



Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

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

COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 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 (<i>Regrets</i>)	Councillor Charley McGivern
	Councillor James Kinnee	
Administration:	CAO Bob Brooks	Ashley Feschuk
Public:	Robert MacDonald (Resident)	
Presenter:	Sandra Hodder, Executive Director, Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce	
Livestream:	15 Live Viewers and 1642 Views 24 Hours After Meeting	

***Please Be Aware: RMB Council Meetings are Livestreamed to facebook.com/belfastpei
Livestream Comments are not monitored in real time during the Council Meeting.
Visitors – Please remember to sign in – thank you.***

Happy New Year

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 of Council declared a conflict of interest with any items on today’s Agenda.
3. **Approval of Agenda** – No additional items added to the agenda.

Moved by **Deputy Mayor Docherty** and seconded by **Councillor McGivern** to adopt the agenda as presented.

Votes for: 4 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

4. **RCMP Report for the Month of November/December 2025** (*Admin - Ashley Feschuk*) The statistics for occurrences within Belfast in December were below average with just 16 service calls – four of which were vehicle collisions which could have been weather related. This is down from 22 the month prior. Council has been provided a copy of the report with their Agenda packages, and the reports are posted to our website for public review at: www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com
5. **Public Presentations** – *There was one public presentation*: Sandra Hodder, Executive Director for Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce discussed the findings of the Impact Study commissioned to examine the economic relationship between Eastern PEI’s ferry service and its effect on area businesses. Key Economic Contributions: The Ferry is responsible for \$700 million in export revenue, 44% of Kings County’s total economic output, 40% of all private sector employment.

There has been a 46% drop in commercial vehicle traffic, 23% drop in overall passenger traffic and 73% of local businesses reported that they were “highly disadvantaged” by ferry disruptions. The plan moving forward from the Chamber is to visit all the eastern municipalities to discuss the report and later to conduct municipal group meetings with each municipality. There is strength in numbers. The report will also be presented to the provincial government once a new leader is established, it is also being sent to Transport Canada and will be shared with key people in Ottawa. The full copy of the report ‘Eastern PEI’s ferry service: A critical part of the Island’s transportation infrastructure is now posted to the RMB website for review, www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com

Statement from MP Kent MacDonald and Ferry Panel Advisory Update (Councillor Bryson)
 MP Kent MacDonald raised the issue in Sept. of 2024 with the Minister of Transportation and continues to lobby for a reliable two ferry service for Prince Edward Island To read the full statement please visit the RMB website at www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com

The ferry panel advisory committee had their first meeting in Jan. 2026. One of the biggest concerns for maintaining effective reliable operation is the berth (docking area). Docking is difficult under certain weather conditions due to aging infrastructure. It is up to the Captain to decide whether it is safe to cross. To accommodate repairs to the first berth the whole system would need to be demolished. The second meeting of the panel is scheduled for March 2026.

6. **Adoption of the November 19, 2025, Council Meeting Minutes (attached - previously distributed; all suggested changes already incorporated)**

Moved by **Councillor McGivern** and seconded by **Deputy Mayor Docherty** to approve the Minutes of the November 19, 2025, Council Meeting as presented.

Votes for: 4 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

7. **Business Arising from the Nov. 19, 2025 Council Minutes (dealt with in today’s agenda)**

8. **CAO Report (CAO – Bob Brooks)**

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

i. **Provincial Credit Union Account Balances @ January 5, 2026:**

a. Share Acct 001	\$5.52
b. Chequing Acct 010	\$76,576.12
c. Gas Tax (CCBF) Acct 011 (for approved projects)	\$31,054.33
d. Reserve Savings Acct 020	\$38.23
e. Reserve Savings GICs; Acct 041	\$50,887.26
(Reserves Breakdown \$50,887.26)	
1. RMB Expansion Reserve	\$18,012.26
2. Emergency Preparedness Reserve	\$10,000.00
3. Legal Reserve Fund	\$1,250.00
4. Elections Reserve Fund	\$500.00
5. Remaining – (for Budget Shortfall)	\$21,125.00
6. (FYI) Remaining Funds in ShopBelfastPEI	\$523.01

b) **Revenues and Expenditures Tracking (2025/26) to October 31, 2025:**

Revenues:	Budgeted	To-Date
i1 – Assessment Income (Commercial & Non-Comm)	\$407,697	308,790
i2 – GPEI Rink Grant (in)	8,500	0
i3 – Sub-Lease Rent (starting July 1, 2025)	5,635	3,381
i4 – CCBF (in) (New Projection w 2026 CCBF Approval)	57,624	134,342
i5 – Other (a HST & Govt, b Govt Programs, c. Foundation) (in)	1,900	17,941
Total	481,356	464,454

