



Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

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

COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 7:00 PM

Upstairs Hall, Wood Islands Market

Council:	Mayor Garth Gillis (<i>Chair</i>)	Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty
	Councillor Katherine Bryson	Councillor Trisha Carter (<i>Regrets</i>)
	Councillor Billy Gamble	Councillor Charley McGivern
	Councillor James Kinnee	
Administration:	CAO Bob Brooks	Ashley Feschuk

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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** – No members of Council declared a conflict of interest with any items on today’s Agenda.
3. **Approval of Agenda** - Additional items placed under item 15. Item #9 moved to Item #16.

Moved by **Councillor McGivern** 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 April 2026** (*Admin - Ashley Feschuk*) The number of incidents was up slightly at 25 in total last month. March was very low at 14. RMB administration connected with RCMP regarding complaints of litter on MacAulays Wharf Road, at the suggestion of Council. A file was opened and additional patrols will be starting in that area.

5. **Public Presentations** – There were no public presentations.

6. **Adoption of the April 15, 2026, 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 April 15, 2026, Council Meeting as presented.

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

7. **Adoption of the May 13, 2026, Special Council Meeting Minutes** (*attached*)

Moved by **Councillor McGivern** and **seconded** by **Deputy Mayor Docherty** to approve the Minutes of the May 13, 2026, Special Council Meeting as presented.

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

8. **CAO Report (CAO – Bob Brooks)**

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

i. **Provincial Credit Union Account Balances @ May 1, 2026:**

a. Share Acct 001	\$5.56
b. Chequing Acct 010	\$123,348.16
c. Gas Tax (CCBF) Acct 011 (for approved projects)	\$55,013.91
d. Reserve Savings Acct 020	\$38.31
e. Reserve Savings GICs; Acct 041	\$51,997.58
(Reserves Breakdown \$51,997.58 in GIC)	
1. Emergency Preparedness Reserve	\$10,000.00
2. Legal Reserve Fund	\$5,000.00
3. Elections Reserve Fund	\$5,000.00
4. Remaining Reserve (T.B.D.)	\$31,997.58

b) **Revenues and Expenditures Tracking (2026/27) to March 31, 2027:**

Revenues:	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>To-Date</u>
i1 – Assessment Income (Commercial & Non-Comm)	\$424,807	36,145
i2 – GPEI Rink Grant (in)	8,500	0
i3 – Sub-Lease Rent (bi-monthly pmts)	6,762	0
i4 – CCBF (in) (for approved projects)	82,000	0
i5 – Other (HST/WCB refunds & other funding initiatives)	17,000	0
Total	539,069	36,145
Expenditures:	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>To-Date</u>
e1 – Council Remuneration, Contracts, Payroll, Deductions	\$149,368	9,417
e2 – Travel Allowance	1,000	0
e3 – Office Admin (Supplies/Hardware/Phones/Rent/Cleaning)	27,741	2,572
e4 – Advertising, Promotion and Website	1,500	500
e5 – Audit, Financial, Bank Fees, and Amortization	8,045	11
e6 – Insurance, Legal, WCB	10,566	0
e7abc – Projects (MEMP/Other)	250	0
e7d – Events (Remembrance/Halloween/Christmas/Other)	1,550	0
e8 – Elections or By-Elections	5,000	0
e9 – FPEIM, FCM, Prof Fees, Conferences, Workshops	7,649	4,699
e10 – Miscellaneous	500	0
e11 – Fire Protection Grant	165,000	13,750
e12 – GPEI Rink Grant	8,500	0
e13 – Community Grants	66,400	14,200
i4 – CCBF (out) (for approved projects)	82,000	0
e14 – Contingency	1,000	0
e16 – Warming Ctr Operations (Belfast Rec Ctr/WIADC)	3,000	0
Total	539,069	45,149
	=====	=====
Change in Fund Balance (Net)	\$0.00	-\$9,004

All 2026/27 Community Grants are on a payment schedule, to pay out earlier. This is the first reporting month for the 2026/27 fiscal year, and everything is on track as projected. Our books are scheduled to go to our auditors again in sometime in May/June.

9. **Purchase of an audio/video system for Council meetings (Admin – Ashley Feschuk)** The Meeting Own by Owl Labs is a 360-degree conference camera, microphone and speaker designed for hybrid meetings. It sits in the middle of a table and automatically focuses on whoever is speaking using AI speaker tracking. Council decided to purchase this piece of equipment and arrange a few trial runs while it is covered under the return policy. This system came recommended to our office from multiple sources including Belfast Area Watershed Group and Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities.

Moved by ***Councillor Bryson*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Kinnee*** to approve the audio/video purchase for Council Meetings, as described above.

