



Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

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

COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at 7:00 PM

Upstairs Hall, Wood Islands Market

Council:	Mayor Garth Gillis (<i>Chair</i>)	Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty
	Councillor Trisha Carter (<i>Regrets</i>)	Councillor Katherine Bryson
	Councillor Billy Gamble	Councillor James Kinnee
	Councillor Charley McGivern	
Administration:	CAO Bob Brooks	Ashley Feschuk
Public:	Robert MacDonald	
Facebook:	634 Views 24 hours later, 8-12 people watching real time	

***Please Be Aware: RMB Council Meetings are Livestreamed to facebook.com/belfastpei
Livestream Comments are not monitored in real time during the Council Meeting.
A New Practice for RMB now includes a requirement for all visitors to Council and Committee meetings to Sign In. For Fire Safety Reasons as well as more accurate Minutes – Thank you***

Item Order of Business

1. **Call to Order** - Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor Gillis at 7:00 PM.

“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.”

2. **Declarations of Conflict of Interest** – No members declared a conflict of interest.

3. **Approval of Agenda** – Two additional items were added to today’s Agenda and placed under item 16.

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

Votes for: 5 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

4. **RCMP Report for the Month of Jan.** (by Admin Ashley Feschuk) Sergeant Robinson has informed the RCMP office that as of December 2024 the RCMP Reports are no longer available for public dissemination. However, going forward Administration will keep a copy of the report on hand if any Council members would like to review it after the meeting. RMB area had 19 incidents in January which is down from 28 in December. RMB continues to maintain it’s relatively low incident rate average, keep up the good work.

5. **Public Presentations**

a) **Robert MacDonald asked why the RCMP Reports are not being distributed publicly anymore.** Admin suggested that the reports are becoming far more detailed and privacy may be a reason but offered to follow up with Sergeant Robinson in the coming days for a formal response.

6. **Adoption of the January 15, 2025, Regular Council Meeting Minutes** (*attached - previously distributed; all changes incorporated*)

Moved by **Councillor McGivern** and seconded by **Deputy Mayor Docherty** to approve the Minutes of the January 15, 2025, Council Meeting as presented.
 Votes for: 5 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

7. **CAO Report (CAO – Bob Brooks)**

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

i. **Provincial Credit Union Account Balances @ February 3, 2025:**

a. Share Acct 001	\$5.44
b. Chequing Acct 010	\$74,509.69
c. Gas Tax (CCBF) Acct 011 (<i>for approved projects</i>)	\$48,917.27
d. Reserve Savings Acct 020	\$37.97
e. Gas Tax (CCBF) GIC Acct 040 (<i>for approved projects</i>)	\$53,998.27
f. Reserve Savings GICs; Acct 041 & 042	\$48,742.59
(Breakdown as approved)	
1. RMB Expansion Reserve	\$25,000.00
2. Emergency Preparedness Reserve	\$10,000.00
3. Un-allocated	\$13,742.59
4. (FYI) Remaining Funds in ShopBelfastPEI	\$523.01

b) **Revenues and Expenditures Tracking (2024/25) to January 31, 2025:**

Revenues:	Budgeted	To-Date
i1 – Assessment Income (Commercial & Non-Commercial)	\$377,234	336,352
i2 – GPEI Rink Grant (<i>in</i>)	\$8,500	-
i4 – CCBF (<i>in</i>)	\$92,000	20,695
i5 – Other (Gen.) & BAWG (<i>in</i>) & Community Pantry (<i>in</i>)	\$8,363	51,329
Total	\$486,097	408,376
Expenditures:	Budgeted	To-Date
e1 – Council Remuneration, RMB Payroll, Deductions	\$128,272	106,099
e2 – Travel Allowance	\$1,500	1,114
e3 – Office Admin (Supplies/Hardware/Lease/Cleaning)	\$20,860	18,220
e4 – Advertising, Promotion & Website	\$2,018	1,961
e5 – Audit, Financial, Bank Fees, Amortization	\$4,715	5,093
e6 – Insurance, Legal, WCB	\$10,211	8,875
e7abc – Projects (MEMP/Com.Plan/ShopBelfastPEI/Other)	\$3,250	2,923
e7d – Events (Remembrance/Halloween/Christmas/Other)	\$1,500	2,290
e8 – Elections or By-Elections	\$500	-
e9 – FPEIM, FCM, Prof Fees, Conferences, Workshops	\$5,467	5,772
e10 – Miscellaneous	\$750	256
e11 – Fire Protection Grant	\$115,000	100,000
e12 – GPEI Rink Grant (<i>out</i>) & BAWG & Pantry (<i>out</i>)	\$14,863	3,250
e13 – Community Grants	\$69,900	69,500
i4 – CCBF (<i>out</i>)	\$92,000	20,695
e14 – Contingency	\$1,000	-
e15 – 2 nd Warming Ctr Gen. (<i>\$51,192</i>) & RMB Share (<i>\$2,817</i>)	\$10,814	54,009
e16 – Warming Ctr Operations (Belfast Rec Ctr/WIADC)	\$2,416	2,416
e17 – New Office (<i>New</i>)	0	0
e18 – Dish Washer (ACOA Grant - WIADC) (<i>in/out</i>) (<i>New</i>)	6,100	6,100
Total	\$491,137	408,573
	=====	=====
Change in Fund Balance (Net)	\$1,061	-197

Regular Revenues, Expenditures & Community Grants are on track after 10 months of the fiscal year, plus receiving additional monthly GPEI Assessment dollars at (\$2,818/month).

