



Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

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

COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at 7:00 PM
Upstairs Hall, Wood Islands Market

In Attendance:

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

Guest Speaker: RCMP - GRC Staff Sergeant Mike Robinson

Public: Mark Booth BCDC Sherry Pelkey BAWG

Facebook Livestream (12) on-line; (623) Views by Sep 27th after the meeting.

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.
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** – Many other suggested Agenda Items were added to today's meeting under Item 15.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Docherty and seconded by Councillor Carter to adopt the agenda as amended.
Votes for: 6 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**
4. **RCMP Presentation** – RCMP Staff Sergeant - Mike Robinson, accepted an invitation from RMB to introduce himself to Council; he presented the RCMP August Report for Belfast (*attached*). Staff Sergeant Robinson will be available to attend RMB Council Meetings regularly as his schedule permits and is available to assist RMB with any concerns brought up by Council.
5. **Public Presentations (if any)** –
 - a) **Belfast Area Watershed Group (BAWG) – Watershed Coordinator Sherry Pelkey** – informed Council about the Sustainable Forestry Alliance Information Session coming up on October 12th. This presentation will look at a Model of Forest Management that is ecologically sustainable, climate smart and economically viable. All are welcome to attend October 12th, 7:pm, Upstairs at the Wood Islands Market.
 - b) **Belfast Community Development Corporation (BCDC) Mark Booth**, requested an "in camera" discussion for a Confidential Land Matter – to be held just prior to adjournment.

6. **Adoption of the August 16, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes** (*previously distributed; all changes incorporated*).

Moved by **Councillor Bryson** and seconded by **Councillor Gamble** to approve the Minutes of the August 16, 2023 Council Meeting as presented.

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

7. **Business arising from the August 16, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes** (*already addressed in today's agenda – no other items*).

8. **CAO Report** (*presented by CAO - Bob Brooks*)

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

i. **Provincial Credit Union Account Balances at September 2, 2023:**

a. Share Acct 001	\$5.35
b. Chequing Acct 010	\$30,528.40
c. Gas Tax (CCBF) Acct 011 (<i>for approved projects</i>)	\$97,141.74
d. Reserve Savings Acct 020	\$37.09
e. Gas Tax (CCBF) GIC Acct 040 (<i>for approved projects</i>)	\$52,016.24
f. Reserve Savings GICs; Acct 041 & 042	\$65,438.49
(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*	\$30,438.49

*(*to be considered during Annual Budget Deliberations)*

While there have been a number of changes in RMB operational plans over the past two months; expenditure items are being adapted to a small degree to ensure the RMB Bottom Line stays intact. Many of the operational changes reflect the newly adopted Strategic Plan for 23/24 – 26/27; and are listed in items b), c), d) and e) below.

CAO – Financial and Strategic Plan Related:

- b) **Development Officer** – In late August, the CAO was contacted by the newly proposed Development Officer, informing him that she and her family have decided on a new life-direction for themselves. The CAO wished her all the best in her future endeavours. That call changed several things in RMB's Budget and Strategic Plan:
- i. **Timelines** on the resumption of the Official Plan and Development Bylaw. After speaking with some Executive Members with Municipal Affairs; they confirmed that an extension of time was in place. The feeling I was left with, was that a further extension might be in the cards (unconfirmed).
- a. **Official Plan** – There was discussion that continued consultation and finalization of the Official Plan (might) be possible; that way, even if the Province continued in its duties in municipal area development; they would have RMB's Official Plan in front of them when considering development.
- b. **Development Bylaw** – It was discovered that the Province is still doing some work in that area. Although many municipalities on the Island are already operating with an approved Development Bylaw; some changes, especially for Rural areas, may be forthcoming. A further time extension on that issue may be forthcoming (to be confirmed)

