Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

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

COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, September 16, 2026, at 7:00 PM

Upstairs Hall, Wood Islands Market

In Attendance:

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

Public: Charlotte MacAulay - Reporter with the Eastern Graphic, Russell Compton

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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 have declared a conflict of interest with any items on today's Agenda.

3. **Approval of Agenda** – There were six additional items placed under item 16.

   Moved by ***Councillor Carter*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor McGivern*** to adopt the agenda as amended.
   Votes for: **5** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

4. **RCMP Report for the Month of August 2026** (*Admin - Ashley Feschuk*) - Incidents were up slightly; however, not one category carried the bulk of the weight as incidents varied in type across the board. August was at 34 compared to July at 28 - All RCMP reports can be viewed by the public on the RMB website www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com

5. **Public Presentations (if any)** – There were no public presentations.

6. **Adoption of the August 19, 2026, Council Meeting Minutes** (*attached - previously distributed; all suggested changes already incorporated*)

   Moved by ***Deputy Mayor Docherty*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Carter*** to approve the Minutes of the August 19, 2026, Council Meeting as presented.
   Votes for: **5** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

7. **Adoption of the September 9, 2026, Special 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 Sept. 9, 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 @ August 31, 2026***:

a. Share Acct 001		$5.56
b. Chequing Acct 010		* $68,820.51
c. CCBF (Gas Tax) Acct 011 *(after partial payout)*		$365.91
d. Reserve Savings Acct 020		$38.39
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*	

**** NOTE: Fire Hall Loan of $32,000 taken from Chequing Acct. Cash Flow instead of GIC, to keep GIC and interest intact, since loan will be repaid before fiscal year-end.***

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

Revenues:	**Budgeted**	**To-Date**
i1 – Assessment Income (Commercial & Non-Comm)	*$424,807*	*180,725*
i2 – GPEI Rink Grant (in)	*8,500*	*0*
i3 – Sub-Lease Rent (bi-monthly pmts)	*6,762*	*2,818*
i4 – CCBF (in) (for Firehall Expansion Prj)	*82,000*	*133,137*
i5 – Other (HST/WCB refunds & other funding initiatives)	*17,000*	*15,000*
Total	***539,069***	***331,680***
Expenditures:	**Budgeted**	**To-Date**
e1 – Council Remuneration, Contracts, Payroll, Deductions	*$149,368*	*49,496*
e2 – Travel Allowance	*1,000*	*362*
e3 – Office Admin (Supplies/Hardware/Phones/Rent/Cleaning)	*27,741*	*12,979*
e4 – Advertising, Promotion and Website	*1,500*	*535*
e5 – Audit, Financial, Bank Fees, and Amortization	*8,045*	*722*
e6 – Insurance, Legal, WCB	*10,566*	*10,000*
e7abc – Projects (MEMP/Other)	*250*	*10*
e7d – Events (Remembrance/Halloween/Christmas/Other)	*1,550*	*69*
e8 – Elections or By-Elections	*5,000*	*100*
e9 – FPEIM, FCM, Prof Fees, Conferences, Workshops	*7,649*	*5,763*
e10 – Miscellaneous	*500*	*0*
e11 – Fire Protection Grant	*165,000*	*68,750*
e12 – GPEI Rink Grant	*8,500*	*0*
e13 – Community Grants	*66,400*	*65,000*
i4 – CCBF (out) (for Firehall Expansion Prj)	*82,000*	*133,137*
e14 – Contingency	*1,000*	*1,726*
*e15 – Fire Hall Temporary Loan (unbudgeted – **see * Note above**)*	*0*	*32,000*
e16 – Warming Ctr Operations (Belfast Rec Ctr/WIADC)	*3,000*	*0*
Total	***539,069***	***380,649***
	========	========
Change in Fund Balance (Net)	***$0.00***	***-$48,969***

All 2026/27 non-monthly Community Grants are now paid out early. All revenues and expenditures are on track to-date. The current deficit in accounts is due to the unbudgeted-Council approved loan for the Fire Hall – see * Note above. As in past years, RMB is trying to finish the fiscal year with a better-than budget surplus.

