

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Council Meeting Agenda **AMENDED**

December 10, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

In-person, Sanford Council Chambers, 76 Morison Dr, Windsor, NS

Virtual via Zoom (also YouTube Livestream)



West Hants
something inspiring awaits

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1. Call to Order
 2. Attendance
 3. Announcements
 4. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
 - a) Dashboard Action Items – Information Log
 - b) Dashboard Action Items – Dangerous or Unsightly Premises
 5. Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest
 6. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
 - a) 2024-11-26 Council Minutes
 - b) 2024-11-26 PH Minutes Ellershouse Windfarm Expansion Development Agreement
 - c) 2024-11-26 PH Minutes 1809 Highway 1 Falmouth PID 45026820 Development Agreement
 7. Presentations
Water Utility Overview - Gerry Isenor and Blaine Rooney
 8. Public Hearings - None
 9. Second Readings (as it pertains to Public Hearings) - None
 10. Unfinished Business/Postponed Motions
 11. Mayor's Report
 12. Financial Updates
 - a) General Operating as of October 31, 2024
 - b) Water Utility Operating as of October 31, 2024
 - c) Water Consumption as of October 31, 2024
 13. Committee(s) of Council Excerpts/Recommendations
 - a) Committee of the Whole Excerpts (December 3, 2024)
 - i. Avon View High School Fence
 - ii. Climate Action Committee 2025 Work

- iii. Code of Conduct for Elected Officials
- iv. Commercial Kitchen Equipment Tender Award WHRMCD24-10
- v. Home Flood Protection Pilot Program Applicants
- vi. One ½ Ton 4x4 Crew Cab Truck RFP Award for By-law Enforcement
- vii. Public Participation Policy Amendments
- viii. Regional Council Remuneration

b) Audit Committee Excerpts (December 5, 2024)

14. Councillor Municipal Business/Activity Reports

a) Councillor Ivey, District 11 Activity Report

15. Correspondence

a) Information

- i. Avon Causeway Activity Log – None
- ii. Correspondence Received Activity Log - None

b) Requests - None

c) Outgoing Correspondence Log - None

16. New Business

a) Committee of the Whole Amended Minutes – Councillor Ivey

17. In-Camera

- a) 2024-11-26 In-Camera Minutes
- b) MGA 22(2)(a) Land Matter
- c) MGA 22(2)(a) Legal Matter
- d) MGA 22(2)(a) Legal Matter

18. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – January 14, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting 6 p.m.

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Council Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

Sanford Council Chambers, 76 Morison Dr, Windsor, NS

And virtually via Zoom (also Facebook Livestreamed)



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1. As Call to Order – Mayor Zebian called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Attendance

Council:

Abraham Zebian, Mayor

Rupert Jannasch, Councillor, District 1 (6:08)

Scott McLean, Councillor, District 2

Chrystal Remme, Councillor, District 3

Paul Wheadon, Councillor, District 4

Bob Morton, Councillor, District 6

Debbie Francis, Deputy Mayor, District 5

Kayla Learey-Pinch, Councillor, District 7 (6:04)

Paul Morton, Councillor, District 8

John Smith, Councillor, District 9

Bonnie Smith, Councillor, District 10

Jim Ivey, Councillor, District 11

Staff:

Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer

Carlee Rochon, Director of Financial Services

Kari Fougere, Manager Planning and Development

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Todd Richard, Director of Public Works

Regrets:

Shelleena Thornton, Municipal Ops Sup

Kathy Kehoe, Director Community

Presenter and Gallery

Gerry Isenor and Blaine Rooney, presenters

1 in the Gallery

3. Announcements (6:02 p.m.)

Mayor Zebian acknowledged West Hants Regional Municipality is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This land is governed by the treaties of Peace and Friendship signed in 1726. West Hants Regional Municipality recognizes we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to this land and each other. West Hants Regional Municipality also recognizes African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose history, legacies, and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Reminder of the Newport Station Hall fundraiser being held at the St. Croix Hall this coming Saturday from 8-11am. Santa will be available for pictures.

The Ardoise Hall held their annual breakfast with Santa last weekend.

4. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions (6:02 p.m.)

a) Dashboard Action Items – Information Report

b) Dashboard Action Items – Dangerous or Unsightly Premises

Additions to the agenda:

- i. In-Camera - MGA 22(2)(a) Legal Matter - update
- ii. Item 16 (a) New Business – Minute error/amendment
- iii. In-Camera - MGA 22(2)(a) Legal Matter

Voting was completed by a show of hands. All additional items were added.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS P. MORTON AND WHEADON THAT THE 2024-12-10 COUNCIL AGENDA BE APPROVED AS AMENDED. MOTION CARRIED.

- 5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest (6:05 pm)
Item 13(v) – Councillor P. Morton declared conflict due to family involvement with the agenda item.
- 6. Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes (6:05 p.m.)
 - a) 2024-11-26 Council Meeting Minutes
 - b) 2024-11-26 PH Minutes Ellershouse Windfarm Expansion Development Agreement
 - c) 2024-11-26 PH Minutes 4859 Highway 1, Three Mile Plains PID 45016763 WHLUB Map Amendment

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR P. MORTON AND DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS THAT LEARY-PINCH THAT THE 2024-11-26 COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES, 2024-11-26 PH MINUTES ELLERSHOUSE WINDFARM EXPANSION DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT AND 2024-11-26 PH MINUTES 4859 HIGHWAY 1, THREE MILE PLAINS PID 45016763 WHLUB MAP AMENDMENT BE APPROVED. MOTION CARRIED

- 7. Presentations (6:06 p.m.)
Water Utility Overview with Gerry Isenor and Blaine Rooney
Mr. Isenor provided a brief overview of the process/steps and rationale on setting water rates and the information regarding the decision made in the recent water hearing for West Hants as well as the Order. Water rates were regulated by the Public Utilities Act and the regulatory body is the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (UARB). Rate settings were a public process done through a Public Hearing (all documents were available to the public). On September 3, 2024, the Board ordered the two utilities be amalgamated into the West Hants Regional Water Utility. Water rates and fire protection rates were set for three years effective; October 1, 2024, April 1, 2025, and April 1, 2026. The rules and regulations were effective October 1, 2024.
Mr. Rooney provided a brief overview highlighting the decision made. One of the reasons that drove the rates to be as high; was the significant amount of Capital expenditures (\$25-30 million) in the next four years (including the previous year that just concluded) related to the reservoir connecting Falmouth and Windsor systems, a new treatment line required for the Windsor treatment plant. There were a lot of projects identified in the budget and included in the rates were depreciation and debt servicing on all of the infrastructure being built. The Board was concerned the utility could not accomplish all of the capital works included in the rate study within the time limit due to staff availability, equipment availability and contractor availability. The Board ordered any money included in the rates for debt servicing and depreciation on those projects that was not spent would be put in a Reserve account to ensure the projects will be completed. This

money cannot be used for operations. In order to take money from this account permission from the Board was required.

The Board also ordered WHRM review the charge for administration services charged to the water utility before the next rate application/hearing.

The role of the Board was to make the water utility efficient and effective. It was felt WHRM was not charging the water utility enough money to cover the costs to produce water.

Discussion Points:

- Previously when Windsor sold water to West Hants, only a portion of the leakage could be charged to West Hants despite both utilities having issues with leakage. In Engineering terms, it was referred to as non-revenue water (don't receive money for this) and it was then subdivided into accounted for water (knew where it went – flushing water mains, fire department usage) and unaccounted for (this was the concerning water). Unaccounted for water was primarily leakage.
- The former Town of Windsor system was old, with joints every 5 ft as that was how it was constructed at the time. As time progressed, traffic volume has increased, and vehicle weights have also increased resulting in more pressure being put on the original pipes resulting in pipes flexing and potentially leaking.
- The other concern was related to service connections, these pipes were prone to having drips and a utility the size of West Hants (2-3000 customers) has the potential to have up to that many drips, which adds up to a lot of unaccounted for water. These drips were unfixable, as it costs more to fix a drip than what it was worth.
- Leaks, inaccurate meters, theft of water and smaller leaks that were unable to be detected were a big component of water loss. If a leak does not get to the surface, they were harder to find. Leak detection needs to be proactive and ongoing.
- Having district meters in place instead of bulk meters would be beneficial and be able to be monitored through the SCADA system. It was still important to track leakage despite the utilities being amalgamated.
- Mr. Isenor noted WHRM was not the worst municipality with respect to unaccounted for water but also not the best. There was work that needs to be done.
- The financial costs associated with water leakage would be recorded by taking into account the cost of treating and pumping the water and not being able to sell it.
- Water does have a shelf life; a lot of water leakage was attributed to system flushing that was required to occur.
- The main point to note was the utility needs to generate enough revenue to pay the expenses to ensure there is safe, clean drinking water supply.