- ii. Due to the changes described above, Development Officer resources were moved to achieving other Strategic Plan direction.
- c) **Bookkeeper** – Upon passage of the new Strategic Plan, it became clear that to achieve many of the objectives within the Strategic Plan, the CAO would need some assistance with some of his current tasks. On September 5th, the CAO hired a part-time bookkeeper to work 12 hours per week. Ms. Kerry White will work on Payroll, Cheque Reconciliation/Data Entry, and Community Grants Program oversight. Funds to cover Ms. White’s activities come from the existing approved budget.
- d) **Network Server** – although originally envisioned that a Network Server System for shared files was necessary to bring on the Development Officer; it was quickly recognised that the same system was also necessary to effectively bring on a bookkeeper. That system is now up and running. RMB had the advantage of using an RMB area local contractor. The CAO confirmed that the total cost of the project was \$7,348: Of that, only \$1,855 was for the network server function and the remaining was for the budgeted hardware for the other work stations.
- e) **Additional Hours and Duties for Administration’s Ashley Feschuk** – Per our discussions and passage of the Strategic Plan; on September 1st, Ms. Ashley Feschuk moved to 5 hours per day and takes on the duties of Projects and Events Coordinator. Already doing a fantastic job in the organization; I’m positive we can expect more of the same! Thank you to Ashley for being able to take on these new duties (also reflected within the current budget). Ms. Jill Harris RMB Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) Coordinator has sadly moved into a new role outside of the Municipality. Jill’s talented leadership will be greatly missed, and Council and Staff wish her all the best going forward. Ashley will take on the role of MEMP Coordinator, in addition to her new responsibilities.

CAO – Other Matters dealt with/involving the CAO:

- f) **Ferry Issue** – On August 23rd, the Federal Government announced the purchase of a Ferry for Wood Islands – an interim-replacement for the MV Holiday Island, which was destroyed last season by fire. To follow-up, RMB released a ‘Good News’ Notice to residents (*attached*). Additionally, working with Mayor Garth Gillis and under his signature, three letters of thanks, were sent out to: Premier Dennis King, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and our Member of Parliament, the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay. These three letters were designed specifically to be non-partisan to any political party, and specifically offered RMB’s thanks, appreciation and offer to continue to follow the issue. CCs on that correspondence also went out to several other individuals involved in the issue. The Notice and the three letters were provided to all of Council and posted to RMB’s Website and Facebook pages.
- g) **Association of Municipal Administrators PEI (AMAPEI) Conference and Meeting** – On September 8th, the CAO attended the newly regenerated AMAPEI, which brought together CAOs from across PEI and with representatives from small, rural, remote, resort, medium, and large communities. This well attended meeting also included representatives from Municipal Affairs, from Lands, and from the Federation of PEI Municipalities. In summary, attendees were eager to meet and continue to meet regularly to discuss issues for their municipalities and look for solutions and suggestions amongst their peers. This meeting also gave participants an opportunity to hear from the Provincial Government on status and programs, as well as an opportunity to lobby for changes, programs, and a bolstered funding formula for municipalities.

We wrapped up the meeting with an election of a new slate of officers. For exactly the same reason of wanting to ensure 'Rural' issues had a voice, I let my name stand for President of the AMAPEI – turns out that attendees liked that idea. Rural issues will certainly be part of the ongoing AMAPEI Agenda. Council congratulated CAO Bob Brooks on becoming President of the AMAPEI and look forward to the 'Rural' issues being highlighted.

- h) **Wellness Centre** – Recognizing that three separate organizations have an interest in a Wellness Centre of some type, the CAO organised an initial meeting of the three organizations; to see if the interests aligned, to see if there was a path to effectively work together, and to see if we could coordinate our efforts to be eligible for more outside funding. The three groups are:
- i. Rural Municipality of Belfast (**RMB**) – has historically funded both organizations for various projects and have been involved with Council sanctioned discussions for and Wellness Centre within the RMB municipality.
 - ii. Belfast Community Development Corporation (**BCDC**) – was involved in a previous iteration of trying to develop a Wellness Centre in the Belfast area. This project is a new iteration/concept.
 - iii. Belfast Rec Centre (**BRC**) – the BRC operates the current Arena/Community facility and has just finished (is finishing) projects that improve its facilities. The improved/enhanced facilities may be a perfect fit to compliment some type of Wellness Centre within or attached to its current structure.

