



**West Hants**

something inspiring awaits

**WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
Climate Action Committee (CAC) Meeting  
April 10, 2024 – 11:00am  
Sanford Council Chambers / Facebook Live via Zoom**

- PRESENT:** Rupert Jannasch, Councillor (Chair)  
Scott McLean, Councillor  
Debbie Francis, Councillor  
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer  
Shelleena Thornton, Protective Services Designate  
Sara Poirier, Director of Planning and Development  
Carlee Rochon, Director of Financial Services  
Todd Richard, Director of Public Works  
Mark Williamson, Resident Member
- GUEST:** Tim Webster, Research Lead of the Applied Geomatics Research Group (AGRG)
- STAFF:** John Ogilvie, Climate Action Coordinator  
Vanessa Lake, Planning Assistant
- PUBLIC:** Two members of the public were present.
- REGRETS:** Jeremy Higgins, Resident Member  
Vanessa Roberts, Community Services Designate

### **Call to Order and Identification of Designates**

Chair Jannasch called the meeting to order at 11:00am. Committee members identified themselves and their designations. Jeremy Higgins and VanEssa Roberts sent regrets.

### **Approval of Agenda and Additions**

Moved by Debbie Francis and seconded by Scott McLean that the agenda be approved as circulated. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes (November 8, 2023)**

Moved by Debbie Francis and seconded by Mark Williamson that the minutes be approved as circulated. Motion carried unanimously.

### **New Business**

#### **Presentation: Tim Webster**

Tim Webster is the Research Lead of the Applied Geomatics Research Group (AGRG), of the Centre of Geographic Science (COGS), Nova Scotia Community College. He was present via Zoom to share three presentations with the Committee.

His first presentation was about the changing coastline. He discussed the different agents of coastal change and the different ways to record, map, and predict coastal changes. He showed examples of coastal change over time and the impacts of Hurricane Fiona in 2022. He informed the Committee that a flood risk simulation map is available online for certain areas.

His second presentation was about the “GeoForensic Team” response to the July 2023 floods in West Hants. He partnered with Shelleena Thornton (REMO), Jason Cochrane (Fire Chief), and Troy Burgess (Public Works Operations Manager). They used Survey Grade GNSS-GPS (Global Navigation Satellite System and Global Positioning System) to measure the elevation and position of the high-water mark from the floods. Hydrodynamic modeling can simulate the event, and the results can be used to better understand the mechanisms of flooding and evaluate mitigation strategies.

His third presentation was on his proposal to Research Nova Scotia’s Focused Research Investment fund, “GeoSolutions for Important Nova Scotia Challenges.” There are four pillars to the proposal. The first is to expand and improve the coastal flood prediction tool for all of Nova Scotia. The second is to use machine learning to predict river flow from weather forecasts and using topo-bathymetric LIDAR to measure flooding and fish habitat/passage. The third is to map and predict coastal erosion to assist municipalities in developing climate change informed Land-

use Planning By-laws. The fourth involves wildfires, an emerging threat to Nova Scotia. This item will look to predict communities at risk and enhance tools that model the movement of fires using the types of fuel, topography, and weather at the time, and have a visualization available online.

By expanding the technology and prediction/evaluation tools, more data will be available to inform better decisions to deal with these events. This information will also be shared with municipalities. Tim may seek a letter of support from WHRM in the future for the proposal. Tim will also be submitting a report regarding the July 2023 flooding, which Shelleena will present to Council at a later date with more information.

Chair Jannasch and the Committee thanked Tim for his presentation and for all the work he has done for the Province. It was appreciated how Tim incorporates local knowledge into his research. Many look forward to Tim's report, and how the Municipality may support him.

Tim Webster left the meeting at 12:30pm.

### **Business Arising from the Minutes**

#### **Update: Committee Name**

John explained that the Committee's Terms of Reference have been updated to reflect the new Committee name, and the Municipality's website has also been updated.

#### **Update: Community Solar Program**

Both John and Sara attended an information webinar from the Province on the community solar program. The program has officially launched, and applications are being accepted. John can send the presentation and information documents to anyone interested. The website has Frequently Asked Questions and slides from the webinar available. Sara added that there has been interest from local companies in the solar program. This may come through the Planning Advisory Committee in the future. She said it is free for people to subscribe to a project once it is open, and municipalities are welcome to apply as well.

One member of the public left the meeting at 12:49pm.

