

**TOWN OF STELLARTON
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
January 27, 2025**

MEETING

A Committee of the Whole meeting of Stellarton Town Council was held on Monday, January 27, 2025 at 5:31 p.m. in the large Committee Room, Stellarton Town Hall.

PRESENT

Chair Deputy Mayor S. Eis, Councillor S. Campbell and Councillor M. Fortune. Also present was Mayor D. Stroud, CAO S. Higdon. Regrets were received from Councillor G. Pentz.

1. **Call to Order** Chair S. Eis called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

2. **Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as presented with two amendments: one addition, Under Correspondence, 5.b. Sobeys Complex and one correction to the agenda, correct meeting date should be February 24, 2025 on motion Councillor S. Campbell seconded by Councillor M. Fortune. Motion carried.

Mayor D. Stroud joined the meeting in progress. He was given an update on the amended agenda.

3. **Approval of Previous Minutes**

The Minutes of the November 25, 2025, meeting were deemed approved as written with one edit: change "is" to "if", Under Item 5 a. Report from Returning Officer J. MacDonald. Last sentence.

4. **Business Arising from the Minutes**

a. **Pictou County Roots for Youth**

S. Higdon requested direction on the request from Pictou County Roots for Youth – exemption from residential property taxes for their Poplar Street property. A discussion took place. Councillors S. Campbell, Mayor D. Stroud and Deputy Mayor S. Eis were all in agreement that the Town already provides a significant financial break for the existing tax exemption for Pictou County Roots for Youth's Stellar Street property. Chair Deputy Mayor S. Eis would still like to see Pictou County Roots for Youth make a presentation to Council re: to get awareness of what they offer and how the municipalities can support this organization. She would like to focus on other ways that we can support them and teach other municipalities about this organization and how we can all help. Councillor M. Fortune said he looks at the value of places like Pictou County Roots for Youth and how necessary they are. He said he doesn't know about the Town's finances but if we are in

a position to help out, he would like to. Mayor D. Stroud thinks coming in an asking for another exemption is a lot to ask from a treasury that he doesn't feel new Council has a handle on yet. Moved by Councillor M. Fortune, seconded by Councillor Campbell, to grant a tax exemption to the Poplar St. Property for Roots for Youth. Councillor Fortune was in favor of authorizing the tax exemption, while Mayor D. Stroud and Councillors S. Eis and S. Campbell were opposed. Motion was denied. S. Higdon will inform the Executive Director of Roots for Youth of the Town's decision.

b. Strategic Plan

Strategic planning session set for February 4th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Holiday Inn on Lawrence Blvd. Lunch to be provided.

5. Correspondence

a. Department of Emergency Management

Re: Moving Towards Consistent and Impactful Emergency Response

S. Higdon reported on correspondence discussed at a recent REMO meeting from Kim Masland, Minister for the Department of Emergency Management, a department established in the Spring of 2024 by the provincial government because of the devastating hurricanes, wildfires and floods Nova Scotia communities and residents have endured over the last few years. The Minister is requesting municipalities put protocols in place during an emergency response. CAO Higdon reported the municipalities are not in agreement with all the suggested protocols, and REMO has asked the municipalities to draft a letter to the Minister addressing their concerns. S. Higdon will send the letter to Council members as information once drafted.

b. Sobeys Complex

S. Higdon reported receiving an email from Andy Kenny, Highland District Soccer Association. The current heating system at the WM Sobeys Indoor Sports Complex urgently requires replacement. The Association plans to approach the province for a grant aimed at recreational facilities to help fund this replacement. This grant would enable them to replace the outdated oil-fire furnace (which has served for over 18 years), with four propane-fire wall heaters. The email says failure of their current heat source would result in a complete loss of heating and potential closure of the facility. The estimated cost for this project is between \$110,000 and \$120,000. Last year the Association applied for the grant but were unsuccessful. S. Higdon said this year the Association is asking all local municipalities and major sports groups to provide a brief letter of support to include with their application.

The grant is due mid February. Council members agreed to send a letter of support. S. Higdon will draft a letter.

6. **Deer Population – May 24, 2022 Committee of the Whole Minutes**

Deputy Mayor S. Eis brought to Council's attention after receiving complaints from residents. S. Higdon shared the minutes of May of 2022 where representatives from the Department of Natural Resources attended a Committee of the Whole meeting to discuss the overpopulation of deer in town. With the rising concern of deer within the town, S. Higdon said it is impossible for one municipality to control the deer population alone. Councillors reported receiving deer complaints while campaigning. Mayor D. Stroud asked if we have a bylaw in place. S. Higdon said the previous Council refused to put a bylaw in place; hard to enforce. Mayor D. Stroud thinks there needs to be a coordinated effort among municipalities. He thinks this needs to be a coordinated conversation at a Mayors and Warden meeting. Recognize it as an issue. It involves all municipalities. Involve the Dept. of Natural Resources, get their take on it, tap into their knowledge. He said we do it openly and collaboratively with our towns and engage the public so that at some point when we make a decision, based on the evidence, research and the knowledge of our professionals. He said if we do it in an educated and transparent fashion, at least we are moving forward together with the public being in the know and us drawing on available resources from the Department of Natural Resources.

Council asked to take the issue to a Mayors and Warden meeting in April for discussion and report back to Council.