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

10. **Municipal Government Act (MGA)** (***Councillor Kinnee***) The Government of PEI (GPEI) has been reviewing the MGA. In March of 2026, the GPEI released a Summary of Engagement.

Discussion:

Some members of Council expressed comments that the Summary agreed with some of the concerns some Councillors have been expressing about the MGA over the years. Specifically, about lumping all municipalities together, regardless of their size (large or small) or their population, capacity and resources. It was recognized that there are some valuable parts within the current MGA like the municipal funding, the legislation pieces, and the bylaws, but that the remoteness, rural or urban and population needed to be addressed in whatever re-write will be done. Some Councillors felt that the current MGA did not fit with the smaller municipalities in particular.

It was felt that a re-write of the MGA that addresses the concerns above could make governance and administration for the smaller municipalities more affordable. Other items that should be addressed include: the prevalence of unincorporated communities in PEI, the mandatory office hours, the delivery of services, maintenance, etc.

It was noted that this Summary will be used by the GPEI towards its possible amendments to the MGA in the future; that once any amendments are presented, municipalities will again be able to comment, before any passage. RMB will continue to follow this file so that Council can continue to provide its feedback. Council will be made aware of its next opportunity.

11. **Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) Update** (***Councillor Bryson***) The purpose of the MGA review and this study by Volume 18 wasn't to come up with solutions, they were simply contracted to review. The FPEIM Annual General Meeting was last month. The Minister of Housing and Community, who is currently Kent Dollar, was there to answer questions. Annexation is not on the table under this current government. Minister Dollar did announce that there are changes coming to the MGA, that there will be amendments. He did not provide a timeline. He did not provide anything concrete. What he did say is that they were taking this report and Forming Teams and take the review into consideration. He recognized that the one-size-fits-all approach did not suit our province.
12. **Belfast Rural Fire Department – Monthly Update** (***CAO Bob Brooks***) This is a good news story. As you know, the fire department is in the process of expanding the fire hall. The new Planning and Design Report showed the new quote for the project at \$1.32 million instead of \$1.4 million. The Project already has funding from the Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF). We've had funding from RMB and the Fire Department (BFD), and currently BFD is waiting on the results of its application to the Rural Growth Initiative (RGI) on its \$248,000 application. Yesterday, Garth and Bob and a few others had a meeting with Kent MacDonald, our MP about this ***Shovel-Ready Project*** that could be ready this fiscal year - a very positive meeting where we talked about the project and possible avenues to provide some funding. Mr. MacDonald committed to look into the funding avenues right away and in fact got back to the CAO the very next day for more information – a positive sign.

We've had positive conversations with Finance PEI, who are not only willing to provide a really good rate for the financing (through BFD), but that they would do it over a 25-year term (for affordable monthly payments), but would also allow balloon payments and advance payments to pay off the financing much earlier, without penalty.

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

- a) **Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP)** (*Administration Ashley Feschuk*) The new date for the MEMP round table discussion is Wednesday May 27th at 7pm. Emergency Management will be facilitating this mandatory exercise. The topic is Wildfires and the administration has reached out to the Belfast Rural Volunteer Fire Department to confirm their attendance along with other groups who have established Memorandums of Understanding with our office in case of emergency. The Belfast Rural Community Fire Department has a new website and it is very user friendly. On the first page is a box that you click and it will advise you as to burn conditions in our area and or if there are any restrictions in place. Residents are also able to now get their permits from this site as well, check it out www.bfdpei.com
- b) **Belfast Days** (*Deputy Mayor Docherty*) SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, June 27th, and Sunday, June 28th. Saturday will be a full day of activities located at the Lord Selkirk Campground. This year, we are adding a classic vehicle show beginning at 1 p.m. down by the pool area. We're also going to have the parade there, along with many activities including a blindfold graffiti wall, Belfast Disc Golf, horse and wagon rides, a pool party, and inflatables. On Saturday night Firestorm Fire Performers there right before the fireworks at 10 p.m., which will be set off on the 9th hole tee deck. On Sunday, we're hoping to have live matinee races beginning at 2 p.m. at our Pinette Raceway. If there are full races that day, we'll also hold our annual final race presentation, including the cooler and gift presentation to the winning driver and horse of the last race. **Let's have some fun Belfast!**
- c) **Doors Open Down East** (*Administration Ashley Feschuk on behalf of Councillor Carter*) The second annual Doors open down east was a great success. We have a website this year that is year-round and I encourage everyone to share it to continue to support local businesses. The website is www.doorsopendowneast.com
- d) **Ferry Report** (*Administration Ashley Feschuk on behalf of Councillor Carter*) Northumberland Ferries officially began the 2026 operating season on May 1, and we are looking forward to another strong and successful year as we celebrate our 85th season of service connecting Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. Over the winter and spring months, extensive maintenance, inspection, and preparation work was completed to ensure our vessels, terminals, and operations are ready for a safe and reliable season. With that work now complete, we are preparing to transition to full two-vessel service beginning June 15, which will significantly increase capacity and scheduling flexibility during the peak travel period. We continue to work closely with tourism and community partners to support regional economic activity and provide an essential transportation link for residents, visitors and commercial traffic. This season, passengers will also notice a greater presence of our staff members front and center in our communications initiatives. We want to highlight the dedicated people behind Northumberland Ferries, the crews, terminal staff, maintenance teams, and customer service employees who work every day to ensure passengers have a safe, dependable, and comfortable journey. As we mark this milestone 85th season, we remain committed to safety, service excellence, and contributing positively to the communities we serve.

