Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

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

COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at 7:00 PM

RMB Office, Wood Islands Market

Council:	Mayor Garth Gillis (*Chair*)	Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty
	Councillor Katherine Bryson	Councillor Trisha Carter
	Councillor Billy Gamble	Councillor James Kinnee
	Councillor Charley McGivern	
Administration:	CAO Bob Brooks	Ashley Feschuk
Public:	Keir White Executive Director Belfast Community Development Corporation, Robert MacDonald Belle River Resident, Dorothy Oulton Belle River Resident, Josh Lewis Eastern Graphic Reporter, Russell Compton Pinette Resident	
Livestream:	2345 Views (48 hours after livestream), 12 Interactions, 3 New Followers	

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.

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

3. **Approval of Agenda** – Three additional Agenda Items placed under item 17.

   Moved by ***Councillor Carter*** and **seconded** by ***Deputy Mayor Docherty*** to adopt the agenda as amended.
   Votes for: **6** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

4. **RCMP Report for the Month of September 2026** (*Admin - Ashley Feschuk*) (*attached*) RCMP incidents are down by two this month at 32 compared to last month's 34. It seems most of the incident types are vehicular in nature with the bulk of them being speed related. RCMP Reports along with the monthly Fire Department Reports can be found on the RMB website at www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast.com

5. **Public Presentations** – *Members of the public were offered five minutes to make a presentation to Council*. Only one presenter (arrangements made prior to the meeting).
   a. **Keir White Executive Director of Belfast Community Development Corporation (BCDC)** – There have been some challenges to address throughout the season. We've been able to renovate the old stand and now there is a maintenance shed there. We've been able to cut trails through the park, thanks to the help of the Belfast Area Watershed Group.

There is also going to be the addition of a pollinator bed to the park. A spot for signage at the entrance of the park, and in 2027 we'll be approaching community partners in that respect. Also added this year, are new and safe beach access stairs and there are plans in June of 2027 for a grand reopening. October 29th and 30th, from 2-5pm, there will be a community cleanup at the park (cleanup and haul away), so we're looking for helping hands, trucks and trailers, that type of thing. We do have a spot to dispose of the material at the golf course. We hope to see some community involvement there to just continue to bring, back to a viable green space for the community that hopefully families can continue and begin to enjoy in the future. Last day for golf is Sunday October 25th but the virtual golf will be available throughout the winter months so come and check it out. *Thank you.*

6. **Adoption of the September 16, 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 September 16, 2026, Council Meeting as presented.
Votes for: **6** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

7. **CAO Report** (*CAO – Bob Brooks*)
   a) **Financial/Variance/Planning Report**
      i. ***Provincial Credit Union Account Balances @ September 30, 2026***:

a. Share Acct 001	$5.56
b. Chequing Acct 010	* $76,026.07
c. CCBF (Gas Tax) Acct 011 *(after partial payout)*	$359.41
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*	*216,870*
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***	***367,825***
Expenditures:	**Budgeted**	**To-Date**
e1 – Council Remuneration, Contracts, Payroll, Deductions	*$149,368*	*61,303*
e2 – Travel Allowance	*1,000*	*362*
e3 – Office Admin (Supplies/Hardware/Phones/Rent/Cleaning)	*27,741*	*15,255*
e4 – Advertising, Promotion and Website	*1,500*	*535*
e5 – Audit, Financial, Bank Fees, and Amortization	*8,045*	*738*
e6 – Insurance, Legal, WCB	*10,566*	*10,000*
e7abc – Projects (MEMP/Other)	*250*	*10*
e7d – Events (Remembrance/Halloween/Christmas/Other)	*1,550*	*219*
e8 – Elections or By-Elections	*5,000*	*100*

e9 – FPEIM, FCM, Prof Fees, Conferences, Workshops	*7,649*	*5,919*
e10 – Miscellaneous	*500*	*0*
e11 – Fire Protection Grant	*165,000*	*82,500*
e12 – GPEI Rink Grant	*8,500*	*0*
e13 – Community Grants	*66,400*	*65,200*
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***	***409,004***
	========	========
Change in Fund Balance (Net)	***$0.00***	***-$41,179***

