



Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

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

COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 7:00 PM

Upstairs Hall, 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 (*regrets*) Ashley Feschuk

Please Be Aware: RMB Council Meetings are Livestreamed to facebook.com/belfastpei

Item Order of Business

1. **Call to Order** – Council Meeting called to order by Mayor Gillis at 7:00 PM. CAO Bob Brooks sends his regrets due to a family matter, and in his place for this Council Meeting was: Administration – Ashley Feschuk.

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** – Any other suggested Agenda Items for today’s meeting? – (*a number of additional items were added to the Agenda and placed under Item 16*)

Moved by **Deputy Mayor Docherty** and seconded by **Councillor Carter** to adopt the agenda as presented/amended.

Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

4. **Public Presentations (if any)** –There were no requests for any public presentations.

5. **Adoption of the June 21, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes** (*previously distributed; all changes incorporated*).

Moved by **Councillor McGivern** and seconded by **Councillor Gamble** to approve the Minutes of the June 21, 2023 Council Meeting as presented.

Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

6. **Business arising from the June 21, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes** (*already addressed in today’s agenda – no other items*).

7. **CAO Report** (*presented by Acting CAO – Ashley Feschuk*)

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

i. **Provincial Credit Union Account Balances at August 8, 2023:**

a. Share Acct 001	\$5.35
b. Chequing Acct 010	\$25,021.10
c. Gas Tax (CCBF) Acct 011 (<i>for approved projects</i>)	\$69,577.74

d. Reserve Savings Acct 020	\$37.03
e. Gas Tax (CCBF) GIC Acct 040 <i>(for approved projects)</i>	\$50,501.20
f. Reserve Savings GICs; Acct 041 & 042	\$66,438.49
(Breakdown as approved)	
1. RMB Expansion Reserve	\$25,000.00
2. Emergency Preparedness Reserve	\$5,000.00
3. 2 nd Warming Ctr Generator Reserve	\$5,000.00
4. Remaining*	\$31,438.49
<i>(*to be considered during Annual Budget Deliberations)</i>	

All RMB Revenues and Expenditures are on track for 23/24 so far. The CAO finalised the costs for the Budget/Strategic Plan approved computer and networking equipment for the 23/24 fiscal year and is underway. Audit documents are complete and will be provided to the Auditor (deadline not until October). CAO has redefined current workload to be in sync with recently approved 23/24 – 26/27 Strategic Plan.

8. **Meeting with local MLA and Speaker of the House, the Honourable Darlene Compton** *(report written by CAO Bob Brooks – for information only)* – On Monday, August 7th, CAO Bob Brooks met with RMB’s local MLA and Speaker of the House, the Honourable Darlene Compton. All in all, this was a very positive introductory meeting and one where the possibility of more future updates and collaboration on common issues was discussed, and will be pursued.

During the meeting, our MLA was brought up to current on the growth of the municipality over the last five years, and the compliance with the *Municipal Government Act*. More specifically, MLA Compton was made aware of the latest RMB Strategic Plan, the large number of activities, and the desire of this Council to be involved in issues of concern to the residents of RMB, including issues that need the cooperation and consultation with other orders of government. Four specific issues were discussed at this meeting:

- i. ***A sustainable/reliable two-ferry service at Wood Islands:*** MLA Compton was very well aware of this issue and had our letters of concern and the Premier’s support letters in hand. Our MLA was also well aware of the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce activities in this regard and all the options that they are looking into. I informed our MLA that RMB recently joined the Chamber to closer follow and participate in the Ferry issue. RMB’s position is that, at minimum, RMB is looking for a Sustainable/Reliable Two-Ferry Service for Wood Islands and the Premier’s letters also seem to support that position.
- ii. ***The ShopBelfastPEI initiative that was born out of the failures at the Wood Island Ferry Service:*** The CAO updated our MLA about the ShopBelfastPEI – local purchase program, that was created due to the Ferries at Wood Islands going out of service on and on. The CAO made a point to talk about how well it is being received and how local residents are stepping up to help fill the void left by the missing tourist visitor segment. The CAO also made a point of thanking the Department of Tourism for its immediate help in this initiative.
- iii. ***A Rural Public Transit Service (Charlottetown; down the Trans-Canada Highway to Wood Islands, and on to Montague:*** MLA Compton was aware of our interest in having a Rural Public Transit Route that specifically covers the RMB service area and beyond. Our MLA has already been in contact with the Department and Minister involved to find out more, and will continue to follow-up.