The presentation concluded at 6:47 p.m., Mr. Isenor and Mr. Rooney left the meeting at this time.

8. Public Hearings - None

9. Second Readings (as it pertains to Public Hearings - None

10. Unfinished Business/Postponed Motions – None

11. Mayor's Report (6:47 p.m.)

Mayor Zebian provided a brief verbal summary.

Attended various events:

- Attended the NSFM Fall conference. Some of the major discussions focused on Climate Action, Coastal Protection, PVSC and tax assessments and provincial priorities not meeting or matching municipal priorities.
- Attended the Avon Chamber of Commerce Annual Gala. Business of the Year went to Lisa's Café, Outstanding Customer Service went to the Spitfire Arms, Outstanding Professional Service Provider went to Brooklyn Village Garden Centre, Community Service award went to Walker's Restaurant and Businessperson of the Year went to Tony Wood. Congratulations were extended to all.
- Christmas Angels telethon raised the largest amount ever this year, they raised approximately \$96,000, with donations still being received. Congratulations were extended to all the volunteers who made this a successful event.
- Attended the Audit Committee meeting. The audit has been completed; all the financial statements have been reviewed. The statements have been presented fairly with no errors or omissions. It was noted the internal controls in place remain very strong, resulting in a gold standard being achieved. There was a large amount in community investment and \$9.85 million in Capital additions. The report highlighted WHRM was very healthy.
- Congratulations were extended to the Avon View Girls Hockey team who were successfully named the Birthplace of Hockey Champions. Congratulations to Noa Sanz who will be representing Spain at the world championships. Monday night will be the team's final game before the winter break. All were encouraged to come out and support the team.
- Attended the Hantsport Fire Department's banquet held over the weekend. Congratulations were extended to Rick and Brian Shay for 50 Years of Service with Hantsport Fire Department, Captain Jason States for 20 years of service, Deputy Chief Paul Maynard for 35 Years of service, and Ronnie Starratt with 35 Years of service.
- Attended the Annual People First Christmas Social.
- Congratulations to the volunteers on another successful Festoon event in Hantsport.
- Highlighted many compliments have been received on purchase of the new vacuum truck for the region.

12. Financial Updates

a) General Operating as of October 31, 2024 (6:53 p.m.)

Director Rochon provided a brief update on the General Operating. This was the seventh month ending October 31, 2024. The overall projected surplus based on the variance analysis for the general fund was \$354,310. This projection has decreased by \$19,655 since September 30, 2024.

b) Water Utility Operating as of October 31, 2024 (6:55 p.m.)

Director Rochon provided a brief update on the Water Utility Operating report. This was the first report on the general operation since the two utilities were consolidated. The utility was projecting a surplus of \$81,754.

c) Water Consumption as of October 31, 2024 (6:55 p.m.)

Director Rochon noted there was little change since the last report presented to Council. The information reported in the Q3 column was related to final closes due to sales or final billing completed or adjustments completed.

Discussion Points:

- The Q1 billing and Q2 billing had different number of days. There was more consumption on the Q1 billing vs the Q2 billing.
- The drop in the Underwood meter was associated with a battery within the sensor pad. The read was done using a picture and an estimate. This was the last billing for this meter. It was noted there would be some water loss due to the battery.
- The newer style meters have batteries that require more frequent checking, staff were unaware that the battery was in a low state and there was no back up for this battery.
- Reminders notices were sent out in the October bills regarding the water rate changes taking effect in January 2025. Information was also available on the website and communicated through social media posts.
- The Utility and Review Board (UARB) did not order a stub audit which means the GL accounts will be consolidated, it was considered one entity as of October 1, 2024.