+32,000 would be: -$9,179

All 2026/27 *(non-monthly)* ***Community Grants are now paid out early.*** *All revenues and expenditures are on track. 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 our year with a better-than budget surplus and is currently on-track to achieve that goal.*

8. **Belfast Rural Fire Department – Firehall Funding Update** (*CAO – Bob Brooks*) … The Finance PEI financing is now in place and both the Fire Department and RMB have met the RGI criteria to release the pre-approved funds per schedule. Regarding the possible funds from the Government of Canada; they have decided to move our application to the **Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) stream**. The new application has now been submitted and by all accounts it seems to be going well. This ACOA application (if successful) would mean the Firehall Expansion Project could potentially be fully paid off within 3 – 5 years. RMB continues to work closely with the Fire Department to help ensure the cost to the RMB Taxpayer is as small as possible. Many thanks to MP Kent MacDonald's office, who continues to assist us with our funding aspirations.

9. **Remembrance Day** – Wreath Laying (November 11, 2026) (*Admin-Ashley Feschuk*) – RMB participates annually at two wreath-laying events, put on by the Royal Canadian Legion within the RMB area. Typically, Mayor Garth Gillis will lay an RMB sponsored wreath at: *St. John's Presbyterian Church* and another Council Member will lay another RMB sponsored wreath at *St. Michaels Church in Iona*. This year the second wreath will be presented by Councillor McGivern, Councillor Bryson and Administration.

10. **Play Area at Wood Islands Market area, Update -** (*Deputy Mayor Docherty, Admin – Ashley Feschuk*) I am pleased to report that Deputy Mayor Docherty and I successfully submitted the Gender Equity Diversity and Inclusion grant application (GEDI) before the deadline, accompanied by a full letter of support from the Wood Islands and Area Development Corporation. This is an exciting opportunity for RMB to secure funding toward the development of a small community playground, creating a welcoming space for local children and families to gather, play, and connect. This project represents a meaningful investment in the well-being of our residents and continued development of community amenities. RMB anticipates receiving notification of the grant decision before Christmas. RMB is hopeful that this application will be successful and look forward to sharing further updates with Council as they become available.

11. **Association of Municipal Administrators, Update -** (*Admin – Ashley Feschuk*) On Friday September 25th Administration attended a professional development day hosted by the Rural Municipality of Kinkora, featuring a variety of informative presentations relevant to municipal administration and governance. Topics included municipal asset management, a CAO meeting presented by Kevin McCarville of Municipal Affairs, PEI, and a keynote address by Minister Kent Dollar, Minister of Housing and Communities. Suzanne Pater of the PEI Department of Finance, Taxation and Property Records also provided valuable information.

Additionally, Melanie McKenna of Cox & Palmer delivered an in-depth presentation on municipal liability, workplace harassment policies, and codes of conduct for members of Council. The sessions provided valuable insight into current municipal issues, legislative responsibilities, and best practices to support effective municipal governance and administration.

12. **Home-heating Program -** (*Deputy Mayor Docherty*) Beginning November 1st, eligible low-income islanders can apply for support through the PEI Home Heating Program at any Access PEI Location, Currently the program is delivered by The Salvation Army and funded by the Province. The Salvation Army will continue accepting applications until October 31st. On November 1st, Access PEI will start to administer the program and process all applications. Program eligibility and benefits remain unchanged, with eligible households able to receive up to $1,200 per calendar year. For more information visit: www.princeedwardisland.ca/homeheatingprogram

13. **General Municipal Election Update -** (*Admin – Ashley Feschuk*) Congratulations go out to the new Council for the Rural Municipality of Belfast for the next four years. The new Council (starting in December) will be made up of the following: Mayor Lynn Docherty (previously Deputy Mayor Docherty), Councillor Billy Gamble (returning), Councillor Charley McGivern (returning), Councillor Joshua Mori (new), Councillor Dorothy Oulton (new), Councillor Robert MacDonald (new) and Councillor Russell Compton (new).