8. **2025/2026 Community Grants Call/Process** (*Admin - Ashley Feschuk*). RMB is now receiving Grant Applications for the 2025/26 Community Grants Program cycle. Applicants are reminded that they have **until noon on Friday, March 7th** to submit their applications. The Community Grants Committee will be reviewing the applications on Wednesday, March 12th for a recommendation/decision of Council on Wednesday, March 19th.
9. **2025-2030 Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF) (Formerly Gas Tax Funding Program) - Update** (*CAO - Bob Brooks*). In late 2024, the Canada/PEI Infrastructure Secretariat announced the new iteration of funding – this one covering 2025-2030, with RMB seeing access to more than \$300,000. This program is different, in that it also covers projects for Firehalls. As always, the CCBF Program was created to provide much needed funding for municipal infrastructure projects as its top priority. Should a municipality not have a project to complete within the funding cycle, municipalities are permitted to allow municipality-selected Not-for-Profit Organization projects to be completed, if approved. RMB is currently finishing up the last two approved projects from the previous program cycle. RMB is expected to do a call for proposals of the new CCBF funding in the Spring/Summer of 2025.
10. **Responsible Dog Ownership and New PEI Dog Legislation** (*Admin – Ashley Feschuk*): One of the New Initiatives listed within the 2024/25 Strategic Plan was for RMB to use its existing promotional vehicles, to promote responsible Dog Ownership. With the expected passage of new PEI Dog Legislation, that initiative is on hold, as RMB is waiting to see if there are any changes to the current legislation, that may or may not affect our municipality. RMB Administration will inform Council and the public, once we know more and provide options for consideration.
 - a. **Dog Complaint (Iona)** (*Admin – Ashley Feschuk*): Email (*distributed to Council*) – RMB recently received an email from a resident concerned with dogs in area running loose. This happened to coincide with a FPEIM meeting Councillor Bryson attended where she learned that two municipalities are currently undergoing the process of creating a dog bylaw and hiring an animal enforcement officer. The other municipalities had lawyers review the **Proposed ACT** and the way it is written excludes the province from liability if issues relating to dogs arise unless the area is unincorporated. This **Proposed ACT** is now past the public consultation phase and is waiting royal ascent. Once it reaches this point, Council will decide to seek legal advice or not and discuss future next steps. Right now, whenever a resident calls or emails the RMB office in regards to concerns around dogs, they are redirected to the Province since this is not an issue RMB has jurisdiction over. Following up on Councillor Bryson’s research, RMB was able to obtain a copy of the Town of Three Rivers animal control bylaw, they have an Enforcement Officer one day a week to investigate non-urgent complaints. RMB was also able to get a copy of the draft bylaw to regulate domestic animals from the Rural Municipality of West River. They used Three Rivers as their template and are still determining how to go about enforcement. This is still a draft and it needs to be reviewed by their lawyer before they decide to adopt it. RMB spoke to Carolyn Thorne Executive Director of the PEI Humane Society who noted that they already enforce (without a bylaw) issues related to animal welfare and also respond to dog bite complaints. She also stated that the Humane Society thinks our community would be better served having a bylaw officer who works independently of the Humane Society. They only have two vans and four animal protection officers and are constantly servicing their other contracts. Carolyn recommended an animal bylaw officer to connect with if Council decides to pursue this once the Proposed Dog ACT is officially passed.

11. **FPEIM Update** (*Councillor Katherine Bryson*): Negotiations for a new funding model for municipalities are still ongoing and confidential with the Province; however, updates are expected soon. Executive Director of FPEIM John Dewey has officially retired after many years of service. FPEIM is currently accepting resumes and the closing date is February 23rd, 2025. The selection committee is in place and notice will be given once someone is chosen for this role. After being delayed for several months, the State of the Island Report has been released, everyone is encouraged to take a look at it. The *Municipal Government Act* is open for review and public consultations and one-on-one interviews with Municipalities are being scheduled. The next meeting for our area is on Thursday, February 27th, 2025 at Montague High School (274 Valleyfield Road) 6-8pm, everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend to share their feedback and contribute to the review process.
12. **Sustainable Two-Ferry Service** (*Councillor Trisha Carter*): This item was deferred until the next Council meeting on Wednesday March 19th, 2025
13. **2025/26 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan - 1st Reading** - (*presented by CAO Bob Brooks*) (*attached*) Notice was given in January that RMB would be holding public meetings in February and March for passage of the 2025/26 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan. The public was encouraged to attend these meetings and/or send comments. To-date RMB has yet to receive comments by email.