13. Committee(s) of Council Excerpts/Recommendations (7:00 p.m.)

a. Committee of the Whole Excerpts (December 3rd, 2024)

i. Avon View High School Fence (7:00 p.m.)

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL DIRECT STAFF TO DRAFT A LETTER TO THE ANNAPOLIS VALLEY REGIONAL CENTER OF EDUCATION REGARDING INSTALLATION OF A FENCE AROUND THE SCHOOL PROPERTY TO ADDRESS SAFETY CONCERNS FOR STUDENTS. MOTION CARRIED

ii. Climate Action Committee 2025 Work Plan (7:01 p.m.)

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL PLACE THE CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE 2025 WORK PLAN ON FILE, IN A MANNER SUBSTANTIVELY THE SAME AS ATTACHMENT A TO THE STAFF REPORT TITLED "CAC 2025 WORK PLAN" DATED NOVEMBER 13, 2024. MOTION CARRIED

iii. Code of Conduct for Elected Officials (7:02 p.m.)

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL REPEAL AND REPLACE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ELECTED MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS' POLICY, RCOHR-002.00 AND ADOPT THE CODE OF CONDUCT AS PROVIDED IN THE MGA WITH THE FOLLOWING

RESOLUTION: WHEREAS THE MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA HAS MADE THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTED OFFICIALS REGULATIONS, N.S. REG. 220/2024 (“THE REGULATIONS”); AND, WHEREAS MUNICIPALITIES ARE REQUIRED TO ADOPT THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT PRESCRIBED BY THE REGULATIONS ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 19, 2024, PURSUANT TO SECTION 4(1) OF THE REGULATIONS AND SECTION 23A OF THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT; THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY HEREBY ADOPT THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT AS SET FORTH IN SCHEDULE “A” TO THE REGULATIONS, WHICH SHALL BE TITLED THE “CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS OF THE WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY. MOTION CARRIED. Nays: MacLean, Leary-Pinch and Ivey

- iv. Commercial Kitchen Equipment Tender Award WHRMCD24-10 (7:04 p.m.)

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL APPROVES THE AWARD OF TENDER WWRMCD24-10 TO RH FOOD SERVICE EQUIPMENT TO PURCHASE COMMERCIAL KITCHEN EQUIPMENT AS LISTED IN RFQ IN THE AMOUNT OF \$53,435.28 PLUS APPLICABLE TAXES TO BE TAKEN FROM THE CANADA COMMUNITY BUILDING FUND. FURTHER COUNCIL APPROVE THE INSTALLATION OF THE KITCHEN EQUIPMENT ALSO BE FUNDED THROUGH THE CANADA COMMUNITY BUILDING FUND. MOTION CARRIED.

- v. Home Flood Protection Pilot Program Applicants Excerpt (7:05 p.m.)

Councillor P. Morton declared conflict at 7:05 p.m. and left the table.

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR J. SMITH THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE LIST OF PARTICIPANTS FOR THE HOME FLOOD PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM AS SHOWN IN ATTACHMENT B TO THE REPORT “HOME FLOOD PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS”, FILE 24-18, TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, DATED DECEMBER 3, 2024.

Mayor Zebian stepped down as Chair, Deputy Mayor Francis assumed the chair at 7:06 p.m. A total of 35 applications were received for the program, with 27 being successful in receiving funding as identified within the report. Seven applicants were not successful in receiving funding based on the scoring criteria. Although discussions have occurred regarding the program rolling over to another year, it was felt it would be hard to evaluate the programs success until projects were completed by those successful in receiving funding.

If the entire list of applicants (who met the criteria) was considered, nine out of the eleven districts would have residents represented in the program. It was suggested that Council consider awarding the remaining seven (7) applicants funding (total of \$80,000) to be taken from the Operating Reserve.