The meeting originally scheduled for September 6th needed to be rescheduled due to illness. Council is looking forward to hearing further updates and also noted its interest in some type of 'Daycare' operation, possibly being included in the improved facility. To be continued...

- i) **Warming Centre and Other MOUs** – Over the past few years, RMB has provided funding to the Belfast Rec Centre for a stand-alone Generator, for improvements to its kitchen facilities, and other improvements, with the goal of using the Belfast Rec Centre as RMB's first choice for a Warming Centre in the event of a local emergency. During the Fiona Hurricane, RMB's designated Warming Centre was not ready, so in the interim; Northumberland Ferries graciously stepped up to fill the void. For the 2023 Storm Season, the Belfast Rec Centre is in place; the CAO is working with BRC to complete a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the operation of the Emergency Warming Centre – if required. The plan is to operate a Soup Kitchen type operation, complete with eating facilities, washrooms, showers, a community gathering/information centre, and charging facilities.

In an emergency, BRC will operate the facility and RMB staff will coordinate the Volunteers and Workers. Additionally, the Warming Centre will need (7) groups to operate the Soup Kitchen Operation. It is envisioned that for each day (i.e., Mondays, Tuesdays, etc.) a Separate Community Group will be assigned a day. i.e., RMB Council could be assigned every Wednesday (for as long as the emergency is in effect). The group would need to commit two people for a four-hour shift for the morning, and two people for a four-hour shift for the afternoon (total operating 9 – 5).

Question to RMB Council? As RMB is asking some RMB resident community groups to volunteer a day in an emergency; it is appropriate that RMB Council also pick a day. In an RMB-area emergency; which day would RMB Council Members prefer? RMB Council agreed to be one of the groups and picked Wednesdays. Councillor Bryson also supplied RMB office with a list of community groups to reach out to for other days, and Council also liked the idea of lining up some alternates as well – all of Council agreed.

9. **ShopBelfastPEI (Local Purchase Program) Update** (presented by Councillor Bryson and Councillor Carter) – Councillor Bryson informed Council that this program has now reached its conclusion for this year. Stacy Balsewicz from Connecticut was the winner of the \$500 Visa Gift card. Councillor Carter read a thank-you note from Stacy and the \$500 is going toward a new laptop for her son’s education and expressed their gratitude for the funds, but also to Prince Edward Island and the Residents of Belfast for being so kind and gracious during their lighthouse tour on the island this past summer. The ShopBelfastPEI program saw 397 entries submitted into the draw. The entries alone, amounted to 1,985 visits to local retailers, which helped to boost the Belfast economy. The Program was setup at five (5) Provincial Welcome Centres, four (4) destination centres and both ferry terminals. Additionally, 40 posters, advertising participating local businesses were distributed across PEI and Nova Scotia. A breakdown of the \$3,000 Program budget was provided. Some funds remain in the Program, which will be used to buy additional T-shirts for sale. It is also intended to continue the Program in future years and expand its reach as it continues to grow.
10. **Public Transit connection for RMB Area** – The Department of Transportation and MLA Compton have committed to following up on the request; however, there has been no update provided to-date.
11. **Drivers Passing Stopped School Buses** – The Department of Education and MLA Compton have committed to following up on the request. RMB has received an update from Dave Gillus (Director of Transportation). RMB is also awaiting a response from the Safety Taskforce. The CAO also personally witnessed enhanced RCMP patrols in school areas, with the opening of the school year.
12. **Comments to the Proposed Revisions to the Dog Act** (presented by Mayor Gillis) – As a result of many, many years of complaints across the whole of PEI, the Government of PEI have been working on revisions to the *Dog Act*. Located on the Government website at: www.princeedwardisland.ca. The Province is looking for comments from all residents, whether you own a dog or not. While the public consultation period officially ended on September 14th; residents are encouraged to send their comments anyway.
13. **Audio/Visual Enhancements Update for the Facebook Livestreaming and Paging System** (presented by Administration, Ashley Feschuk) – RMB is aware that there is a strong need to enhance the audio and visual quality of our Facebook livestreamed Council Meetings. Two additional microphones and speakers were set up for this meeting in hopes of making the audio clearer. Thank-you to Wood Islands Area & Development Corporation for their generosity in lending us their sound system for the evening. Feedback online in response to this effort was very positive with a noticeable improvement. RMB is also looking at purchasing the budgeted sound system for special events like the Holiday Tree Lighting as well as the regularly scheduled Council meetings. RMB is looking into a new camera system that would improve the visual quality for viewers tuning in from home.
14. **Official Community Plan and Development Bylaw** (presented by CAO Bob Brooks) – As previously discussed; now that RMB no longer has the assistance of a local/rural PEI Development Officer; further public consultation is on hold.

