

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
FEBRUARY 17, 2026, 6:00 PM
MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

STAFF PRESENT:

Tom Ossinger, Chief Administrative Officer
Leslie Brinton, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Karen Morrell, Admin. Assistant/Receptionist

REGRETS:

A. CALL TO ORDER – ROLLCALL

B. CELL PHONE USE DURING MEETINGS

C. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

D. AGENDA

D.1 Additions/Deletions
None

D.2 Approval

Motion:

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Mayor Bartlett that the agenda be approved as presented.

Motion carried

E. DECLARATIONS OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None

F. DELEGATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

F.1 DATA- Karen Enright

The presentation was to update the Committee on what Digby and Area Tourist Association (DATA) has been working on in regards to its 3-to-5-year strategic plan.

There was a project that was completed late last year that asked questions to the public, the major takeaways were that Digby should have experiences available for the tourists that include our history of Maud Lewis. There was an interest in developing sports tourism for all seasons.

DATA secured a co funding and with those funds was able to hire a company to put together and facilitate three experiences to be launched this year.

Those three experiences are:

1. Brier Island -promote the nature conservancy, whale watching, hiking and the food establishments.
2. Bear River- which will promote the unique scenery, First Nations artists and wine history.
3. Scallop Experience- where a guide will explain why Scallops are so important to our area's History and economy, demonstrate interactively how to shuck scallops and tell them the history of our fleet.

Karen Enright also spoke about a misunderstanding with correspondence DATA sent to Council in regards to the Visitors Information Centre (VIC). She apologized for any misunderstanding and enquired on what the Town of Digby will be doing with the Shore Road building and requested if there were any way for DATA to get approval for funding earlier so that they could build a realistic budget. As to the plans for the Shore Road property there have been no plans as of yet and will be determined shortly. In answer to receiving approval earlier it was noted that DATA's budget is done the 2nd week of March and they do not hear from Levy Committee on the amount of funds that will be granted to them until May generating a two-month lag. **It was decided that Councillor Rick Foote will contact Ms. Enright after the Marketing and Promotion Levy Advisory Committee meeting March 11, 2026 with information that concerned DATA.**

F.2 Digby and Area Health Service Charitable Foundation

Digby identified that we had difficulty retaining physicians. Inspired by a model from the Yarmouth Area, the concept of a Community Navigator emerged during the Digby Area Health Services Charitable Foundation's strategic planning in 2019-2020. With a preliminary budget of \$100,000-\$150,000, provincial government grants were identified as potential funding sources for non-salary aspects of the initiative. Funding requests were submitted to the Town of Digby (TOD) and Municipality of the District of Digby (MODD), proposing a shared financial commitment with DAHSCF. Since conception the Community Navigator's role has evolved dynamically to address ongoing challenges while continuing to support recruitment and retention efforts.

Motion:

Moved by Councillor Weir and seconded by Councillor McCormick to recommend to Council the request of continuing funding with a three-year commitment for the Community Navigator Program in the amount of: 1st year- \$49,980, 2nd year -\$50,980 and 3rd year -\$51,999.

Motion carried

G. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

G.1 January 19, 2026

Motion:

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Weir, that the minutes of January 19, 2026 be accepted as presented.

Motion carried

H. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

H.1 Letter-Support Letter Trinity Anglican Church

Deputy Mayor Saulnier read out the letter and commented that the support of the Town of Digby hopes to play a meaningful role in its obtaining funding for Trinity Anglicans restoration project.

I. STAFF REPORTS

I.1 Director of Finance

A) Report

The budget template is being populated, with a rough draft expected by March COTW. The draft will include material assumptions, not yet accurate for tax rate recommendations. Collaboration ongoing with CAO and Director of Public Works to finalize the capital budget. Fire Department submitted their Wishlist, deadline February 27, 2026.

B) Monthly Financial Statement – Operations

No significant variances other than those previously identified were noted however electricity bills may not yet be accurate. NSP has recently manually read the Town's meters at the Town's request, but the bills related to those reads have not yet been received. There may be large positive and negative adjustments on those bills.

