

APRIL 14, 2025
STELLARTON, NOVA SCOTIA

MEETING

A meeting of the Stellarton Town Council was held on Monday, April 14, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

PRESENT

Mayor Darren Stroud, Couns. Sandra Eis, Mark Fortune, Susan Campbell and Garry Pentz. Also present was CAO Susan Higdon, Town Account Brenda MacKay, Fire Chief Mike O'Sullivan, Marketing and Communications Paige Draper and Town Engineer Blaine Murray

1. AGENDA

The Agenda was approved as amended to include #10. Police Commission Recommendations, and 14. Auburn Avenue on motion by Coun. G. Pentz, seconded by Coun. S. Campbell. **Motion Carried.**

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from March 10, 2025 Regular Council were approved on motion by Coun. S. Eis seconded by Coun. M. Fortune. **Motion Carried.**

3. Business Arising from the Minutes

a. Deer Population – CAO S. Higdon stated that at a previous Committee of the Whole meeting, the Deer Population was on the Agenda, where it was asked to bring issue to the Mayors and Warden meeting by their Chair Mayor Stroud; he invited Suzanne Adshead, from the Department of Natural Resources to attend as well. New Glasgow has been doing work re the deer population; Ms. Adshead stressed the importance of public understanding of issue. When New Glasgow did their survey, it was determined that 50% liked the deer and 50% didn't like the deer; the idea is to control the population; not looking at a cull. Some recommendations were to do a survey of the residents; New Glasgow set a "No Feeding" bylaw; all the municipalities are going to work together. More information to come.

b. Pictou Antigonish Regional Library – Funding – CAO S. Higdon reported that the Pictou Antigonish Regional Library had some funding issues from the Province; discussions with the municipalities; the Mayors and Warden meeting on March 31, Mayor L. White of Westville asked all the municipalities to write a letter to the Hon. Dave Richie, Dept. of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage; to encourage the government of Nova Scotia to negotiate a new and appropriate multi-year funding arrangement for the Pictou Antigonish Libraries; letter was sent out early April. A letter was received today from the Chief Librarian Eric Stackhouse, requesting a grant increase from the 8 municipalities in their region. The Town of Stellarton's increase is \$1,791.00 which has been budgeted for. Coun. G. Pentz commented that libraries are overlooked by government, and fully supports funding. Mayor D. Stroud commented on the important services provided by the libraries.

4. Proclamation – Lyme Disease Awareness Month

Mayor D. Stroud read Proclamation raising epilepsy awareness for the record; proclaiming May 2025 as Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

5. Proclamation – Gaelic Nova Scotia Month

Mayor D. Stroud read Proclamation for the record; proclaiming May 2025 as Gaelic Nova Scotia Month.

Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve Proclamations, seconded by Coun. S. Eis.
Motion Carried.

6. Presentation

Town Accountant B. MacKay presented the following, highlights:

- 2025-2026 General Operations Budget – Total Residential and Resource Assessments \$244,046,100 for Total Taxes of \$4,588,067; Commercial Assessments \$92,110,500 for Total Taxes of \$3,960,752.
- General Operating Budget
 - o Revenue Budget total at \$10,257,156; no change in the tax rates
 - o Sewer Charge added for 2025-2025 of \$250,000; higher interest revenue
 - o Total Expenditures at \$10,257,156.
 - o Balanced Budget
- 2025-2025 Water Utility Operating Budget
 - o Water Meters will be in place for Q3 and Q4 billing; metered revenue 50% and flat rate revenue 50%
 - o Total Revenue is \$2,425,510
 - o Operating Expenditures at \$2,144,079 with additional \$431,716 Interest & Principal on debt charges
 - o Transfer from Surplus of \$150,285 to balance budget
- 2025-2026 General Capital Budget
 - o Equipment purchases
 - o Recreation
 - o General – Robertson Memorial Park
 - o Fire Department
 - o Infrastructure Projects – Sewer Lines
 - o Total Capital at \$2,706,000
 - o Funding from the Canada Community-Building Fund, Debt Financing, Provincial GRID Funding, Provincial PCAP Funding, Provincial Recreation Funding, Contributions, and the General Capital Reserve
 - o Total Funding at \$2,706,000
- 2025-2026 Water Capital Budget
 - o Equipment Purchases
 - o Infrastructure Projects
 - o Total Capital at \$2,149,250
 - o Funded by the Water Depreciation Fund, Provincial GRID Funding and Debt Financing for \$2,149,250

B. MacKay asked for motion to approve the PCAP for the South Foord Street sewer line renewal project.

Moved by Coun. G. Pentz, seconded by Coun. S. Campbell that Council approve the South Foord St. Sewer Line Renewal Project for \$372,000 and the application to be filed through the Provincial Capital Assistance Program for 2025-2026. **Motion Carried.**

