



# Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

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

## COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, February 25th, 2026, at 7:00 PM

*Upstairs Hall, Wood Islands Market*

Council:	Mayor Garth Gillis ( <i>Chair</i> ) Councillor Katherine Bryson Councillor Billy Gamble Councillor James Kinnee	Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty Councillor Trisha Carter Councillor Charley McGivern
Administration:	CAO Bob Brooks	Ashley Feschuk
Presenter:	Kathy Luppe, Wood Islands Resident	Wood Islands Café Express
Public in Attendance:	John Luppe- Wood Islands Resident, Joanne Vessey Belfast Fire Dept, Big Jay aka BFD Chief, Ricky Myer BFD, Nick, Angie Acron Belle River, Graham Labonte BFD, Josh Lewis Eastern Graphic	
Livestream:	16 Views during the meeting, 907 Views 12 hours later	

---

***Please Be Aware: RMB Council Meetings are Livestreamed to [facebook.com/belfastpei](https://facebook.com/belfastpei)  
Livestream Comments are not monitored in real time during the Council Meeting.  
Visitors – Please remember to sign in – 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** – Councillor Carter declared a conflict of interest with Fire Department discussions.
3. **Approval of Agenda** – Any other suggested Agenda Items for today’s meeting? (*one - placed under Item 15*)

Moved by **Councillor Carter** 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 January 2026** (*Admin - Ashley Feschuk*) Sergeant Mike Robinson is being transferred to Alberta. The Rural Municipality of Belfast was very lucky to have him service our community and support the Council; he will be missed. Once a meeting has been set up with his replacement and administration, Council will be notified. The incident numbers are slightly higher this month from 16 to 21, nothing notably more serious, similar to the last month in terms of type. RCMP reports are available for public review on the RMB website [www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com](http://www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com)

***Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty arrived for the meeting...***

5. **Public Presentations (if any)** – *There was one public presentation and one statement provided.*

**Kathy Luppe, Resident of Belfast,** Topic: Snowmobile use of the Wood Islands branch of the Confederation Trail (specifically the section from the Visitor Center to Grays Road, and the section across Grays Road to where it meets the main trail line) and the decision to change public use of the trail -- formerly designated a "No Motorized Vehicle" zone for safe walking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing -- to a snowmobile route in order to support business (the Express Cafe) in the Wood Islands area.

**Concerns:** The *reason* for the change is not the issue (we whole-heartedly support our local businesses). The issue revolves around the logistics of the decision itself -- how and when it was made; the lack of communication and awareness regarding this change -- within the community at large AND between relevant organizations; and the safety concerns this presents.

Currently: \*Social media searches across relevant sites (Belfast CDC, Belfast Rec Center, Rural Municipality of Belfast, WIADC, Tourism PEI, PEI Snowmobile Assoc.) yield no evidence of past meetings to invite discussion or vote on trail status.

\*Trail maps and advisory wording on the Tourism PEI and Snowmobile Assoc. websites do not align.

\*Signs posted at the trailheads contradict each other.

In the interest of transparency -- to avoid confusion and the potential for serious injury -- could you kindly address the following?

**1. Which governing body holds the jurisdiction for decision-making regarding trail use?**

**2. What are the protocols for making changes and who is responsible for disseminating this information to the general public (and relevant organizations)?**

**3. Why wasn't there a public forum or attempt at outreach to allow input from all community members ahead of this decision?**

On behalf of the community members who walk and snowshoe in winter, we are keen to have a voice in matters relating to public trail use. Surely, we can find a way to work together to share this amazing piece of nature in winter. (end)