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR LEARY-PINCH TO AMEND THE MOTION TO INCLUDE IN ADDITION COUNCIL ALSO APPROVES THE

REMAINING SEVEN APPLICANTS FOR THE HOME FLOOD PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$80,000 AS SHOWN IN ATTACHMENT B TO THE REPORT “HOME FLOOD PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS”, FILE 24-18, TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, DATED DECEMBER 3, 2024 TO BE FUNDED THROUGH THE WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OPERATING RESERVE. MOTION CARRIED

Discussion Points:

- Within the properties identified as medium scoring (yellow); seven properties were not awarded funds due to a lower score. One (1) property was eligible to receive \$20,000 and the remaining six (6) properties were eligible for \$10,000 each.
- A friendly amendment was proposed to include the wording those who were not originally included. After a further review of the report, consensus was to proceed with the motion as amended originally and not add the friendly amendment.
- There was enough capacity built into the original budget to fund assessments for the additional seven properties.

Full motion as amended

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR J. SMITH THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE LIST OF PARTICIPANTS FOR THE HOME FLOOD PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM AS SHOWN IN ATTACHMENT B TO THE REPORT “HOME FLOOD PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS”, FILE 24-18, TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, DATED DECEMBER 3, 2024 AND IN ADDITION COUNCIL ALSO APPROVES THE REMAINING SEVEN APPLICANTS FOR THE HOME FLOOD PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$80,000 AS SHOWN IN ATTACHMENT B TO THE REPORT “HOME FLOOD PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS”, FILE 24-18, TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, DATED DECEMBER 3, 2024 TO BE FUNDED THROUGH THE WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OPERATING RESERVE. MOTION CARRIED

Councillor P. Morton returned to the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

- vi. One ½ Ton 4x4 Crew Cab Truck RFP Award for By-law Enforcement Excerpt (7:16 p.m.)

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND LEARY-PINCH THAT COUNCIL APPROVES THE AWARD OF THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS # WHRMPD24-01 TO O’REGAN CHEVROLET BUICK GMC CADILLAC LIMITED TO PURCHASE ONE (1) ½ TON 4X4 CREW CAB TRUCK FOR BY-LAW ENFORCEMENT AT A PURCHASE PRICE OF \$57,677 PLUS APPLICABLE TAXES. MOTION CARRIED. Nays: Ivey

- vii. Public Participation Program Policy RCOPL-006.00 - Revised as per discussion of Council (7:17 p.m.)

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM POLICY WHICH ARE SUBSTANTIVELY THE SAME AS SHOWN IN ATTACHMENT A TO THIS REPORT. MOTION CARRIED. Nays: B. Morton and Remme

viii. Regional Council Remuneration Policy Amendments (7:18 p.m.)

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL DIRECTS THE REMUNERATION POLICY BE UPDATED TO INCLUDE THE ANNUAL REMUNERATION LEVELS FOR MAYOR, DEPUTY MAYOR AND COUNCILOR INCREASE, AS PER THE DECEMBER 2024 REPORT, ON APRIL 1ST OF EACH FISCAL YEAR AS PER THE ANNUAL STATISTICS CANADA CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI – ALL ITEMS) FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA FOR THE PRECEDING CALENDAR YEAR UNTIL THE 2028 NS MUNICIPAL ELECTION. MOTION CARRIED.

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL DIRECTS THE WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY EXPENSE POLICY BE REVISED TO REFLECT THE UPDATED MEAL ALLOWANCE VALUES NOTED IN THE REPORT. MOTION CARRIED. Nays: B. Morton and Leary-Pinch

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL DIRECTS WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY CONTINUE TO EXTEND THE DEFINED CONTRIBUTION GROUP PENSION PLAN TO ELECTED OFFICIALS WITH MATCHING FUNDS FROM THE MUNICIPAL AND COUNCIL MEMBER OF 8%. MOTION CARRIED. Nays: Jannasch and Zebian

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL DIRECTS THE REMUNERATION POLICY BE UPDATED TO INCLUDE A PARENTAL/DEPENDENT CARE LEAVE POLICY FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS, ALLOWING ELECTED OFFICIALS TO TAKE UP TO 52 WEEKS LEAVE WITHOUT PAY.