9. **Belfast Rural Fire Department – Firehall Funding Update** (*CAO – Bob Brooks*) … all information from both the Fire Dept. and RMB are in the hands of Finance PEI – who confirmed that no other information is required. Finance PEI noted that their Board will make a final decision on September 16th then complete the paperwork. If all goes according to expectation, the approved Rural Growth Initiative funds will be able to be released to the Fire Dept. next week to pay initial invoices – everything seems to be according to plan at this point. No word yet from Canada regarding the $529,000 application; however, MP Kent MacDonald's office and RMB continues to follow-up. Fire Hall Expansion construction is proceeding as planned for an expected March 31, 2027 completion.

10. **Harassment/Respectful Workplace Policy # 2026-001** (*CAO – Bob Brooks*) (*attached*) – under Council's direction to have a Harassment Policy in place for our municipality; Administration was tasked: to look at other PEI municipal examples and present one for Council consideration. In discussion with the President of the PEI Association of Municipalities, our administration (Ashley Feschuk) not only found a policy that has been in use and working for more than two years, but it's a policy that has been vetted by the municipality's lawyers.

    For the past two months, members of the RMB Council have had this policy in hand to determine if they liked it or had a problem with it. In those two months, no members expressed any concerns, and in fact, a number said they liked it. Hence, this policy is now on the agenda for consideration/approval. RMB also found out, that a municipal Harassment Policy is now a requirement for every municipality. (Policy attached).

    Discussion: Council discussed some last-minute amendments to the Policy: however, decided to approve the Policy as presented since the majority of Council was happy with the Policy presented and it would immediately make RMB compliant with the *Municipal Government Act*. However, Council will review the suggested changes and may or may not bring suggested changes forward in the current Council term.

    Moved by ***Councillor Gamble*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Carter*** to approve the **Harassment/Respectful Workplace Policy # 2026-001** as presented.
    Votes for: **5** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

11. **Continued Canada Post Operation in Belle River, PE - Update** (*CAO – Bob Brooks*) – Following the August 19th Council meeting and direction, the CAO was in contact with Canada Post to note Council's support of keeping the current Post Office location where it is at in Belle River. It was confirmed that Canada Post must now follow its process, but that no changes will take place in the meantime.

12. **2025/2026 Audited Financial Statements** (*CAO – Bob Brooks*) (*attached*) – On Sept. 9th, the CAO met with our auditors at MRSB and I'm very pleased to report that RMB has once again received a clean audit. Additionally, even though we budgeted (in 2025/2026) for a small deficit (to be covered by our reserves), we instead achieved a healthy surplus of $13,787.

    That surplus was garnered in a few ways:
    - Reducing our monthly expenditures (primarily through reduced staffing),
    - Higher than expected tax revenues from unknown higher assessments, and
    - The temporary increase of municipal funding from the Province, while they re-assess the *Municipal Government Act*.

    All-in-all, a win-win for RMB's fiscal year-end results.

    Moved by ***Councillor Carter*** and **seconded** by ***Deputy Mayor Docherty*** to approve the **2025/2026 Audited Financial Statements** as presented.
    Votes for: **5** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

13. **Small Play Area at Wood Islands Market area, Update -** (*Deputy Mayor Docherty & Admin Ashley Feschuk)* At the suggestion of Deputy Mayor Docherty, Administration reached out to the Province regarding a potential application to the Gender, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Community Enhancement Program (GEDI Grant). Administration requested clarification on the eligibility of a proposed accessible/inclusive community playground in Wood Islands, and is pleased to report that the project meets the basic eligibility criteria. This initiative aims to remove barriers to participation and create a welcoming, accessible space where all children and families can enjoy and participate in our community. Admin. also confirmed that RMB has the full support of the Wood Islands and Area Development Corp. (WIADC) for this project. With the application deadline approaching, Admin. has reached out to the FPEIM to gather additional information regarding other municipalities that have implemented playground structures. Deputy Mayor Docherty and Admin. will also reach out to Councillor McGivern to draw on her knowledge and experience in this area. At this time, RMB is awaiting further guidance and information before proceeding with the full application.