**Wood Islands Café Express, Statement:** We regret that we are unable to attend the meeting in person, but we appreciate the opportunity to provide this statement for consideration. The winter use of the trail by snowmobiles has been approved by the Province. This seasonal designation is not new, and it has been communicated and understood prior to the grooming and opening of the trail for snowmobile use. As a small local business, winter snowmobile traffic is essential to our survival. The snowmobile season is short — approximately one month — yet it provides the critical revenue needed to sustain our café through the slower winter period. Without this seasonal activity, we would not be able to remain open. Our café is not only a business that contributes taxes to the community, but also a valued local service. Many residents, including seniors who do not always cook for themselves, rely on and appreciate having a warm, accessible place to gather and eat during the winter months. Remaining open year-round matters to our community. We understand that some residents enjoy walking the trail with their dogs. However, the snowmobile designation is temporary and seasonal. There are alternative walking areas nearby, including other trails and quiet wooded roads, that remain available during this short winter period. Safety is also an important concern. Once the trail is officially designated and groomed for snowmobile use, it is no longer appropriate for pedestrian or off-leash dog use. There has already been an incident in which a loose dog was nearly struck by a snowmobile. When a trail is clearly designated for motorized use, it is important that all users respect that designation to prevent accidents. This is not a matter of choosing one resident over another; it is about respecting a provincially approved seasonal use that supports local economic activity while still leaving other recreational options available. We respectfully ask the Council to support the continuation of the approved seasonal snowmobile access so that our small business can remain viable and continue serving the community year-round. Thank you for your consideration.

Following the presentation and statement, RMB committed to send both items to the Dept. of Transportation, as it is within their mandate. RMB will also update Council and the public in the future.

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

Moved by **Deputy Mayor Docherty** and seconded by **Councillor McGivern** to approve the Minutes of the January 21, 2026, Council Meeting as presented.  
 Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

7. **Business Arising from the Jan. 21, 2026 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 @ February 9, 2026:**

a. Share Acct 001	\$5.52
b. Chequing Acct 010	\$87,073.73
c. Gas Tax (CCBF) Acct 011 ( <i>for approved projects</i> )	\$31,051.53
d. Reserve Savings Acct 020	\$38.25
e. Reserve Savings GICs; Acct 041	\$50,887.26
(Reserves Breakdown \$50,887.26 in GIC)	
1. RMB Expansion Reserve	\$5,547.44
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)	\$33,589.82

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

<b>Revenues:</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>To-Date</b>
i1 – Assessment Income (Commercial & Non-Comm)	\$407,697	343,100
i2 – GPEI Rink Grant ( <i>in</i> )	8,500	0
i3 – Sub-Lease Rent ( <i>starting July 1, 2025</i> )	5,635	4,508
i4 – CCBF ( <i>in</i> ) ( <i>New Projection w 2026 CCBF Approval</i> )	57,624	134,342
i5 – Other ( <i>a HST &amp; Govt, b Govt Programs, c. Foundation</i> ) ( <i>in</i> )	1,900	18,540
<b>Total</b>	<b>481,356</b>	<b>500,490</b>
<b>Expenditures:</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>To-Date</b>
e1 – Council Remuneration, RMB Payroll, Deductions	\$133,759	106,364
e2 – Travel Allowance	1,500	530
e3 – Office Admin (Supplies/Hardware/Lease/Cleaning)	30,157	21,604
e4 – Advertising, Promotion & Website	2,119	1,348
e5 – Audit, Financial, Bank Fees, Amortization	7,876	4,622
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	3,324
e10 – Miscellaneous	500	500
e11 – Fire Protection Grant	120,000	100,000
e12 – GPEI Rink Grant ( <i>out</i> ) & BAWG & Pantry ( <i>out</i> )	8,500	196
e13 – Community Grants	106,860	106,460
i4 – CCBF ( <i>out</i> ) ( <i>New Projection w 2026 CCBF Approval</i> )	57,624	134,342
e14 – Contingency	1,000	95
e16 – Warming Ctr Operations (Belfast Rec Ctr/WIADC)	3,000	3,000
e17 – New Office ( <i>New</i> )	19,586	14,039
<b>Total</b>	<b>513,138</b>	<b>507,628</b>
<b>Change in Fund Balance (Net)</b>	<b>-\$31,782</b>	<b>-\$7,138</b>