C) Monthly Financial Statement - Capital

Year ended March 31	2026	(YTD)	
		2026	2025
TOTAL FINANCING AND TRANSFERS	(298,664)	(268,664)	(433,268)
Deficit/(Surplus) for Budget Purposes \$		\$ 665,687	\$ 24,395
Transfer deficit/(surplus) from/(to) operating reserve			(24,395)
Change in accumulated surplus		\$ 665,687	
ENDING ACCUMULATED SURPLUS		\$ 665,687	

I.2 Director of Public Works

a) Report

- All water sources had zero counts for Coliform and E-coli, ensuring safe water distribution and well functionality.
- addressed water main breaks on Montague Row, St. George Street and King Street,
- pumped out and shoveled hydrants, completed work orders and water reads, topped up water cuts, and maintained well and windmill roads.
- inspections were conducted on monitoring equipment, wells, pumping stations, and water systems.
- Daily water checks, weekly well inspections, and associated tasks were completed.
- Lift Station #8 requires major repairs in spring and summer of 2026. Temporary repairs were made to a check valve. Bushes around the lagoon were cleared. Daily and weekly duties included wastewater tests, lift station checks, and bi-weekly water sampling.
- Repairs and upgrades included replacing the water pump and belt on the John Deere Skid Steer, installing a new cutting edge on the loader, fixing an engine oil leak on the New Holland Skid Steer, and adding a two-way radio to a new truck.
- The department updated chemical and cleaner lists, MSDS binders for various locations, and drafted a lock-out/tag-out procedure for Public Works and the Digby Water Commission.
- An events binder was created to outline roles and duties for town events, allowing for amendments as needed.
- Preparations for the annual Wastewater Report commenced.

I.3 Special Constable/Bylaw Officer
a) Protective Services Report

- Addressed complaints about employees parking in front of businesses on Water Street, advising staff to use designated parking areas. A truck parked improperly was contacted to be moved to avoid ticketing or towing.
- Civic address assigned to Pump Station #6 at 44 Shreve Street.
- A new SOP was created to manage unexpected absences, requiring guards to read and acknowledge the procedure.
- Waste left by a tenant at 33 First Avenue was addressed, with housing contacted to remove it before external cleanup services were engaged. The waste has since been collected and removed.

I.4 Dangerous & Unsightly Administrator
a) Dangerous or Unsightly Premises Reports

159 Queen St has been given written notice for site inspection which gives By Law legal authorization for home inspection should the owner rebut agreeing to the inspection time and date. Failing to comply with a written request can be seen as a separate violation. Order to remedy is ready for the day of inspection.

69 Second Avenue the owner would like to see the dilapidated building torn down and hopes to have it addressed as soon as possible.

I.5 Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
a) Report

- various administrative tasks and updates on municipal initiatives. There were several meetings attended, progress on housing projects, planning for transit consultation, handling of a water main break, updates on the Alertable notification system, and other miscellaneous activities undertaken during January 2026.
- the Housing Initiative Coordinator has prepared a draft for the Grant Program, seeking council input. An annual report is scheduled for submission in early February, and a survey will be developed to gather feedback from the development community regarding fees and processes.
- Plans are in progress for a Transit Consultation meeting to be held on February 5, 2026, at Digby Station
- A water main break on King Street required administrative coordination for notifying affected residents via multiple channels, including Alertable, social media, and physical notices.
- As of February 1, 2026, 499 residents have subscribed to the notification system. The majority (77%) use the mobile app, while others receive notices via SMS, email, or phone.
- drafted the "What we Heard" document from the Commercial Engagement Session, organizing supplies for community events, and applying for funding through MuniSoft, though the application was unsuccessful.

I.6 Chief Administrative Officer
a) Report

- The Development Agreement for 55 Sydney Street has been finalized and recorded, with a permit issued for construction. The application for 186 Queen Street was denied by Council, and discussions are ongoing regarding possible amendments.
- The Fire Department responded to eleven calls during January, including alarms, motor vehicle collisions, a chimney fire, a boat fire, and a CO detector incident.
- Circular Materials has proposed providing a 20-foot sea can for the Digby Transfer Station to manage foam, flexible plastics, and aerosols. Glass and cardboard are already accepted at the public drop-off.
- The Digby County ATV Association requested an ATV road-trail connection between Shore Road and Victoria Street. While the Town has authority over the proposed sections, current bylaws lack provisions for such requests.

