitted with the package. The Water commission has approved their cost sharing.

Motion

Moved by Mayor Bartlett and seconded by Councillor Weir that the Committee of the Whole recommend to Council to approve a one-year term position for the Public Works Administrative Assistant - Operator position.

Motion Carried

H.5 Roadside Signage

Councillor McCormick wanted to communicate that the sign by the old KFC can now move forward to be removed as it is the owner's responsibility to do so. The suggestion that will go to the owner is that we will remove the sign if the owner gives the Town ownership of the sign.

I. IN-CAMERA

I.1 Property

Motion

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Weir that the Committee of the Whole meeting be moved to In-Camera.

Motion Carried.

Motion

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Weir that the Committee of the Whole meeting be moved out of In-Camera.

Motion Carried.

Committee of the Whole moved out of In-Camera session.

Motion

Moved by Mayor Bartlett and seconded by Councillor McCormick that the Committee of the Whole recommends to Council that the CAO enter into negotiations involving PID 30231179, and that sketch #2, be the option to negotiate with.

Motion Carried.

Motion

Moved by Mayor Bartlett and seconded by Councillor McCormick that the Committee of the Whole recommends to Council that the CAO negotiate an easement in the amount of \$8,000 over PID 30330534.

Motion Carried.

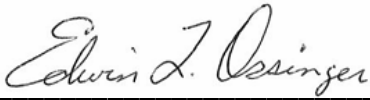
J. Adjournment

Motion

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Weir that the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned as there is no further business at 9:30 p.m.

Motion Carried.


Deputy Mayor


Clerk