The Committee discussed a municipally led solar project at length. \$20k is in the CAC 2023/24 budget earmarked for a solar project, which is recommended to be carried over into the 2024/25 budget during budget deliberations. In addition, it was confirmed that in December 2022, Council approved in principle funding 30% as the municipal contribution of an application to the Sustainable Communities Challenge fund, up to a maximum of \$150k. This application was rejected on April 28, 2023, noting that a feasibility study may strengthen future applications for capital funding. The \$150k from the previous motion was not used; Mark Phillips noted that standard practice is not to decrease the size of a project if grant applications are rejected. A \$75k grant from the Provincial Department of Natural Resources and Renewables was recently

accepted to conduct a feasibility study, which will advise which facilities, locations, and layouts will have the best results. Carlee Rochon mentioned that, depending on the funding source, Council may need to re-allocate funding each year. The Committee felt it would be appropriate to recommend that Council allocate funding for a solar project, to be prepared should the opportunity arise.

Moved by Debbie Francis that CAC recommend to Council to approve funding for a solar project, keeping in mind there was \$150,000 pre-approved for the 2023-2024 budget year.

Mark Phillips seconded Debbie's motion and suggested an amendment.

Moved by Mark Phillips that the CAC recommend to Council that an allocation of \$150,000 be allocated to the 2024-2025 capital budget to support a solar project led by the Municipality. Further, that the funding be secured from the Canada Community Building Fund or operating reserves from the Municipality. Seconded by Mark Williamson. Motion carried unanimously.

Todd Richard left the meeting for another engagement at 1:02pm.

#### **Update: 6 Months of Switch West Hants**

Approximately every 2 weeks, John does a check-in with the SwitchPACE administrators and energy assistants. A dashboard is provided, updating John on ongoing, planned, and considered projects. Many people are still hesitating to fully commit, John commenting that it may be due to the changing nature of grants and the high-cost environment. People are still interested, but it is a question of timing. The program has seen success and is leading to real energy savings and benefits. Switch is looking to double down on marketing efforts. Debbie Francis and Mark Phillips thanked John for his efforts and congratulated him on the success of the program. Mark Phillips noted the support offered by the program is invaluable to residents.

#### **Roundtable Discussion**

Scott McLean found Tim Webster's presentations very interesting and pointed out the unique river system in West Hants. The information provided was very valuable. He mentioned that Kubota put out a press release on April 4, 2024, about building a hydrogen engine. He feels hydrogen energy will be a big player in the future.

Mark Williamson would like to discuss the information provided by Tim Webster and the provincial Coastal Action Plan at the next meeting in further detail.

Sara mentioned that Planning has received an application for an 11-turbine wind farm in the Vaughan area, the Bear Lake Wind Farm. In addition, there are ongoing discussions on the Council-led application for 4 km setbacks from new large-scale wind turbines to existing dwellings. These are both going through the public process and comments are being received until April 16, 2024.

Member of the public Denise Forand asked if there was any potential to put solar on the same locations as wind turbines to maximize productivity while minimizing the space used.

Shelleena has been in constant contact with Tim Webster since the July flash flood and complimented Tim and his team. They are volunteering their time and trying to support the region alongside other commitments. Tim's report will be incredibly valuable to the Municipality. She highlighted the complexity of flood mapping. There is an EMO planning meeting tomorrow (April 11, 2024) and this is a topic that will be discussed. EMO's report will also be provided to Council.

Debbie suggested writing a thank-you letter to Tim from CAC and offering support. She would also like to know what the province plans to do with the dyke system. If a dyke is taken out, entire areas will flood catastrophically. It is not the Committee's jurisdiction but is something they should be mindful of. She believes the province needs to see the dykes for themselves- especially during a high-water event- to really appreciate their importance. Council has already written a letter to the province, but it should remain on the Committee's radar as well.

John informed the Committee that he had applied to the Community Climate Capacity through the Clean Foundation, a program to provide staff resources to the Municipality to assist in climate action work. There were limited resources available and WHRM's application was unsuccessful. He also noted that the lights in Council Chambers have been switched to LED. They will provide significant energy cost savings. They were funded mostly through a grant from the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

Chair Jannasch thanked John for organizing the presentation from Tim Webster. He believes it will lead to a lot of good work. He acknowledged that the February meeting had been cancelled due to a small agenda lacking recommendations, and hoped no more would be cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for September 11 as per the Terms of Reference. Debbie added that additional meetings may be called as needed. She also noted that in September, elections are coming up, and meetings will be on hold. CAC members should be ready and available should something important arise.

#### **Next Meeting Date / Adjournment**

The next meeting is scheduled for September 11, 2024, at 11:00am. The Committee and the public will be notified of any changes or additional meetings. Moved by Shelleena Thornton and seconded by Mark Phillips that the meeting be adjourned at 1:19pm. Motion carried unanimously.