CAO S. Higdon read the following resolution:

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Stellarton that the assessment for 2025-2026 is confirmed at \$92,110,500 for commercial;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the assessment for residential and resource is confirmed at \$244,046,100;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the tax rates for 2025-2026 be approved at \$1.88 per \$100 of residential and resource assessment and \$4.30 per \$100 commercial assessment;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the General Operating Budget for 2025-2026 is approved at \$10,257,156;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the General Capital Budget for 2025-2026 is approved at \$2,706,000

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Water Operating Budget for 2025-2026 is approved at \$2,425,510 for Revenue and \$2,575,795 for expenditures;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Water Capital Budget for 2025-2026 is approved at \$2,149,250

Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve resolution, seconded by Coun. S. Eis. **Motion Carried.**

Mayor D. Stroud comments on balanced budget and no change to tax rates.

Detailed Budget documents available online and at the Town Office.

Town Account B. MacKay left the meetings

7. **Reports from Staff: March (Attached and available online)**

a. Chief Mark Hobeck – Stellarton Police Service

CAO S. Higdon reviewed report to Council; 219 Calls in March; Events include Sgt. Irving attended a school advisory committee meeting at Dr. W.A. MacLeod; Sgt. Morrell attended a board meeting for the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre; and Cst. Vandergrift and Cst. Berthier attended G. R. Saunders Elementary School and presented an internet safety talk. They had 7 hours of Foot Patrol; 135 hours of Traffic Enforcement; and 11 hours of Community Relations.

Coun. G. Pentz made motion to accept Police Service Report, seconded by Coun. S. Campbell. **Motion Carried.**

b. Fire Chief Mike O'Sullivan – Fire Department

Chief O'Sullivan reported that the Stellarton Fire Department had 8 calls in March; practices were held every Thursday evening with an average of 13 members attending; Equipment checks were completed weekly with 4 – 5 members performing the equipment checks.

Coun. M. Fortune motioned to accept Fire Department's report for March 2025, seconded by Coun. S. Eis. **Motion Carried.**

c. Paige Draper – Marketing and Communications

P. Draper added to her report that Day Camp registration is now open which is being organized and coordinated by the YMCA, and is being hosted out of the G. R. Saunders Elementary School.

Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve the Marketing and Communications report, seconded by Coun. S. Campbell. **Motion Carried.**

d. Blaine Murray – Town Engineer

Town Engineer Blaine Murray presented reports to Council; commenting on the Rutherford Infrastructure Upgrades project is out for tender; the Traffic structure at the Acadia / Foord corner has been reinstalled. On the Water Report, he commented that they are installing outstanding water meters; staff is out trouble-shooting communication issues with the radio transmitters.

Coun. G. Pentz commented on the reduced consumption of water compared to the same time last year.

Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve Town Engineer's Reports, seconded by Coun. M. Fortune. **Motion Carried.**

8. Correspondence

a. Fibromyalgia Association Canada Re: Request for Light Up – CAO S. Higdon stated that Council has been asked to approve the illumination of the Town Hall in purple, for Fibromyalgia Association of Canada awareness; this was done in the past. Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve lighting the Town Hall in purple for Fibromyalgia awareness, seconded by Coun. S. Eis. **Motion Carried.**

b. Healthy Pictou County Re: Monthly Report – CAO S. Higdon re for Council's information.

9. Committee of the Whole Report

The following recommendation is for Council's consideration from the Committee of the Whole meeting held on March 24, 2025:

Recommendation #1

On recommendation of Committee of the Whole Council approve the flag raisings for Disability Pride, Pride and Gaelic Awareness Month.

This was discussed at the Committee of the Whole meeting.

Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve recommendations from Committee of the Whole, seconded by Coun. S. Campbell. **Motion Carried.**

10. Police Commission Report

The following recommendation is for Council's consideration from the Police Commission meeting held on April 3, 2025.

Recommendation #1

On recommendation of the Police Commission, Council formally request to acquire the RCMP detachment located on Foord Street for a nominal fee once it is decommissioned. The purpose of acquiring the building is for the Stellarton Police Department.

Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve recommendation from the Police Commission, seconded by Coun. M. Fortune. **Motion Carried.**

Mayor D. Stroud commented on the recommendation of the Police Commission, that this decision made sense for building accessibility and designed for a police department.

11. Volunteer of the Year 2025 – P. Draper reported that 12 nominations for the Francis Bud MacKay Volunteer of the Year Award were received; a blind selection process was conducted at the Committee of the Whole; Jodi Matlock has been selected as Stellarton's Volunteer of the Year. Her volunteer contributions include working with the YMCA, Johnny Miles event, New Glasgow Kinettes, Soccer Coach, Can-Skate Coach, and volunteered at the Elementary School.