14. **Getting Nurse Practitioner in the RMB Municipality -** (*Deputy Mayor Docherty and Admin. Ashley Feschuk)* RMB is currently waiting for meaningful follow-up from the attendees at the meeting we had with Health PEI, our MLA and Health Minister Cory Deagles office. Our office has a designated space to meet the needs of our residents in terms of supporting them once per week; however, there seems to be a roadblock? Healthcare is more than having access to online services links and due to the lack of reliable internet support, makes it difficult for some residents, especially seniors, to access the care they deserve. Deputy Mayor Docherty and Admin. have had several meetings in which several ideas were discussed. This initiative may be something the New Council may want to continue. An idea for the Strategic Plan discussions, in order to carry on the legacy of previous Councils along with the vision of Councillor Mary Meecher Carlson. As long as people continue to call our office to make an appointment, RMB will continue to bring this forward to Council on behalf of the community. I was able to complete the CBC interview, aired in September, along with a follow-up CBC article. Both were sent to Council and posted to our Facebook and Website under the news and announcements section. **I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Josh Lewis and Pratik Bhattarai of the Eastern Graphic on their Outstanding Reporter Initiative Award regarding PEI Healthcare** in which the massive increase in spending for travel nurses, an industry with no government oversight, to how much PEI spends on blood products. Their comprehensive examination of travel and moving expenses for Health PEI's senior management resulted in a capping of allowable expenses - even the judges cited the effort and clarity of the reporting. I would highly recommend looking at this series which can be found at www.peicanada.com/health_pei/

15. **Calgary Foundation (In/Out) Update -** (Admin. Ashley Feschuk) The RMB office has been working with the Calgary Foundation and I'm pleased to report that the grant for the Belfast Rec. Centre will be issued shortly in the amount of $1,943.75 - this grant is meant to support the organization's charitable activity and will be distributed annually in perpetuity to a maximum of $5,000 - this is conditional upon the community hall retaining the Sinclair MacTavish Room name.

16. **New Business Items** (*per Agenda Item 3 above*):
    a. **Belfast Rural Community Fire Department Update (***Councillor Carter***)** The Sept. 12th Truck Pull was a success. The Dept. thanks everyone who participated, volunteered and supported the event. William McGuigan has successfully completed his probationary period and is now a full member of the Belfast Rural Community Fire Company. Upcoming Events: Sept. 19th - 70 Mile Coastal Yard Sale at the Fire Hall. Sept. 19th - 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb in Summerside, Sept. 25th - Bingo fundraiser. Detailed Fire Hall Reports can be found on the RMB website www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com

b. **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (***Admin. Ashley Feschuk***) -** Council members are wearing orange shirts today in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on Sept. 30th. Wearing orange is a meaningful way to honour the Survivors of residential schools, remember the children who never returned home, and acknowledge the lasting impacts of the residential school system on Indigenous peoples, families, and communities. It is also a reminder of our shared responsibility to listen, learn, and continue the work of reconciliation.

c. **Belfast Area Watershed Group (BAWG) (***Admin. Ashley Feschuk***) -** Save the date for Monday, October 5th from 6:30-8:pm at 13056 Shore Road in the Upstairs Hall. BAWG will be presenting the season's monitoring from forest birds and bank swallows to the waters that connect us all and discover how you can help turn knowledge into conservation action. Support was provided by the Rural Municipality of Belfast and the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund.

d. **Additional Dates for Council (***Admin. Ashley Feschuk***) see below under Next Meeting**