14. **Next Meeting:**

- a) **Regular Council Meeting** – Wednesday, June 17, 2026: 7:pm – Upstairs Meeting Hall, Wood Islands

15. **Confidential “HR” Item** (*Held In-Camera – No decisions made In-Camera*)

Moved by **Councillor McGivern** and seconded by **Deputy Mayor Docherty** to move In-Camera for a Confidential HR Item.

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

Moved by **Councillor McGivern** and seconded by **Councillor Gamble** to move out of In-Camera regarding the Confidential HR Item.

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

Minutes of the In-Camera Session that was closed to the public:

Date of In-Camera Session: ***May 20, 2026***

Attendance: ***Mayor Gillis, Deputy Mayor Docherty, Councillor Bryson, Councillor Carter, Councillor Gamble, Councillor Kinnee, Councillor McGivern.***

Topic of Discussion: ***The discussions were regarding a Confidential HR Matter and no formal decisions were made.***

16. **Designation of Remaining Reserve as ‘Fire Expansion Project’** (*CAO – Bob Brooks*) Over the past year, the Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB) has been working with the Belfast Rural Fire Depart (BFD) on the ***Firehall Expansion Project***.

To-date, RMB and BFD:

- Met to devise a plan to bring the expansion concept into a workable plan;
- Applied (and received) funding through RMB’s Community Grants to create a ‘expansion concept’ that would also give us a ballpark cost for this project;
- Presented the project case to Council and gained support to apply to the Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF) for a Firehall Expansion Project, to create a Planning and Design Report, that would solidify an actual quote for the project.
- The CCBF funding was approved (\$294,835.51). \$28,136.62 was used for the Planning and Design Report; and the remaining \$266,688.89 can be used for the actual construction of the project.
- The Planning and Design Report, now put the project cost at: \$1.15 million +\$172,500 HST = \$1,322,500. The remaining \$266,689 brings that down to: \$1,055,811.
- BFD, then applied for Rural Growth Initiative (RGI) Funding in the amount of \$248,000 and received a unanimous support resolution from the RMB Council. (Still awaiting the results of that application.)
- With approval of RGI funding, that would bring the amount required for the project down to \$807,811.
- In that RGI process, BFD committed their fundraising efforts to-date, in the amount of \$62,000 to the project, bringing the amount down to \$745,811.
- Over the past year, Council Members talked about the possibility of assigning the RMB (undesignated) Remaining Reserve for use by the Firehall Expansion Project, to further bring down the project cost by \$31,998. Now equals **\$713,813** (to-date).

The above is for background information and project status to-date only. In discussing the project with Finance PEI, we are in the process of confirming all those numbers. BFD is looking to have Finance PEI finance the project. That number so-far would be \$713,813. That said, BFD and RMB continue to look for other sources of funding; both before and after financing is established.

Finance PEI confirmed that balloon payments are allowed (without penalty) and paying off the financing early (also without penalty) is allowed and would be built into the financing agreement.

Discussion:

It was confirmed that the only reason to dedicate the Remaining RMB Reserve (over \$31,000), was to show additional and continued RMB commitment to this Firehall Expansion Project. It was also confirmed that whatever the final amount of the Financing that will be required (approximately \$745,000), that monthly payment amount would have to be paid to BFD through the RMB Budget allocations.

It was discussed that, at this point (if the financing amount was approximately \$745,000, that RMB was responsible for; then RMB would be funding approximately half of the Firehall Expansion Project. That is already showing additional and ongoing commitment to making this project a reality. That said, Council thought it best to defer specifically designating a use for the Remaining Reserve at this time, until a more-clear final picture of the Firehall Expansion Project has been established.

Moved by **Councillor McGivern** and seconded by **Councillor Kinnee** to ***DEFER*** a decision to designate the Remaining RMB Reserve at this time.

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

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

Moved by **Councillor Gamble** to adjourn the meeting at: **9:02pm**

Ashley/Bob

Minutes Approved On: **June 17, 2026**

Signature and Seal of File

Mayor – Garth Gillis

Signature and Seal of File

CAO – Bob Brooks

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