12. Equity and Anti Racism Plan – P. Draper reported that she and CAO S. Higdon sat on a Planning Organizing Committee regionally (Westville, Trenton, Pictou and the Municipality of Pictou County), New Glasgow already has a plan; this is mandated by the Province; a finalized plan was submitted to the Committee of the Whole meeting for review; looking for Council's approval to submit to the province. Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve submitting the Equity and Anti Racism Plan to the Province, seconded by Coun. S. Eis. **Motion Carried.**

13. 2025-2028 Town of Stellarton Strategic Plan – CAO S. Higdon commented that Council and senior staff held a planning session on February 4 for strategic direction based on Council's priorities; she noted that this is a living / working document; adjustments can be made; some priorities and action plans include the Town Hall (to

eliminate barriers for accessibility and provide goods and services to all Stellarton citizens); to continue to expand the Albion Business Park as well as working with businesses along Foord Street; to reduce the deer population in an efficient manner; and to establish a sustainable Recreation program that is accessible to residents. Those are the four priorities put forth to Council for approval. Coun. S. Eis made motion to accept the 2025-2028 Town of Stellarton Strategic Plan, seconded by Coun. M. Fortune.

Coun. S. Eis commented on establishing a Recreation Committee of volunteers from the community for their input.

Motion Carried.

14. Resolution for Pre-Approval of Debenture Issuance Subject to Interest Rate

CAO S. Higdon referred to previous resolution that allowed borrowing; this is an actual resolution that states we are going to borrow. S. Higdon read the following resolution:

WHEREAS clause 66 (1) of the *Municipal Government Act* (the “Act”) provides that a municipality may borrow to carry out an authority to expend funds for capital purposes conferred by the Act or another Act of the Legislature;

AND WHEREAS clause 91(1)(a) of the Act provides that where a municipality is authorized to borrow money, subject to the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (the “Minister”), that the sum shall be borrowed by the issue and sale of debentures, in one sum or by installments, as determined by the council;

AND WHEREAS clause 91(1)(b) of the *Municipal Government Act* authorizes the council to determine the amount and term of, and the rate of interest, on each debenture, when the interest on a debenture is to be paid, and where the principal and interest on a debenture are to be paid;

AND WHEREAS clause 91(2) of the *Municipal Government Act* states, that in accordance with the *Finance Act*, the mayor or warden and clerk or the person designated by the council, by policy, shall sell and deliver the debentures on behalf of the municipality at the price, in the sums and in the manner deemed proper;

AND WHEREAS the resolution of council to borrow for was approved by the municipal council on February 10, 2025.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED

THAT under the authority of Section 91 of the *Municipal Government Act*, the Town of Stellarton borrow by the issue and sale of debentures a sum or sums not exceeding \$2,080,000.00, for a period not to exceed 25 years, subject to the approval of the Minister;

THAT the sum be borrowed by the issue and sale of debentures of the Town of Stellarton in the amount that the mayor or warden and clerk or the person designated by the council deems proper, provided the average interest rate of the debenture does not exceed the rate of 6.5%;

THAT the debenture be arranged with the Province of Nova Scotia with interest to be paid semi-annually and principal payments made annually;

THAT this resolution remains in force for a period not exceeding twelve months from the passing of this resolution.

Coun. G. Pentz made motion to approve the Resolution for Pre-Approval of Debenture Issuance Subject to Interest Rate, seconded by Coun. S. Campell. **Motion Carried.**

15. Auburn Avenue – Coun. G. Pentz commented on section of Auburn Avenue where it connects to the county property; it is in dire need of repair. Coun. G. Pentz made motion to ask the Municipality of Pictou County to fix this section of road, seconded by S. Eis. **Motion Carried.**

CAO S. Higdon will draft letter and copy the province.

16. Open Forum

Carrie Anderson, owner of the Day Care on Foord Street, comments:

- Rat problem at neighbour house
- Rats found on the day care playground

CAO S. Higdon commented that the Town's policy states that we do not deal with rats unless it is an area-wide problem; she spoke with our Dangerous and Unsightly Official, he has determined that it is not an area-wide issue. S. Higdon did report that there is an order to clean the garbage on property by next week; if owner does not comply, the Town will perform the clean-up and put incurring costs on their taxes.

Carrie Anderson commented on the fires that occurred in the house and it seems that there is no water as well. CAO S. Higdon replied that they are paying for water.

Mayor D. Stroud re area-wide problems and the proper procedure.

Coun. G. Pentz reiterated concerns with rats around day care and children and thanked Carrie for her patience.

17. Next Council Meeting: Monday, May 12, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

18. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned on motion by Coun. G. Pentz.

MAYOR

CAO