



Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

Mayor: Garth Gillis; Chief Administrative Officer: Bob Brooks; *Incorporated 1972*

COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 at 7:00 PM

Upstairs Hall, Wood Islands Market

In Attendance:

Council: Mayor Garth Gillis (Chair) Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty
Councillor Katherine Bryson Councillor Trisha Carter
Councillor Billy Gamble Councillor James Kinnee
Councillor Charley McGivern

Administration: CAO Bob Brooks Ashley Feschuk

Guest Presenters: Native Council PEI Elder - Stephenson Joe
BAWG Executive Director - Sherry Pelkey
RCMP Staff Sergeant - Mike Robinson

Please Be Aware: RMB Council Meetings are Livestreamed to facebook.com/belfastpei

Item Order of Business

1. **Call to Order** – Council Meeting called to order by Mayor Gillis at 7:00 PM. Mayor Gillis introduced Native Council PEI Elder - Stephenson Joe, who presented the Rural Municipality of Belfast Council’s first ever Land Acknowledgement Statement. This statement will also be read out for every RMB Council subsequent meeting.

Native Council PEI Elder - Stephenson Joe: Opened the ceremony with a traditional Mi’kmaq prayer and thanked the RMB Council members for inviting him to participate in this inaugural and important first Land Acknowledgement Statement.

“In the spirit of Reconciliation, we acknowledge that the land upon which our organization stands is unceded Mi’kmaq territory. Epekwitk (PEI), Mi’kma’ki, is covered by the historic Treaties of Peace and Friendship. We pay our respects to the Indigenous Mi’kmaq People who have occupied this Island for over 12,000 years; past, present, and future.”

Mayor Gillis: *“Many thanks, to Native Council PEI Elder - Stephenson Joe for helping our municipality recognise the Mi’kmaq history, lands and acknowledgement in a respectful manner – thank you very much.”*

2. **Declarations of Conflict of Interest** – No members of Council declared a conflict of interest with any items on today’s Agenda.
3. **Clarification of Voting Procedures** (*presented by CAO - Bob Brooks*) – Recently, the CAO was asked to clarify the voting procedures that RMB uses (per the *Municipal Government Act*). On any motion, Council is asked to Vote: Yes or No. Should any Councillor wish to Abstain - they have that right and may ask to make it known to the Chair that they would like to Abstain; regardless, as per the MGA (see Page 39 of the MGA - 2nd Edition Resource Handbook), any vote to Abstain, is still counted as a vote in the affirmative.

If a Councillor says nothing during a vote; their answer will also be taken in the affirmative. There is nothing in the MGA that says every Councillor must speak to every issue, they may remain silent if they wish. On any vote, Council has a right to ask for a recorded vote, before the actual vote; only in that instance, will an individual (identified) vote count be taken. Otherwise, in any vote that is taken, it is recorded: how many voted Yes, how many voted No, how many voted to Abstain if requested). When publicly reporting; it will only be reported as to whether the majority of Council supported the initiative, or did not support the initiative, and/or whether Council gave unanimous support of an initiative. Regardless, Council is reminded that all Council meetings are livestreamed on Facebook, and the public are able to see and hear the actual voting of Council members on any issues.

4. **Approval of Agenda** – *(other suggested items were placed under items 11 and 14)*

Moved by Deputy Mayor Docherty and seconded by Councillor Carter to adopt the agenda as amended.

Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

5. **Public Presentations:**

- a) **Belfast Area Watershed Group (BAWG)** – Executive Director Sherry Pelkey spoke to Council and Residents of Belfast, about providing a necessary voice to environmental sensitivities when the Official Plan and Development Bylaw discussions resume. BAWG is currently mapping some of the ecologically sensitive areas within the municipality and their mission is to protect watersheds to preserve our future, including the biodiversity of our forests, wildlife, and aquatic species. Janice Harper who produced the report “Protecting Habitat: A Guide for Municipalities on Prince Edward Island” will join BAWG in January to provide Council with more information.
- b) **RCMP Monthly Report** – Staff Sergeant Mike Robinson was in attendance to present the RCMP Monthly Report for the area. Upon completion, the Staff Sergeant was invited to enjoy the festivities of the Holiday Tree Lighting Event on December 2nd.