Today the CAO went over all the aspects of the Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan, including detailed line-by-line revenues and expenditures. At the end of the presentation, Council was asked to consider the information that was presented; take into consideration any public comments; and take into consideration any positions or suggestions that other Councillors brought forward for consideration.

Following discussions and clarifications, Council will be asked to give **First Reading ONLY** to the 2025/26 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan. The approved document would then be posted again on the RMB Website for another month of public review. On March 19, 2025, Council will again be asked if they have any suggested amendments, then asked to give Second Reading and Final Approval.

Council Members requested a more detailed breakdown of item e3 and e22 on the draft budget. The CAO committed to provide that information prior to the March 19th Meeting.

Moved by **Councillor Gamble** and **seconded** by **Councillor McGivern** to give First Reading to the Rural Municipality of Belfast 2025/2026 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan.

Votes for: 5 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

14. **Notice of 2025/26 Budget and Financial Plan Meeting for 2nd Reading** – Notice is hereby given, that RMB will be holding a second open public meeting on **March 19th** to discuss and ratify RMB's 2025/26 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan. Everyone is welcome to attend. Anyone wishing to speak to the Agenda in this regard; should contact the RMB Office to make arrangements, or can send comments to RMB through email.
15. **Sublease within the New RMB Office Facility** (*Admin – Ashley Feschuk*) In November of 2024, Council authorized RMB Admin to search for possible sublease tenants for a long-term sublease to ensure due-diligence in offering the space to the public. RMB advertised in the Guardian Newspaper, posted on various bulletin boards, posted on RMB's Website and Facebook site, and made phone calls to possible tenants. Two tours were given – only one business continued to express their interest – owners of The Sweet Company.

Unfortunately, the space is not adequate for the The Sweet Company's operations. RMB will continue to look for other sublease occupants and will follow-up with some other interested parties in the coming weeks. An update will be provided at the March Council meeting.

16. **New Business for the Agenda** (*as discussed in Approval of Agenda, Item 3 above*)
- a) **Doors Open Downeast Project** (*Admin - Ashley Feschuk on behalf of Councillor Carter*) - Exciting News for Our Community! 🌟 I'm thrilled to announce an incredible promotional program for our area called "Doors Open Down East" happening on April 26 and 27, 2025. We're aiming to make this an annual event that grows each year! This initiative shines a spotlight on the rural gem stretching from Vernon to Panmure and beyond - an area often overlooked as visitors hurry to catch the ferry. Our goal is to boost awareness of our local attractions so that visitors can take the time to explore, instead of rushing off to popular spots like Charlottetown or Cavendish. This is a fantastic opportunity for local businesses to open their doors to the public for the weekend, allowing everyone to discover places they may have never visited before. All businesses can participate, from foods to gift shops, accommodations (Air BnBs), to entertainment venues, boutiques, service providers, and more. The possibilities are endless! There's still time to get in on the fun but time is running out. Contact Trish at Galla Designs Studio 📞 902-326-1015.
 - b) **Request for Excused Absence from March Council Meeting** (*Councillor Kinnee*)
As Councillor Kinnee was able to give notice that he will be away from February 23rd through March 31st, 2025; Councillor Kinnee is making a formal request for an Excused Absence from the March 19, 2025 Council Meeting.

Moved by Councillor McGivern and seconded by Deputy Mayor Docherty to allow Councillor Kinnee an excused absence from the Wednesday March 19th, 2025 Council Meeting.

Votes for: 4 Votes against: 0 Abstention: 1 Result: **Carried**
 - c) **Thank-you to Minister Myers** (*Councillor Kinnee*) Councillor Kinnee expressed his thanks to the Minister's Office, for sending out building permit notifications to the RMB office, per Council's request. MLA Darlene Compton was very helpful in assisting in this process and following up to ensure that this process was initiated.

17. **Next Meetings:**

- a. **Community Grants Committee Meeting** – Wednesday, March 12, 2025: 7:pm – RMB Office, Wood Islands Market.
- b. **Regular Council Meeting** – Wednesday, March 19, 2025: 7:pm – Upstairs Meeting Hall, Wood Islands Market.

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

Moved by Councillor Gamble to adjourn the meeting at: **8:50pm**

Ashley/Bob

Minutes Approved On: **March 19, 2025**

Signature and Seal on File

Mayor – Garth Gillis

Signature and Seal on File

CAO – Bob Brooks