Expenditures:	Budgeted	To-Date
e1 – Council Remuneration, RMB Payroll, Deductions	\$133,759	97,199
e2 – Travel Allowance	1,500	530
e3 – Office Admin (Supplies/Hardware/Lease/Cleaning)	30,157	19,224
e4 – Advertising, Promotion & Website	2,119	1,083
e5 – Audit, Financial, Bank Fees, Amortization	7,876	4,601
e6 – Insurance, Legal, WCB	11,208	9,673
e7abc – Projects (MEMP/Com.Plan/ShopBelfastPEI/Other)	750	0
e7d – Events (Remembrance/Halloween/Christmas/Other)	2,450	1,531
e8 – Elections or By-Elections	500	0
e9 – FPEIM, FCM, Prof Fees, Conferences, Workshops	5,750	2,880
e10 – Miscellaneous	500	300
e11 – Fire Protection Grant	120,000	90,000
e12 – GPEI Rink Grant (out) & BAWG & Pantry (out)	8,500	196
e13 – Community Grants	106,860	106,260
i4 – CCBF (out) (New Projection w 2026 CCBF Approval)	57,624	134,342
e14 – Contingency	1,000	95
e16 – Warming Ctr Operations (Belfast Rec Ctr/WIADC)	3,000	3,000
e17 – New Office (New)	19,586	14,039
Total	513,138	484,955
	=====	=====
Change in Fund Balance (Net)	-\$31,782	-\$20,501

Community Grants are on track per payment schedule. Better than expected Expenditures savings are currently being realized as well as additional GPEI revenues. RMB now has a goal to try and reach a break-even or better for the fiscal year, rather than the budgeted shortfall.

9. **Update on Dog Act research (Ashley Feschuk)** Extensive research has been done on this issue. The RCMP stats for calls that required assistance for dog related concerns in Belfast in 2025 was seven in total. That does not include calls that were informational in nature, any calls made to the Humane Society and calls made to the Municipal office. MLA Darlene Compton forwarded the letter from Council sent to her office in December to the Premiere’s office Bloyce Thompson who suggested that his staff would be happy to meet with Council to discuss the policy and offer guidance. Councillor Bryson has also suggested that she would raise the topic at the next Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities meeting. There will be an update at the next Council meeting regarding this topic.
10. **Belfast Rec Centre – Community Arena (CAO – Bob Brooks)** A public meeting was held on January 15th to explore the possibilities of a New Ice Rink in Belfast. The RMB Council were invited to attend. Some Councillors who attended elaborated on he gathering and noted considerable support toward the construction of a new arena.
11. **Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF) – Firehall Application Approved (CAO – Bob Brooks):** On January 5, 2026, RMB received confirmation that the CCBF Project Review Committee agreed that the Firehall Project was eligible for funding and provided conditional approval. The conditions will be outlined in Schedule A of the Funding Agreement (*confirmation letter attached*). This decision was expected in early December, however, RMB did not get any notification until early January 2026. RMB is now waiting to receive the Funding Agreement to review and sign the document, before the Project is officially underway. Congratulations to the Belfast Rural Fire Department and the residents of Belfast on this significant step forward.