6. **Adoption of the October 18, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes** *(previously distributed; all changes incorporated)*.

Moved by Councillor Carter and seconded by Deputy Mayor Docherty to approve the Minutes of the October 18, 2023 Council Meeting as presented.

Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

7. **Business arising from the October 18, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes** *(already addressed in today’s agenda – no other items)*.

8. **CAO Report** *(presented by CAO - Bob Brooks)*

a) **Financial/Variance/Planning Report**

i. **Provincial Credit Union Account Balances @ November 6, 2023:**

a. Share Acct 001	\$5.35
b. Chequing Acct 010	\$31,241.54
c. Gas Tax (CCBF) Acct 011 <i>(for approved projects)</i>	\$97,135.74
d. Reserve Savings Acct 020	\$37.21
e. Gas Tax (CCBF) GIC Acct 040 <i>(for approved projects)</i>	\$52,016.24
f. Reserve Savings GICs; Acct 041 & 042	\$66,288.49
1. RMB Expansion Reserve	\$25,000.00
2. Emergency Preparedness Reserve	\$5,000.00
3. 2 nd Warming Ctr Generator Reserve	\$5,000.00
4. Remaining*	\$31,288.49
<i>(*to be considered during Annual Budget Deliberations)</i>	
5. Remaining Funds in ShopBelfastPEI Program	\$523.01

CAO – Other Matters dealt with/involving the CAO:

b)/c) No further progress on the **Wellness Centre** issue or the **Warming Centre MOUs** issue at this time. The CAO will, however, continue to work on these two items.

9. **Progress Report of the Amalgamation Sub-Committee (ASC)** (*presented by ASC Chair – Councillor Bryson*). Councillor Bryson provided an update on the progress the ASC has made to-date. *The recent Draft Minutes from the 1st ASC meeting (November 1st) was attached for Council's information that details the work and where the ASC is heading.*

Additionally, it was discovered that the process the ASC was actually undertaking, was the process of **“Annexation”** (*adding unincorporated Communities into the RMB boundaries*), not the process of **“Amalgamation”** (*combining two or more Municipalities to create one larger municipality*). Hence, the ASC is recommending a Sub-Committee name change to Council, to better reflect its role.

Moved by **Councillor Bryson** and seconded by **Councillor McGivern** to approve the Sub-Committee Name Change from the **“Amalgamation Sub-Committee”** to the **“Annexation Sub-Committee”**.

Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

10. **2024 Regular Council Meeting Calendar** – For planning purposes and as required by the *Municipal Government Act*; a Regular Council Meeting Calendar must be publicly posted for the upcoming 2024 Regular Council Meetings. This Calendar is posted on RMB's Website, announced on RMB's Facebook page, posted on various Bulletin Boards, included within the Belfast Newsletter, and included within the Annual Belfast Lions Club Calendar. This motion follows the tradition of having 10 scheduled meetings on the 3rd Wednesday of each month (except July and December). Council also has the option to call Additional or Special Council Meetings, throughout the year (if required). (Calendar Dates Attached).

Proposed Regular Council Meeting Dates for the 2024 Calendar Year:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) January 17, 2024 | 2) February 21, 2024 |
| 3) March 20, 2024 | 4) April 17, 2024 |
| 5) May 15, 2024 | 6) June 19, 2024 |
| 7) August 21, 2024 | 8) September 18, 2024 |
| 9) October 16, 2024 | 10) November 20, 2024 |

Moved by **Deputy Mayor Docherty** and seconded by **Councillor Gamble** to approve the **2024 Regular Council Meeting Calendar** as presented.

Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

11. **Completion of the Official Plan and Development Bylaw** (*presented by CAO – Bob Brooks*). Following Council's request to resume the Official Plan and Development Bylaw discussions (*per Council meeting of October 18th*); the CAO made five (5) contacts about resuming the process:
- Bill-37 (Amendments to the MGA)** – the CAO reviewed Bill-37 that is currently eking its way through the Committee and House process to confirm that in addition to some clarification items to the MGA; the most significant for RMB, was that Bill-37 (if passed) would now make having an Official Plan and Development Bylaw optional.
 - Contacted Municipal Affairs** – the CAO confirmed with Municipal Affairs that only those amendments in Bill-37 were being worked on (or envisioned) with the MGA at this time.

- iii. **Contacted Canada/PEI Infrastructure Secretariate** – the CAO wanted to know specifically, what the result would be, should RMB decide to cancel the Official Plan and Development Bylaw Project. In short, it was confirmed, that RMB would be required to re-imburse the Infrastructure Secretariate, any monies forward to RMB for the project.
- iv. **Contacted Fotenn Planning Inc.** – the CAO also wanted to know from Fotenn what the result would be in RMB cancelling the project? Fotenn confirmed that the contract would still need to be honoured, especially considering that the process was nearing completion. The CAO also wanted to confirm the steps to finalize the project? RMB would be ready to resume public and Council engagement in January, and in the meantime, all documents to be reviewed are/will be on the RMB Website.
- v. **Spoke with the Municipality of Eastern Kings** – the CAO wanted to confirm the premise that RMB was working under about having an Official Plan and Development Bylaw (Eastern Kings are currently amending theirs). In short, the premise that RMB contracted the project is exactly right and current.

Councillor Kinnee then spoke to two (2) possible motions that he was considering, especially in light of possible amendments to the MGA. Following the CAO’s reporting on the situation and following Council discussion on the five (5) items above, Councillor Kinnee decided to hold off on his motions for now and study the documents that RMB currently has on the RMB website.

Council also confirmed that they would continue with the Official Plan and Development Bylaw process; would be re-engaging in January; and that they would not restrict themselves to a March 31, 2024 completion date. Council will take the extra time to “*get it right*” for the residents of RMB.

- 12. **Feedback requested on changes to the *Planning Act*** (*presented by CAO – Bob Brooks*). On November 7, 2023, the Province sent out an invitation, inviting Island Residents to share their opinion on potential changes to the Provincial *Planning Act* (*invitation attached*). The *Planning Act* governs provincial and municipal planning including how land is used, what structures are permitted within zones, and development in coastal areas. The changes would clarify the appeal process for planning decisions of municipalities and the provincial government.

People can view the proposed changes and provide their input by written submission at: [Proposed Changes to the *Planning Act*: Public Consultation](#) until November 20, 2023.

As this feedback does not require an official RMB position response at this time, the CAO recommended that Council members take a look at the proposed changes and provide comments at the link provided prior to November 20th (*please copy the RMB office: ruralmunicipalityofbelfast@gmail.com and we will keep your input on file to help inform future discussions on the matter*). The CAO is also recommending that residents do the same if they wish. RMB will continue to follow this issue.

- 13. **Upcoming Events Calendar for RMB** – (*presented by Admin - Ashley Feschuk*)
 - a. **Alert Ready Test** – A quick poll was taken at the request of Resident Maggie Morrison to ensure that Council received the PEI EMO Alert Ready Test at 12:55pm. Everyone on Council received at least one if not two messages to test the Emergency Ready System.