17. **Next Meeting:**
    a) **Regular Council Meeting** - Wednesday, October 21, 2026: 7:pm – RMB Office, Wood Islands
    b) **Election Nomination Period** - Wednesday, October 7th to Friday, October 16th at 2:pm
    c) **Municipal General Election Day** - ***Monday, November 2, 2026***
    d) **Final Current Council Meeting** - Wednesday, November 18th at 7:pm
    e) **Swearing in of Newly Elected Council** – Wednesday, December 9th at 7:pm
    f) **RMB Holiday/Tree-Lighting Party** - Saturday, December 12th starting at 6:pm

18. **A Motion to Move In-Camera for a Confidential HR Matter**

    Moved by ***Councillor McGivern*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Carter*** to move in camera for a Confidential HR matter.
    Votes for: __**5**__ Votes against: __**0**__ Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

19. **A Motion to Move Out of In-Camera from a Confidential HR Matter**

    Moved by **Councillor McGivern** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Carter*** to move out of In-Camera from a Confidential HR matter.
    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:	**Sept. 16, 2026**
Attendance:	**All members of Council except Councillor Bryson**
Topic of Discussion:	**A Confidential HR Matter - no formal decisions made**

There are two motions required for Council decision as a result of the Confidential In-Camera matter (20. And 21.):

20. **CAO Sub-Committee Recommendation to Council** (*CAO - Bob Brooks)* – On July 22nd, the CAO Sub-Committee met to complete the task of contemplating, researching, and ultimately, making a recommendation for Council regarding the replacement of a new CAO for RMB, to start as of January 1, 2027. This resolution/recommendation **# RES2026-003** was a unanimous Sub-Committee recommendation, as follows – for Council consideration:

Resolution # RES2026-003

Whereas: The Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB) will need to replace the current Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) as of December 31, 2026; and

Whereas: RMB has had a CAO Succession Plan in place for more than two years, training a current staff member (Ashley Feschuk) on the duties of a CAO; and

Whereas: In consultation with the Government of Prince Edward Island's - Municipal Affairs; hiring through a Succession Plan is often preferrable as it helps to retain the corporate knowledge of a municipality moving forward, if the candidate is qualified; and

Whereas: The CAO Sub-Committee is satisfied that not only would Ms. Ashley Feschuk be a suitable candidate, she would also make an excellent CAO for this municipality; and

Whereas: The CAO Sub-Committee and Ms. Ashley Feschuk will arrive at a suitable CAO Employment Agreement; and

Whereas: Recognizing the current economic climate of uncertainty, the desire to not have to raise taxes in the 2027/2028 upcoming fiscal year due to new planned expenditures, and in the interest of trying to lower the administrative costs of the RMB organization.

Therefore, be it Resolved:

That the CAO Sub-Committee is recommending that Ms. Ashley Feschuk be appointed to the position of Chief Administrative Officer, effective January 1, 2027; and

Be it also Resolved:

That the CAO Sub-Committee is recommending that RMB reduce operations to a one-person (salaried full-time) position (reduced duties to be reflected in the CAO Employment Agreement); and

Be it also Resolved:

That the CAO Sub-Committee recognises that there is a plan for a new Strategic Plan exercise in January 2027 and a new Budget/Financial Plan exercise in February and March 2027, for the newly elected RMB Municipal Council, at which time they will consider a one-person operation or a two-person operation in its deliberations.

This Resolution is now before Council for consideration:

Moved by ***Councillor McGivern*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Gamble*** that RMB adopt the Resolution/Recommendation of the CAO Sub-Committee as presented above as ***Resolution # RES2026-003***.

Votes for: **4** Votes abstained: **1** Result: ***Motion Carried***

21. **A Motion to Accept the CAO Employment Agreement:**

Moved by ***Deputy Mayor Docherty*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Carter*** to accept the CAO Employment Agreement starting January 1, 2027, for the new CAO Ashley Feschuk.
Votes for: **4** Votes against: **1** Result: ***Motion Carried***

22. **Adjournment** – As there is no further business…

Moved by ***Councillor Gamble*** to adjourn the meeting at: **8:31pm**

Motion Approved on: ***October 21, 2026***

Signature and Seal on File	***Signature and Seal on File***
Mayor Garth Gillis	CAO Bob Brooks