7. **Viola's Place Society**

Mayor D. Stroud reported that representatives from Viola's Place Society gave a presentation at a recent Mayors and Warden meeting. The society is looking for support to have a consultant complete a written report to create a Regional Strategy to address Housing and Homelessness Needs across Pictou County. He said they are looking for \$13000 plus HST from the municipalities; a six-way split of the cost. Members agreed to take it back to their respective Councils for consideration. Councillor M. Fortune asked if the society receives provincial funding. S. Higdon said this study is not eligible for provincial funding. Mayor D. Stroud thinks this is the society's method to get the municipalities into the conversation, draw support other than operational funding. He thinks it would be great to help them move forward. S. Eis said she would be in support of a one time six-way split to support this momentum toward getting things more organized for them with the study.

Mayor D Stroud moved a recommendation to Council that the Town of Stellarton support to pay 1/6 of the sharing cost with the other six municipalities for the study for Viola's Place, seconded by Councillor S. Campbell. **Motion Carried.**

8. Capital Cost Approval – Stellarton Fire Department

S. Higdon reported that the fire department purchased six sets of bunker gear at a cost of \$30,000.00. S. Higdon said because this capital item was not approved under the capital budget for 2024-2025, she would need a recommendation to Council to approve this capital cost. S. Higdon said Council is the only body that can approve capital items. S. Higdon noted that the fire department did receive provincial funding from the Emergency Services Provides Fund (ESPF) for \$20,000. This fund is to help first responder organizations buy emergency response equipment. Organizations can apply every three years for the funding. S. Higdon said the invoice for the gear is \$30,000; due date January 30th. S. Higdon explained that we would pay the full invoice, then the fire department would give us the funding they received from ESPF, which would go towards the equipment invoice.

Mayor D Stroud moved to recommend to Council payment of this invoice, seconded by S. Campbell. Councillor M. Fortune declared a conflict. **Motion Carried.**

9. GPS Tender Approval

S. Higdon reported that the engineering department needs to purchase a new GNSS (GPS) survey system. S. Higdon reported quotes were received from three GNSS equipment suppliers:

1.	Sitech	\$22,190.00 plus HST	Trimble R580 & TDC 601 Data Collector
2.	Brandt	\$24,289.00 plus HST	TopCon HiPer, CR & FC 6400 Data Collector
3.	Cansel	\$26,254.84 plus HST	Spectra SP100 & Trimble TC5 Data Collector

The Town's Civil Engineering Technologist, Darryl Moss recommended the Town go with #1 Sitech. In his report he noted that Sitech service/technical support has been recommended as well.

Councillor S. Campbell made a motion to recommend to Council to purchase the recommended GSP survey system as per the engineer's report recommendation: Sitech's Trimble R580 & TDC 601 Data Collector system for \$22,190.00 plus HST, seconded by Mayor D. Stroud. Discussion on the motion. S. Higdon said \$25,000 was approved in the 2024-2025 capital budget for this system. **Motion Carried.**

10. Water Utility – Capital Pre-approval for Membrane 1

S. Higdon reported that membrane #1 needs to be replaced at the water treatment facility. She reported that the Town Engineer will be bringing this request to Council in March during budget discussions under Water Capital, but pre-approval is needed now to place an order for the membrane as there is a 30-45 week delivery date. The cost of membrane is \$191,540 plus HST. S. Higdon said the membrane is an essential item and the water

system cannot be run without it and because it is a replacement item, three quotes are not required. The membrane has a five-seven-year shelf life.

Mayor D. Stroud moved a motion to purchase a membrane from Veolia Water Technologies for \$191,540 plus HST, seconded by M. Fortune. On the discussion, Mayor D. Stroud felt it would have been nice to have the Town Engineer in attendance to ask questions when dealing with such a large expense item. S. Higdon understood his concern and agreed but felt as it was an essential purchase and the engineer would not be needed. She added that she would have the engineer attend the February Council meeting to answer and questions or concerns. **Motion Carried.**

Mayor D. Stroud would be interested in having department heads in attendance at Council meetings to present their reports and interface with Council. S. Higdon said if there is a huge expense item on the agenda, she could have the department head in attendance to answer questions. Deputy Mayor Chair S. Eis asked if it can be looked at on a case-by-case basis. This was agreed to by Council. S. Higdon said if a Council member would like to have a department head attend a meeting to ask questions it is important that they let her know in advance of the meeting.

11. **Bulky Waste Collection**

S. Higdon reported that there is an option under the GFL contract to do a bulky waste collection. S. Higdon said this collection would take place on the Town's regular garbage collection week at a cost of \$1.25 per household with the tipping fees unknown. S. Higdon said GFL would collect the regular garbage and within two to three days come back to collect the bulky items. She said it is possible the items could sit all weekend before pickup. Pictou County Shared Authority is recommending all municipalities in or nothing. S. Higdon said the concern that she saw was items sitting two or three days before pickup. Councillor S. Eis does not like the "extra cost" commitment every two weeks. Councillor M. Fortune likes the idea of it but said there are too many unknowns like the tipping fees. Councillor S. Campbell agreed.

It was moved by Mayor D. Stroud that the Town of Stellarton is not interested in a bulky waste collection, seconded by Councillor S. Campbell. **Motion Carried.**

12. **Next meeting date: February 24, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.,** with an Audit Meeting at 5 p.m.

13. **Adjournment** motion by Councillor Fortune