- b. **Holiday Tree-Lighting Event** (December 2nd starting at 6:pm) – RMB intends to light up the Wood Islands Market Courtyard, sing Christmas carols, a Snowflake Decorating Competition and Face-painting (competitors can start showing up at the RMB Office at 5:00 PM), Photo Booth, Hot Chocolate and Cider/treats, a visit from jolly St. Nick and more – everyone welcome!
Council work party to help decorate the Courtyard – Saturday, November 25th and the 26th (if necessary) starting @ 1:00 PM (Tree will be installed on Friday, November 24th with the assistance of Joanne Vessey, Councillor Gamble and CAO Bob Brooks.)
 - c. **Purple Ribbon Campaign runs from Nov 25-Dec10** – Purple ribbons were dropped off by the Wood Islands Women’s Institute. The Purple Ribbon Campaign was created to help create public awareness and positively change society attitudes and behaviours about male violence against woman. Everyone is encouraged to wear a ribbon and help spread the message that violence of any kind is unacceptable.
14. **New Business for the Agenda** (*as discussed in Approval of Agenda, Item 3 above*)
- a) **Street Lighting within the RMB municipality and Pinette Park particularly** (*for discussion*) – (*presented by Councillor Gamble, deferred from last month’s Council mtg*) – There is some concern over street lights in Pinette not being bright enough. RMB will follow up with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.
 - b) **Wood Islands Ferry Issue – Update** (*by Councillor Bryson*) There have been no updates on the procurement of MV Fanafjord from the Federal or Provincial Government. A two-vessel service is vital to the economic sustainability of businesses within the Municipality. Councillor Bryson has reached out for confirmation to Lawrence MacCaulay’s office, Blair Aitken from EPEICC, CBC, Eastern Graphic, Procurement Canada and Minister Duclo’s office. This issue is ongoing with follow-up information to be presented in the New Year.
 - c) **Community Pantry – update** (*by Councillor Bryson*) The demand is very high, food does not stay on the shelves for very long. Everyone is encouraged to donate if they are able to do so. The Pantry is requesting that donations be kept to Food Items to avoid clutter in the space. Belle River Women’s Institute donated another \$110 to the Pantry on November 7th. Food Donations can be dropped off at the RMB Office Monday to Friday, 8:am-1:pm or at regularly scheduled Council Meetings.
 - d) **Belfast Home and School – November 2nd Meeting Updates** (*by Deputy Mayor Docherty*) Halloween Spooktacular was a success – the grade 9’s raised \$575 in the canteen. Earth Rangers presented at the school and brought in some animals and information for the students. Bingo night had a great turnout. Parent teacher interviews are being held the week of November 20th- 24th. To book a time you can go to www.signupgenius.com The Christmas Concert will be held on Wednesday, December 13th at 6:30pm with a Storm Date Thursday, December 14th.
 - e) **Pinette Boat Launch -** (*by Deputy Mayor Docherty*) After many discussions at multiple levels of Government RMB is happy to announce that work on the Pinette Boat Launch has started as of Thursday, November 16th. Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty worked tirelessly to ensure that community concerns were addressed alongside Engineering Lead Stephen Pigott who was on location to access specific issues and speak with residents on site. Inner line rocks, scattered rock and submerged rock on the lower ramp are scheduled to be removed. Smoothing the ramp surface back to the shoreline and making a walking path will also be priority in the correction process. Another possibility being considered is placement of yellow markers to clearly identify the “safe zone” at the launch area. Council thanked Deputy Mayor Docherty for her efforts on this urgent safety matter.

15. **Next Meetings:**

- i. **Tree-Lighting Event** – This years’ RMB Holiday Tree-Lighting Event will take place in the Courtyard in the Wood Islands Market starting at 6:00 PM on Saturday, December 2, 2023 (5:00 PM for the Snowflake Contest and Facepainting). *(Official Program Attached)*.
- ii. **Reminder – There is No Regular Meeting of Council – scheduled for December 2023** (per the MGA Council Calendar) and the RMB Office closes over the Christmas Break from December 18th through to January 2nd.

16. **Adjournment** – As there is no further business...

Moved by **Councillor Carter** to adjourn the meeting at: **9:33pm**

Ashley/Bob

Minutes Approved On: _____

Mayor Garth Gillis

CAO Bob Brooks

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