- iv. **Drivers Passing Stopped School Buses:** MLA Compton was also very much aware of the school bus issue, and mentioned that she would be in touch with the Minister responsible. MLA Compton did say that typically, public information campaigns often start each school year to inform/warn drivers. Our MLA also pointed out, that they have heard lots about the issue lately, especially in the Iona area. The CAO also pointed out that RMB would be more than happy to utilize RMB facilities like our website, Facebook, newsletters, etc. to push that safety message.

RMB will continue to follow these issues with our MLA and other members and orders of government as and when required. Below are the four issues, as presented for discussion by two of the RMB Councillors:

9. **ShopBelfastPEI (Local Purchase Program) Update** (presented by Councillor Katherine Bryson and Councillor Trisha Carter) – With \$3000 provided to RMB from Tourism PEI our office was able to launch a ‘buy local’ campaign with 21 participating retail businesses. The premise of this program is for individuals to visit at least 5 participating businesses, collecting a stamp at each location, and then be entered to win a \$500 visa gift card. The draw to take place on September 15th. The response from the program has been great, from businesses the community and tourists. We have posters throughout Queens and King’s County and have information cards available at all Tourism PEI welcome sites across the island.

Locally made T-shirts are available for purchase at RMB office or at Galla Designs Studio for \$30, which covers the cost of the t-shirt and provides us with \$5 towards next years program. RMB would also like to thank the Belfast Historical Society, Big Belfast and Audrey Shillaber for sharing their ‘Passport & Fun Map’ template and allowing RMB to adapt and expand it.

Councillor Bryson acknowledged the fact that not all businesses who wanted to participate were able to this year, and this is because we were advised to keep it within the municipality due to time and cost constraints. RMB appreciates all businesses both inside and outside our municipality who support our residents and provide services here. RMB is looking at expanding the program next year and will provide more information on that during the next phase of development.

10. **Public Transit connection for RMB Area** (presented by Councillor Trisha Carter) – On July 20th, RMB reached out to the Department of Transportation and MLA Darlene Compton to start the lobby for an additional route to the PEI Rural Public Transit System. This additional route would see a bus come from Charlottetown, down the Trans Canada Highway to Wood Islands and the Ferry, then on to Montague for further connections and return. The Department of Transportation and MLA Compton is currently reviewing the request.
11. **Drivers Passing Stopped School Buses** (presented by Councillor Katherine Bryson) – On July 13th Councillor Bryson sent a letter to the Minister of Education, Natalie Jamieson, MLA Darlene Compton, MLA Corey Deagle and the Premier’s Office. That letter was forwarded from the Minister of Education’s office to the (then) Director of Public Schools Branch, Norbert Carpenter, and the Director of Transportation and Risk Management for PBS, Dave Gillis. To follow-up on this issue the RMB office sent a letter on July 27th, to the Department of Education and MLA Darlene Compton, to voice RMB concerns about drivers passing unloading School Buses without consequence. RMB has received no response from their letter, however, Councillor Bryson has received a response acknowledging the issue from Minister Compton as well as a lengthy response from Dave Gillis.

The correspondence will be posted to our website www.ruralmunicipalityofbelfast@gmail.com MLA Compton has met with COA Bob Brooks and this was one of the items discussed at length. Updates will be provided as more information becomes available on this issue.