14. **Letter for Increased Provincial Support for Rural Volunteer Fire Departments** (*Councillor Bryson, Admin – Ashley Feschuk*) RMB has sent a formal letter requesting increased provincial financial assistance for all rural volunteer fire departments. The letter was submitted to the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities (FPEIM) and Minister Kent Dollar, with copies provided to MLA Darlene Compton and Minister Bloyce Thompson. The request highlights the growing financial pressures facing rural fire departments, including the rising costs of operating and maintaining fire stations, increasing demands for medical first response, and the need for additional training, equipment, and preparedness for extreme weather events. Particular attention was given to the Belfast Fire Department, which is nearing completion of its newly expanded fire station. While this facility represents an important investment in community safety, the remaining project costs and increased ongoing operating expenses will place additional pressure on the municipality's limited tax base. Council has asked the Province to consider dedicated operational funding, expanded infrastructure assistance, and additional support for medical first response and volunteer recruitment and retention. This request reflects Council's commitment to ensuring the Belfast Fire Department can continue providing reliable, effective emergency services to residents while maintaining the long-term sustainability of rural fire protection. Attached to your packages is a copy of the response from Minister Kent Dollar.

15. **Harassment Policy Update -** (*Admin – Ashley Feschuk*) Given the sensitive nature of the municipality's Harassment Policy and the legislative requirements it encompasses, any proposed amendments should be reviewed and guided by legal counsel. As Council does not have specialized human resources experience, legal oversight is important to ensure that any changes are appropriate, compliant, and protective of both the municipality and its employees. The existing policy incorporates relevant provincial legislation and guidance relating to the Workers Compensation Board and the Human Rights Commission, and has been reviewed by McInnes Cooper Advisory/Policies. Any proposed revisions in future, should therefore be undertaken with qualified legal support to maintain legislative compliance, procedural fairness, and the integrity of the policy. RMB's current Policy is compliant with the *Municipal Government Act*.

16. **Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) Orientation of New Council Members -** (*Admin – Ashley Feschuk*) FPEIM, in partnership with the PEI Government, is planning a full-day orientation session for incoming mayors and council members.

This session will provide valuable guidance on municipal legislation, governance, roles and responsibilities, and the framework within which municipalities operate. The session is scheduled for **Saturday, November 21, 2026**, at the **Murchison Centre, 17 St. Pius X Avenue, Charlottetown**. This orientation will be an important resource in helping our new Council begin its term with a clear understanding of municipal governance and legislative responsibilities.