In the interim, the CAO is working with Municipal Affairs and Lands on separating the Official Plan and Development Bylaw components; as well as discussing other possible changes. Other possible changes came up in discussions at the recent Association of Municipal Administrators PEI meeting. One of those changes could be a shared/funded Development function for Municipalities. To be followed up on...

15. **New Business for the Agenda** (*as discussed in Approval of Agenda, Item 3 above*) – Items that were requested to be added to the Agenda, after the Agenda was distributed:
- a. **Pinette Boat Launch Issue** – (*presented by Councillor Bryson*) There was a report of a major injury at the launch site by John Gillis in a Facebook community group post. He is wondering if signage is an option to help warn people that this is a potentially hazardous area and to be cautious. It was suggested that the injured person and/or Mr. Gillis report the incident to the Department of Transportation and MLA Darlene Compton; and CC RMB for possible further follow-up.
 - b. **Trapping within the RMB municipal area** – (*presented by Councillor Carter*) Kip Smith, a concerned resident, reached out to the RMB office and Councillor Carter regarding some questionable signage he saw along two scenic roads within Belfast. There is a need to clarify with the Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife, questions around hunting, trapping, and snaring within our municipality and a need to educate residents who may not be familiar with the rules associated with these practices. RMB will reach out to the Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife for clarification on this matter and provide them with the concerns raised. Council also suggested that the Department put up some appropriate signage.
 - c. **Update on Belfast Days & Kilted Pace** (*photos attached*) – (*presented by Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty*) It was a great day at the Pinette Raceway for the **2023 Kilted Pace!** RMB was proud to donate a Prize Blanket and support this local event. Thank-you to Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty for attending the presentation and to Gail MacDonald for submitting photos for our website and Facebook page. **The Belfast Days Race** was moved to the same day as the Kilted Pace this year forming a suitable partnership and will likely continue to be held in conjunction with one another next year (Race Component Only). Freddy was the winning Horse. Harlow Knox was the Official Belfast Days Ambassador, and she did a lovely job representing Belfast and helping to present the awards. Belfast Days was able to raise \$900 for Make-A-Wish Foundation this year! RMB Council expressed their pride and gratitude of Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty and appreciate her hard work in making these events an annual success.
 - d. **Update on Daycare Within the Municipality** (*for information only*) – (*presented by Councillor Bryson*) Councillor Bryson informed Council that she has connected with numerous parties to research this topic including Sarah Richard, the Manager of Belfast Chances Daycare, staff of St. John’s Presbyterian Church, Chances Administration, John Monro the Principal of Belfast Consolidated and several concerned parents. There are many issues with this topic; however, the primary issue seems to be around staffing. Staff are finding it difficult to commute to a rural setting and there are limited number of rental opportunities to accommodate relocation. Other issues include pick up and drop off policies that could result in some safety issues, but also stem from a lack of staff, inadequate storage, lack of a working kitchen and before/after school care. Councillor Bryson also presented some short and long-term solution ideas in her report, which may be brought forward to Council to discuss at a future meeting.
Short-term: 1) Extra storage space and outdoor equipment for the daycare – An RMB fundraising event or grant money? 2) Daycare entrance – Looking into Provincial funding to retrofit the school or build an additional entrance or open a ‘wing’ specifically for the daycare? 3) Increase rental opportunities in Belfast to retain residents/working professionals and promote responsible development of housing? 4) Promote licensed day-home facilities. One member is interested in opening an at-home facility. Councillor Bryson is in contact with Monique McClean - Manager of Early Learning and Childcare for the Provincial Government. Monique will be a guest speaker at the October Council meeting to discuss the requirements and procedure to obtain licensing. 5) Contact local community groups to see if any could be able to accommodate before or after care?
Long-term: Look at the option of having a separate space for a daycare facility perhaps within the proposed Wellness Centre.