12. **Wood Islands Ferry Issue** (presented by Councillor Trisha Carter and Councillor Katherine Bryson) – July 18th, Mayor Gillis, CAO Bob Brooks, Councillor Carter, Councillor Bryson and Administration Ashley Feschuk attended a meeting held by Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce. This was an information session in which politicians were invited, as well as a few key speakers and business members of the chamber. The general public was also invited to this meeting as well. Overall, the meeting was effective in getting the points across but a plan of action was not established.

Following this meeting RMB became a registered member with the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce to keep informed on the issue and to work in collaboration with the chamber to find a solution.

On August 8th, RMB was invited to attend a lunch meeting organized by the Chamber and hosted by the official opposition, conservative government, Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce. MP Eric Duncan attended. Councillor Carter and Councillor Bryson attended this meeting and a full report is available on our RMB website. It was advised that there are numerous second-hand ferries available for purchase in Europe and it would be the responsibility of Transport Canada to look at the potential purchase of one of these ships.

Councillor Bryson and Councillor Carter highlighted the need to look at this issue from three angles the first one being a contingency plan if the bridge isn't accessible, secondly from an emergency angle – if the bridge is blocked or overburdened for short amount of time (speed at which individuals can receive essential lifesaving medical care from the IWK Health Centre or specialists in Halifax. Also, the speed at which individuals can leave the island should there be an emergency event. Lastly, the economic and commerce angle which focuses primarily on tourism, import and export shipping – viability of rural life in Eastern PEI. Updates on this issue will be ongoing as more information becomes available.

13. **Saltwire Flyer Distribution** (presented by Administration, Ashley Feschuk) – Saltwire continues to communicate with our office on regular basis in regards to the implementation of the flyer boxes and trees which are now in place. There were a few minor issues with installment and advertising but those concerns have been addressed. A concern was raised that some residents may not be aware that this change has occurred with distribution however, residents were given a notice in the mail from Saltwire in advance of this change of service. It was also announced on the RMB Facebook page, multiple social media groups and in the Belfast newsletter.
14. **Website Activity and Facebook Livestreaming Update** (presented by Administration, Ashley Feschuk). RMB Facebook has 614 followers with 10 new likes in August so far to date. Each RMB post reaches approximately 1600 people with our top views of our livestream coming from Vernon Bridge at 148, Charlottetown 129 and Montague 82. 70% of our audience is women and 30% men. Our new campaign for shopbelfastpei has a new Facebook page which already has 73 followers and posts on that platform reach an average of 689 people. Follow our new Instagram account @shopbelfastpei to stay up to date with what participating businesses are up to!

15. **Wellness Centre Progress/Updates** (presented by Acting CAO, Ashley Feschuk) – A meeting has been set up for Monday, September 4th between the Belfast Community Development Corporation (BCDC) (Board and Staff); the Belfast Rec Centre (Board and Staff) and RMB (Mayor and CAO). The concept is to get all three parties together to discuss how and/or if, the concept of including a Wellness Centre as part or in conjunction with the current Belfast Rec Centre, is a doable concept. A definition of what a Wellness Centre is was requested; a topic to be discussed at the September 4th meeting. The Mayor and CAO will report on that meeting at the September Council Meeting.
16. **Official Community Plan and Development Bylaw Update** (presented by Acting CAO, Ashley Feschuk) – Now that the Strategic Plan is complete, RMB can now concentrate on the completion of the Official Community Plan and Development Bylaw. RMB has been in discussions with Fotenn to reactivate the process; and the CAO has been in discussions with our selected Development Officer to help RMB complete the process. It is planned to reactivate the public discussions and public process in September, and for as long as it takes. This issue will continue to be a standing Agenda item until complete.
17. **New Business for the Agenda** (as discussed in Approval of Agenda, Item 3 above)
 - a. **Speeding on Pond's Road** (presented by Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty) A resident has expressed concern to Deputy Mayor Docherty in regards to speeding on Pond's Road. This is one of our many rural roads where lots of children, horses and residents frequent. The concern is that tourists may not be aware that this road ends suddenly and that it is becoming more dangerous for locals. Administration suggested that RMB reaches out to our RCMP Community liaison for some guidance and the possibility of some added patrols to that area. The Halliday Wharf Road is also one of concern in regards to speed and will be added to the list to discuss in further detail with RCMP. Councillor Carter mentioned that GPS will sometimes redirect tourists off the Coastal Hwy and up the Selkirk Road so the idea of a potential Scenic Highway sign was proposed. Administration will follow up on that idea at our September Council meeting upon further research into the idea.
 - b. **Used Needles Found in Public Spaces** (presented by Councillor Katherine Bryson) In July it was brought to the attention of Councillor Bryson that there was drug paraphernalia found on Holiday Wharf Beach and also at Pinette Park. A request was made to Darlene Compton's office from a constituent to have the province clean-up and discard the materials, they were advised from her office that there currently no service providing that assistance on PEI. Councillor Bryson thanked the Halliday's who graciously cleaned the beach and disposed of the hazardous materials themselves, thank-fully no needles were discovered. MLA Darlene Compton's office suggested to a local resident that they ask the RCMP to patrol the area and suggested a sharps container be installed at the beach – a suggestion that is not favorable with everyone. Councillor Bryson suggested we research how other municipalities are handling this issue by speaking with a representative from Public Health. Administration suggested that our office reach out to our RCMP liaison officer and ask for some advice and seek more patrols in the area. There will be updates on this issue at our next Council Meeting in September.
 - c. **Plan for Upcoming Hurricane Season** (presented by Councillor Katherine Bryson) Going into the 23/24 Hurricane season we are much better prepared than last year. RMB now have an established warming center for our Municipality, the generator has been installed and is ready should it be needed. Council also voted to have money allocated for the costs of running this operation set aside in an emergency account.

The warming centre will be located at the Belfast Rec Centre in Eldon. Steps are in place to have it running within 24 hours of a crisis. Memorandum of Understanding is currently in draft form with the Belfast Rec Centre and work is currently underway with the Wood Islands and Area Development Corporation (WIADC) for use of a secondary site, funding is available to start work on that right away. RMB Administration has prepared notices for social media along with our website and newsletter to be released in the coming weeks to inform residents of the location of the new warming centre along with tips on how to prepare for major weather-related events.

- d. **Community Pantry Update** (presented by Councillor Katherine Bryson) Work has been done to improve the pantry over the summer. Keir MacLeod's Vinyl Windows and Siding donated screw piles to secure the building and the building now has a more secure foundation. Electrical work was also completed by Vissers and Sons. There is a huge demand for donations, the shelves are frequently empty. Anyone who is able is asked to please donate. Donations are accepted Monday-Friday 8-12 at the RMB Office and at our regularly scheduled council meetings. Cash donations are now being accepted as well as e-transfers which can be sent to communitypantry2022@gmail.com. There is an expected increase in use this month as families prepare to go back to school. Please keep this in mind with donation items.
 - e. **Childcare Concerns** (Presented by Councillor Katherine Bryson) Councillor Bryson was contacted last week by a constituent concerned about the lack of childcare in the municipality of Belfast. Subsequently she was able to contact Chances, a full-time daycare facility in Belfast, run out of the Belfast Consolidated School during the school year and the St. John's Presbyterian Church this Summer. She was able to gather some information which confirmed that we have a waiting list for 75+ children in our region. Chances is currently licensed for 35 Children however they are currently at capacity with 23 children due to staffing issues. Councillor Bryson has committed to further research into this issue and will be providing her findings at our September Council Meeting.
18. **Next Meetings:**
- a. **Regular Meeting of Council** - scheduled for Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Hall at Wood Islands Market.
 - b. **Official Community Plan and Development Bylaw Process Resumption** – *to be determined*
19. **Adjournment** – As there is no further business...

Moved by Councillor Gamble to adjourn the meeting at: **8:34pm**

Ashley

Minutes Approved on: **September 20, 2023**

Signature and Seal on File

Mayor Garth Gillis

Signature and Seal on File

CAO Bob Brooks