17. **New Business Items** (*per Agenda Item 3 above*):
    a. **Incoming CAO Update, Municipal Election Preparation and Council Transition Planning** *(Administration/Incoming CAO - Ashley Feschuk):* Amid preparations for the upcoming municipal election and the transition to a new council, I began developing several key resources to help ensure a smooth, organized, and productive start to the next council term. Current preparations include: **Council Orientation Packages:** Preparing introductory materials to familiarize the incoming council with municipal operations, governance, policies, procedures, and their roles and responsibilities. **Council Agendas:** Beginning preliminary work on agenda planning and organizational materials for the coming year to support continuity and effective meeting preparation. **Community Grants Information:** Compiling information on available community grants, funding opportunities, and relevant resources to help council identify potential investments and support initiatives that benefit our community. **Strategic Plan and Roadmap Template:** Developing a draft framework to assist the incoming council in establishing its strategic priorities, identifying key objectives, and creating a practical roadmap to guide decision-making and municipal initiatives throughout its term. An important consideration in this preparation is the development of the municipality's next strategic plan. By preparing to facilitate this process internally, rather than engaging an external consultant, the municipality could realize savings of more than **$7,000**. Should the incoming council choose to follow a similar approach to the one taken by the current council in developing its strategic plan, I will be prepared to support and facilitate the process in-house. This approach would provide the council with a structured starting point while allowing the municipality to retain those funds for other operational priorities and community initiatives. These preliminary efforts are intended to provide the incoming council with a solid foundation, reduce the administrative burden during the transition period, and ensure that essential planning work is already underway when the new term begins. As RMB moves from a two-person office to just myself, it is important to remind council who may not be aware that the reason this is happening is to save the taxpayers a potential increase and so that the funds saved can assist the firehall with their plan. Many of you have already asked me how you can assist given the intense scope of responsibilities. One of the ways is for returning council members to assist in ushering in the new members and offering them guidance if they have questions. My focus remains on supporting an efficient transition, strengthening municipal governance, and ensuring that the incoming council has the information, tools, and resources necessary to begin its term with clarity, direction, and purpose.
    b. **RMB Winter Hours** (*Admin Ashley Feschuk*): The RMB office will be closed from December 19th, 2026 and reopening to the public on January 4th 2027, emails will be checked during this closure: ruralmunicipalityofbelfast@gmail.com
    c. **Belfast Rural Volunteer Fire Department Update** (*Councillor Carter*): Construction of the firehall expansion has advanced substantially. The addition is enclosed at the roof level, with overhead apparatus doors and windows installed, while interior framing and site work continue. The attached photographs available on the RMB website document progress as observed in October 2026. The department has also received portable water-handling equipment, with operational deployment details to be confirmed. Since the last Council meeting, the department has responded to four emergency incidents.

18. **Next Meetings:**
    a) **Election Nomination Period** - October 7th to October 16th **Now Closed**
    b) **Municipal General Election Day** - ***Monday, November 2, 2026***
    c) **Final Current Council Meeting** - Wednesday, November 18th at 7:pm. Meeting to be held in the Upstairs Meeting Hall, Wood Islands Market
    d) **Swearing in of Newly Elected Council** – Wednesday, December 9th at 7:pm. Meeting to be held in the Upstairs Meeting Hall, Wood Islands Market
    e) **RMB Holiday/Tree-Lighting Party** - Saturday, December 12th starting at 6:pm. Party to be held in the Courtyard and the Upstairs Meeting Hall, Wood Islands Market – Everyone Welcome
    f) **Note** – **A Tree and Courtyard Decorating Work Party** will take place on Saturday, November 28th from 10:am – 2:pm. Both Councils and their friends and families are invited to join in :o)

The public portion of the meeting ended at 8:23pm

19. **Motion to Move In-Camera for a Confidential HR Discussion**

Moved by ***Councillor Gamble*** and **seconded** by ***Deputy Mayor Docherty*** to move into In-Camera for a Confidential HR discussion.
Votes for: **6** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

Councillor Kinnee Departed at 8:30pm

20. **A Motion to Move Out of In-Camera from a confidential HR discussion.**

Moved by ***Councillor McGivern*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Carter*** to move out of In-Camera from a Confidential HR discussion.
Votes for: **5** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried Unanimously***

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

Date of the In-Camera Session:	***October 21, 2026***
In Attendance:	***All Council Members and CAO Bob Brooks***
Topic of Discussion:	***Confidential HR Matter***
Result:	***To make a public motion, as follows:***

21. **A Decision was required as a result of the Confidential HR discussion, as follows:**

Moved by ***Councillor McGivern*** and **seconded** by ***Councillor Carter*** to accept the proposal as discussed regarding CAO Bob Brooks.
Votes for: **5** Votes against: **0** Result: ***Carried***

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

Moved by ***Councillor Carter*** to adjourn the meeting at: ***8:49pm***

Meeting Minutes Approved On: _____

_____ _____
Mayor – Garth Gillis CAO – Bob Brooks