A draft policy addressing connectivity, road safety, traffic volumes, and resident support is being developed. Council is advised to delay approval pending the establishment of a formal policy.

-The 2005 agreement for solid waste transportation and disposal at the Queen's Regional Landfill is set to expire on March 31, 2027, with the possibility of extension until October 1, 2026. No major issues have arisen, and the CAOs of the six municipalities involved are seeking an extension. A copy of the agreement has been shared for Council review.

Motion:

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Foote that the reports be accepted as presented.

Motion carried

J. CORRESPONDENCE

J.1 None

K. Public Comment on New Business Agenda Items

K.1 Maria Hersey-

Maria shared a vision with Joint Council for exploring a multi use recreation facility for the Digby Area facility. To do this we need to conduct a feasibility study. The study will answer the important questions of: community demand, evaluate existing capacity, explore locations, identify funding opportunities, and assess long-term sustainability before any major decisions are made. Our current facilities, especially the arena, are valuable and well used, but they were not designed to meet the full range of recreation, accessibility, and community health needs that we see today or we will see in the future. It's not about planning a It's about planning ahead.

This is a very long-term project that we're thinking of. I respectfully encourage council to support moving forward with the feasibility study so we can understand what is possible, what is needed, and what is sustainable for Digby. Thank you for your time and your leadership.

L. NEW BUSINESS

L.1 Affordable Housing Grant Policy

The Affordable Housing Grant purpose is to provide incentives for the construction and conversion of properties into affordable Missing-Middle Housing units. Applicants must hold valid Building and Development Permits (2025–2027) for projects including new Missing-Middle Housing Units, conversion of non-residential buildings, or installation of Secondary Suites. Projects must comply with Town of Digby Land Use Bylaws and not be used for short-term rentals. Grants up to \$7,500 per unit, potentially covering up to 50% of construction costs. Funds are provided as a one-time lump sum after occupancy permits are issued. Funding is allocated based on project type, with possible additional funding based on community benefits. Applications evaluated by the Program Review Officer; no appeal system for rejected applications.

Motion:

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor Weir to recommend to Council the Administrative Policy #2026-??-Affordable Housing Grant Policy.

Motion carried

L.2 Draft Transit Study

Dr. Habib and his teams report was read and discussed. An extension of the report date for the Grant has been granted. As soon as the CAO receives any updates from Dr. Habib it will be shared with Council.

L.3 Digby Home & Lifestyle Expo

Mayor Bartlett will enquire about the cost of a table and make arrangements for the Town of Digby to have a presence there for the Expo. Referred to Council for approval.

L.4 NSFM Conference, Yarmouth

All who wish to attend please notify the Deputy CAO Brinton by next week.

L.5 Draft Letter of Condolences Municipality Tumbler Ridge BC

A letter of Support and condolences for Tumbler Ridge was read and a moment of silence was observed.

L.6 Digby Area Recreation Commission-Feasibility Study Grant Application

This was an item that was brought forward to the Committee from Joint Council Meeting. The Digby and Area Recreation Commission is asking for financial support.

Motion:

Moved by Mayor Bartlett and seconded by Councillor McCormick to recommend to Council the request to give a 10% funding towards the Digby and Area Recreation Commission-Feasibility Study Grant Application.

Motion carried

L.7 Doctor Retention

It is a concern to all in the province and to us especially here in Digby. The Committee has no real power towards this issue. It is a Provincial agenda. There was a discussion among the committee to see if there was anything more, we could do to help with this situation other than the support that we have given the Community Navigator Program.

M. IN-CAMERA Legal and Personnel

Motion:

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Mayor Bartlett that the committee go IN CAMERA for Legal and Personnel.

Motion Carried

Motion:

Moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Mayor Bartlett that the committee go out of IN CAMERA.

Motion Carried

N. ADJOURNMENT

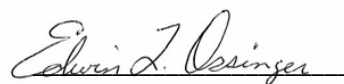
Motion:

Moved by Councillor Foote and seconded by Councillor Weir that we adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM

Motion Carried



Deputy Mayor



Clerk