Mayor Zebian Stepped down as chair, Deputy Mayor Francis assumed the chair at 7:21 p.m. Council discussed the motion. Concerns were raised that approving this motion would remove an elected representative from their duties for a year and how would those districts/residents be represented. Concern was raised on how the workload for that specific district would be managed or shared. While this was the right thing to do, more information was needed to make an informed decision. Staff will gather additional information and provide an update on the matter.

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR LEARY-PINCH THAT COUNCIL DEFER THE MATTER PENDING MORE INFORMATION FROM STAFF TO COME BACK TO COUNCIL FOR DISCUSSION ON THE MATTER. MOTION CARRIED

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL DIRECTS THE REMUNERATION POLICY BE UPDATED TO INCLUDE THE PROVISION FOR UP TO \$1,500/YEAR FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS & \$750.00/YEAR FOR NONELECTED COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT DEPENDENT CARE EXPENSES. MOTION CARRIED. Nays: MacLean, Francis, B. Morton, Leary-Pinch and P. Morton

MOVED BY DEPUTY MAYOR FRANCIS AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL DIRECTS THE REMUNERATION POLICY BE UPDATED TO INCLUDE AN INCREASE TO THE RESIDENT MEMBERS PER MEETING ALLOWANCE TO \$100 FOR ALL COMMITTEES. MOTION CARRIED. Nays: P. Morton and J. Smith

b) Audit Committee Excerpts (December 5, 2024 (7:27 p.m.)

Director Rochon provided a brief overview of the report highlighting the municipality was in a healthy position, specifically the Reserves and the debt ratio was also in a healthy position based on Capital asset investments vs what was borrowed. It was also noted the municipality had a large Capital asset compared to the debt. There was \$96 million in tangible Capital assets cost and \$16 million in borrowing which was a good position to be in.

The auditors also referenced the differences between consolidated surpluses vs unconsolidated surpluses. These statements can be challenging when trying to interpret them. Overall, the municipality was presenting a healthy financial position.

Discussion Points:

- WHRM received a Municipal Capacity Growth Fund grant totalling approximately \$3,000,070 to assist with the water storage tank.
- The detailed operational and financial audit on the water utility from 2023 remained outstanding. Concern was raised with the variances between the numbers shown in the statement and the budgeted numbers approved by Council, approving statements that did not align with the approved budget and the explanation regarding the credit issue that remains outstanding. There was hesitancy in approving the audited statements based on the concerns noted and the not having updated budgetary amounts spent compared to what was approved. It was important to have the right information in order to approve and sign off on audited statements and get it right. The approved budget and the budget within the audited statement should be directly comparable and easy for all to look at and compare one against the other. Any movement with the approved budget should take into account this movement by moving these items out so Council can approve the audited financial statement with confidence.
- As part of the consolidation process, any interconnecting or inter-transaction funds need to be eliminated upon consolidation. Tax revenue from billing the water utilities for taxes would be eliminated as part of the consolidated statement. The consolidation was all thirteen (13) of the funds in the one statement. This results in some of the numbers not directly matching the numbers in the budget.
- It was noted that page 25 of the audited financial statement had a budget that was comparative to the budget approved and the variance was \$1, which was a result of

rounding.

- Any big transactions impacting the budget would be presented to Council, which would consist of the information and a funding plan, in order to get direction from Council on how to proceed.
- There were some categories in the budget that would not align with the audited statements on a per category basis due to how some things were classified. For example, windfarm revenue was classified one way in the budget but another way in the audited financial statements.
- The delay with the detailed operational audit was due to capacity and also looking into what an operational audit consisted of to ensure appropriate criteria and work identified in the RFP accurately reflected the request.
- With respect to budget comparisons, it was noted that one of the things that would be difficult to change (based on the agreements within the consolidation of Windsor and the dissolution of Hantsport) was related to the former debts. The detailed budgets within the appendices, each category had the associated interest costs. This interest cost was a lump sum and was not broken out by category in the audited financial statement but was required in the budgeting process to be broken out into categories which results in a variance related to interest expenses associated to long term debt. Staff were bound by this budgeting practice with the Financial Reporting and Accounting Manual (FRAM) vs reporting practices with public sector accounting.
- The auditor was concerned and noted it would be difficult, if not impossible to go back and change numbers from past audits and could potentially result in fraud. The auditor also explained how the Utility and Review Board reviewed the numbers and had no issues with them.
- It was suggested the corrections on the utility numbers could be done within the current statements to get the information corrected. These numbers should be corrected.
- The RFP for a detailed audit was currently posted and will close in January. A report will be presented to the Audit Committee for review, consideration and a recommendation to Council.
- There were some members of Council who struggled to support approving the audited financial statements without having the results from detailed audit.