Update Moving Forward:

- Once RMB receives the Funding Agreement from the Province and is signed (barring unforeseen unacceptable conditions), the Belfast Fire Department will be authorized to move forward with the Firehall Expansion Project (31.3.1).
 - RMB representatives (Mayor Gillis and CAO Brooks) will then meet with the Fire Department about proceeding.
 - Once the Funding Agreement is approved/signed, the Province will then allocate the funds per the project timelines.
 - With the funding in place, the Fire Department will finally be able to start the Planning and Design Phase, which will give them the architectural drawings and costing of all the components.
 - Once the expansion is costed, the Fire Department and RMB will meet again to discuss the results, and options for moving to completion, including RMB and the Fire Department applying for funds from other sources. (The plan is to find as much contributed funds as possible, to reduce the amount that may need to be financed).
 - Regarding assistance from RMB to help the Fire Department with debt servicing; we will not know that need until the costing is complete and the progress or likelihood of other applications is known (sometime in 2026).
 - For the upcoming 2026/2027 Budget Session, the CAO is suggesting that RMB set up a mechanism for Firehall Debt Finance Servicing. Amount is unknown at this time and is speculative, however, it is reasonable to assume that some significant assistance will be required. For discussion and concurrence of Council.
12. **Update of the *Municipal Elections Bylaw for the 2026 Municipal General Election* (Ashley Feschuk).** Over the next few months, RMB will be looking at our current Elections Bylaw, to ensure it is up-to-date, in preparation for the upcoming General Municipal Election taking place on Monday, November 2, 2026. RMB will be confirming with the Province on its most recent bylaw model.
13. **2026/2027 Community Grants Call/Process) (Admin - Ashley Feschuk).** Administration and procedures are now upon us for the 2026/2027 Community Grants Program cycle. The call for Community Grants Proposals and Applications will be placed on the RMB Website following this Council Meeting, and Facebook site and various Bulletin Boards around our municipality. Applicants have until noon on Friday, March 6th to submit their grant applications. All applications will be checked to ensure eligibility, and the Community Grants Committee will review the applications on Wednesday, March 11th for a recommendation to Council for a Council decision on Wednesday, March 18th.
14. **Notice of 2026/2027 Budget and Financial Plan Meetings (CAO – Bob Brooks).** Notice is hereby given, that RMB will be holding open public meetings on **February 18th and March 18th** to discuss and ratify RMB's 2026/2027 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan for the upcoming fiscal year. Everyone is welcome to attend. Any member of the public wishing to be placed on the agenda in this regard; should contact the RMB Office to make arrangements.
15. **New Business Items (per Agenda Item 3 above):**
- a) **New Public Transit Service Lobby to service the Municipality of Belfast area (Councillor Kinnee).** A request came into RMB looking for a follow-up to RMB's earlier lobby for a Public Transit Service for the RMB area from Mr. Josh Lewis, Reporter for the Easter Graphic. Councillor Kinnee suggested, that since it had been a while since we discussed this topic, Council should discuss it again before granting an interview. Administration is to look for some updated information.

- b) **Welcome Signs Now Complete and Installed** (*CAO – Bob Brooks*) Just wanted to give a shout-out to Deputy Mayor Docherty for kickstarting the Welcome Signs Project. The signs are now in place in four difference locations heading into the Municipality, and apparently Mayor Gillis is famous on Facebook, having his picture in front of one of them. Let us know if Council would like an official group photo in front of one of them later in the summer.
- c) **Special Thank you:** A special thank you on behalf of the Mayor, Council and Administration goes out to Victor O’Neill. Thank you, Victor, for installing the snow guard above the RMB office door and the Belfast Area Watershed Group office door as well. This was done as a good deed and at no extra cost to the municipality, many thanks Victor.

16. **Next Meetings:**

- a) **Regular Council Meeting and 1st Public Meeting on the RMB Budget** – Wednesday, February 18, 2026: 7:pm – Upstairs Meeting Hall, Wood Islands
- b) **Community Grants Committee Meeting** – Wednesday, March 11, 2026: 7:pm – RMB Office, Wood Islands Market
- c) **Regular Council Meeting and 2nd Public Meeting on the RMB Budget** – Wednesday, March 18, 2026: 7:pm – Upstairs Meeting Hall, Wood Islands

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

Moved by Deputy Mayor Docherty to adjourn the meeting at: 8:40pm

Ashley/Bob

Minutes Approved On: **February 25, 2026**

Signature and Seal on File

Mayor Garth Gillis

Signature and Seal on File

CAO Bob Brooks

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