- e. **Update on Community Pantry (for information only) (presented by Councillor Bryson)** – Coordinator Bonnie Shave-Hillier is very pleased with the how the community has stepped up to help keep the pantry stocked. Gardeners have been sharing their fresh produce and having the assistance of community groups to help organize has been very helpful. It has also helped to promote the need for more donations. St. John’s Presbyterian Church have graciously committed to donated \$200 to the pantry. The Women’s Institute of Belfast donated \$100 and Lynn Brooks has made it a personal mission to purchase \$10 worth of groceries for the Pantry every week. Many thanks to you all. There is an issue with lighting since the autumn is upon us and it is getting darker faster, so Randy Visser is overseeing having new lighting installed. There is one fundraiser during the 70-mile coastal yard sale organized by Chelsea Van Tol in Hazelbrook, who will be hosting a table and a BBQ with all proceeds going to the Pantry. Chelsea will also be accepting food donations during this event and RMB wishes to thank her for her time and effort in helping to support the Pantry and her community. Another note of thanks to Monique and Matteo owners/operators of the Point Prim Market for accepting donations throughout the Summer with an incentivized basket draw. Congratulations to Lisa Cheverie who won the basket of donated goods from vendors valued at \$500.
- f. **Update on Belfast Consolidated School Activities (for information only) – (presented by Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty)** As a parent attending these regular School Meetings; Deputy Mayor Lynn Docherty has volunteered to provide Council updates on some of the activities happening in the local school, to help keep the residents informed.
- g. **Update on Flyer Boxes (presented by Administration Ashley Feschuk)** It was reported to RMB office that two of the flyer trees (Greys Road & Camp Road) have been knocked down and that a couple of them are still in need of repair. Our office has reached out to Saltwire to have these issues resolved. There was a concern brought up regarding these boxes/trees and how they will fair in the winter months. RMB will follow-up on to help ensure the boxes/trees are ready for the months ahead. Saltwire who maintains them will be notified so they can keep them in good repair.

16. **Next Meetings:**

- a. **Regular Meeting of Council** - scheduled for Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Hall at Wood Islands Market.

As the meeting was complete and Council wanted to go In-Camera for a Confidential Land Matter, the public portion of the meeting ended – with thanks to everyone for tuning in.

17. **Motion to Move In-Camera for a Confidential Land Matter (No Minutes Taken)**

Moved by Councillor Kinnee and **seconded** by Deputy Mayor Docherty to move into In-Camera for a Confidential Land Matter.

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

Moved by Councillor Carter and **seconded** by Councillor McGivern to move out of In-Camera for a Confidential Land Matter.

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

No decision required as a result of the In-Camera item.

18. **Adjournment** - As there is no further business...

Moved by Councillor Gamble to adjourn the meeting at: 9:29 PM.

Ashley/Bob

Minutes Approved: October 18, 2023 Signature and Seal on File Signature and Seal on File
 Mayor Garth Gillis CAO Bob Brooks