Mayor Zebian stepped down from the chair at 7:49 p.m. and Deputy Mayor Francis assumed the chair at this time.

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY'S AUDITED CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS ENDING MARCH 31, 2024, AS PRESENTED TO THE AUDIT COMMITTEE. MOTION CARRIED.

Nays: McLean, Remme, Leary-Pinch and Ivey

14. Councillor Municipal Business/Activity Reports (7:50 p.m.)

Each Councillor provided an update on activities in their districts.

District 1 – Concerns in community about communications, everyone was suffering from a

diminishing quality of cell phone service. Recently there have been more complaints regarding the poor state of landlines as well, and despite some people purchasing new phones (as a remedy advised by Bell), there has been no improvement noted. The postal strike was also severely impacting residents in the entire region, but residents in the outlying districts were suffering the most as they had limited options to move packages, letters, government documents, etc. This matter gravely affected residents in those areas and needed to be at the forefront in an effort to capture the attention of high levels of government.

District 2 – Attended the Belmont Hall community breakfast last Saturday and the Christmas tree lighting at the Brooklyn United Church. Attended the Tides of Change Community Think Tank at the Avon River Heritage Centre, a lot of great ideas were expressed during this session. It was noted this past Summer and Fall was dry, resulting in lots of residents needing to purchase bulk water. Many residents have expressed excitement in knowing the BFD Station 2 bulk water filling station was nearing completion as it was expected to help reduce delivery costs. In talks with NS Department of Public Works to address a culvert issue on Quarry Road in Union Corner. Concerns remain around the ongoing provincial road issues within the district (Avondale Road, Hwy 236). Speeding in the Brooklyn school areas remains a concern for many residents.

District 3 – The Brooklyn Volunteer Fire Department were assisting Santa with delivering letters during the mail strike. Letters can be dropped off at Station 1 and 2. All information (deadline to drop off letters and pick up dates) can be found on their Facebook page. The Avon Valley Share the Warmth event collected 160 bags of clothing and were able to distribute and donate 137 bags back to the community, with the remaining clothing donated to Matthew 25. The Hants Learning Network Association finished their online auction and were fundraising with outdoor holiday arrangements along with their free family holiday party (families with school aged children) this coming Saturday from 10-12 pm. Assisted WH Public Works with the snowplow naming contest with local elementary schools. Appreciation was extended to the crews providing all the safety talks within the schools and congratulations were extended to the winners of the contest. Participated in Christmas on the Green at the Sports Comple, it was a hugely successful event with over 500 attending the event. Sweets Corner Hall were looking for volunteer members for their board. Appreciation was extended to Victory Credit Union for the \$5,000 donation to Brooklyn Elementary School for their breakfast program.

District 4 – Application was extended to Mary Jewers who raised six (6) pigs and had them processed and had all the meat (100's lbs of fresh pork) delivered to Matthew 25. The Ellershouse Haall hosted a successful Christmas tea a few weeks ago. The ardoise Hall has a new Genrac generator which will allow them to offer a warming centre when needed. Appreciation was extended to Raymond and Susan Wright for all their hard work for the community of Ardoise. A New Year's Eve Karaoke Party with a cold plate dinner was scheduled for New Year's Eve at the St. Croix Hall. A lot of road work has been completed in the district, it was believed the work being done on Exit 4 on the ramp was either finished for the year or completed entirely.

District 5 – The Newport Community Hall Santa breakfast was scheduled for December 14th from 8-11:30 am at the St. Croix Community Hall. Appreciation was expressed to WH Public Works for attending to minor issues some residents have been experiencing. Appreciation was extended to the Council for approval of the additional 7 applications to the Home Flood Protection Pilot

Program. Holiday wishes were extended to everyone.