***Community Grants are on track per payment schedule. Better than expected Expenditures savings and additional GPEI revenues are being realized. RMB now has a goal to try and reach a surplus by the end of the year, rather than the budgeted shortfall.***

9. **Update on Dog Act research (Councillor Bryson)** After lengthy discussions with the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities (FPEIM) I am happy to report that they will be consulting a lawyer on behalf of all the Municipalities regarding the current Provincial Dog Act legislation. The last FPEIM meeting was cancelled due to weather. Updates to follow at next month's Council meeting.
10. **Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF) – Firehall Application Signed (CAO – Bob Brooks)**: On February 5, 2026, RMB received the CCBF Contract for signing – it was signed and mailed back the next day. We now await confirmation to get started.
11. **2026/2027 Community Grants Call/Process (Admin - Ashley Feschuk)**. Application went out to the public on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. We are pleased to report that we have already received five applications (probably more by the time of this Council meeting). Applicants have until noon on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> for a recommendation to Council for a Council decision on Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>.
12. **2026/2027 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan - 1<sup>st</sup> Reading - (presented by CAO Bob Brooks)** Notice was given in January that RMB would be holding public meetings in February and March for passage of the 2026/2027 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan. The public was encouraged to attend these meetings and/or send comments.

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.

This year's Budget will be different, in that, for the first time, RMB has received the Province's Tax Numbers in time to be discussed during the First Reading Discussions. The Draft Budget now being discussed, has recently been revised to reflect the Municipal Assessment and Tax Information (MATI) numbers, as provided on February 10, 2026. (*new Draft Budget attached*)

Following any discussions, clarifications and amendments, Council was asked to give **First Reading ONLY** to the 2026/2027 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan. The Draft Budget document will remain on the RMB Website for another month of public review. On March 18, 2026, Council will again be asked if they have any suggested amendments, then asked to give Second Reading and Final Approval after discussion.

Following clarifications and discussion – no amendments were made and the following motion made:

**Moved by Councillor Kinnee and seconded by Councillor Carter to give First Reading to the Rural Municipality of Belfast 2026/2027 Budget, Financial Plan and Capital Plan.**  
Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

13. **Notice of 2026/2027 Budget and Financial Plan Meetings (CAO – Bob Brooks)**. Notice is hereby given, that RMB will be holding its second open public meeting on **March 18<sup>th</sup>** 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.

14. **New Business Items** (*per Agenda Item 3 above*):

- a) **Ferry Rumour** (*Councillor Bryson*) – In regards to a rumour that has been circulating about the cancellation/shutdown of the ferry service, Councillor Bryson reached out to both Jeff Joyce, Operations at Northumberland Ferries Ltd. and Member of Parliament Kent MacDonald for verification. Jeff Joyce said: *“Groundless, Katherine. Sounds like someone has bad info. Like we used to say in the navy, if you haven't heard a good rumour by noon, start one.”* MP Kent MacDonald responded with, *“...Thanks for flagging this, I just spoke to Transport Canada and that rumour is totally false. I have been having ongoing discussions with Minister MacKinnon on improvements to infrastructure and services and will be able to share with the public when finalized.”* Councillor Bryson will continue to monitor this and report back as required.

15. **Next Meetings:**

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

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

**Moved by Councillor Gamble to adjourn the meeting at: 8:32pm**

*Ashley/Bob*

Minutes approved on: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor – Garth Gillis

\_\_\_\_\_  
CAO – Bob Brooks

13056 Shore Road – Unit 103, Wood Islands, PE C0A 1R0 - Office (902) 962-2086  
Website: [www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com](http://www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com) Em: [ruralmunicipalityofbelfast@gmail.com](mailto:ruralmunicipalityofbelfast@gmail.com)