District 6 – BFD Station 2 will be transporting Santa around Garlands Crossing on December 23rd beginning at 5 p.m. Everyone was encouraged to take a drive throughout District 6 to experience all the holiday lights.

It was noted that a lot of West Hants have decorated for the holiday season.

District 7 – The Society held their tree lighting. On December 14th the Little Red School House will host their Christmas Tree lighting and fundraiser event. The Falmouth Hall has updated their events on their Facebook page, the last jam session was scheduled for Friday 13th.

District 8 – Another Festoon was successfully held last week in Hantsport, with Santa and Cilly Willy attending. Congratulations were extended to Heather MacInnis on another successful bonspiel fundraiser for the Hantsport food bank.

District 9 – Reminder about the UPLAND Active Transportation survey that was available online. All were encouraged to participate in the survey as it covers everything related to active transportation, including sidewalks.

District 10 – The first annual Christmas House tour fundraiser for the 9 Lives Cat Rescue occurred this past Sunday. A total of four houses were visited (2 in Windsor and 2 in Hantsport) resulting in \$1,800 being raised. The Warming Centre located at the Aquatics facility on Stannus Street has been open since December 1st. Visitors to the centre range from 4 – 8 people at varying times.

District 11 – Attended the Ardoise Hall event with Santa, the Avon Chambers of Commerce event which showcased the inspirational businesses in West Hants, the Christmas Angels. The importance of participating in the Active Transportation survey was reiterated. was reiterated, this was the time to put any and all ideas/concerns out so they can be considered in looking at ways to connect the region as a whole. Having discussions related to near border tax issues/concerns (one side of a street was taxed differently than the other side of the street) and development approval timelines.

15. Correspondence (9:53 p.m.)

a) Information

- i. Avon Causeway Activity Log - None
- ii. Correspondence Received Activity Log - None

b) Requests – None

c) Outgoing Correspondence Log - None

16. New Business

a) Committee of the Whole Minutes Correction amendment (8:05 p.m.)

Councillor Ivey provided a brief overview of the report and its intention to correct the essence of how Mister Smith's comments were reported in the meeting. Both statements are related to financial data which are important for accuracy (revenue versus a loss and also the period of "in previous years", versus no period of time referenced). Within the report it identifies that Robert's Rules of Order provides a path forward to correcting previously approved minutes. The next steps would be to have the minutes amended to more accurately reflect Mr. Smith's concerns.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS IVEY AND P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL DIRECT THE CAO TO HAVE THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2024 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES AMENDED WITH A MARGIN NOTATION IN THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SECTION WITHIN THE DISCUSSION POINT (IV) BY MR. SMITH TO COMMUNICATE THE FOLLOWING: MR. SMITH NOTED HIS BIGGEST CONCERN WAS THE 2024 RESULTS FOR THE UNDERWOOD ROAD METER REPORTED ABOUT \$132,000 IN REVENUE BASED ON A CONSUMPTION REPORT. IN HIS OPINION IT WAS A HUGE CONCERN AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS IT WAS ONLY \$600, \$700 OR \$410 WHICH LEADS TO SOMETHING BEING WRONG WITH THAT METER. MOTION CARRIED

17. In-Camera (8:10 p.m.)
- a) 2024-11-26 Council In-Camera Minutes
 - b) MGA 22(2)(a) Land Matter
 - c) MGA 22(2)(a) Legal Matter
 - d) MGA 22(2)(a) Legal Matter

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS P. MORTON AND B. MORTON THAT THE MEETING MOVE IN-CAMERA AT 8:10 P.M. MOTION CARRIED

Prior to the meeting moving in-camera; holiday wishes were extended to all residents in West Hants and reminder to be safe and remember those who were less fortunate.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS P. MORTON AND B. MORTON THAT THE MEETING MOVE OUT OF IN-CAMERA AT 8:55 P.M. MOTION CARRIED

18. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – January 14th, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting pm

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS P. MORTON AND LEARY-PINCH THAT THE MEETING ADJOURN AT 8:55 P.M. MOTION CARRIED

Mayor Abraham Zebian (Chair)

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk