

Present:

Mayor Campbell Councillor Elderkin Councillor Land Councillor Jonah Councillor Coates Councillor Ward-Russell Councillor Garden

Staff Present: Kim Beers – Director, Legislative Services/Clerk Ian Barrett – Director, Operations Jillian Hutchinson - Treasurer

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Campbell called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

Councillor Elderkin entered the meeting at 4:31 pm

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

IT WAS MOVED by **Councillor Land** and **SECONDED** by **Councillor Coates THAT** the agenda be adopted with the following amendment:

• Move item 6.4 Municipal EMO Plan to public presentations item 4.3.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

None declared.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

5-minute presentation

Gillian Matheson - Regarding rezoning (Justin Drive)

Ms. Matheson advised she is the proponent of the proposed mini home park at Justin Drive.

Ms. Matheson highlighted the following:

• Justin Drive will be used for emergency access only, not a secondary roadway and will not be used as a permanent second access road for the community. It will function strictly as an emergency access route. A gated system with a punch code system will be installed to allow emergency vehicles to access the site if needed, and allowing residents an option to exit safely if necessary.



- Zoning History and Request for Reinstatement This land was zoned R2 up until the municipal amalgamation in 2022, at which point it was reclassified as rural, which unfortunately no longer allows for mini home developments.
 However, Ms. Matheson has been actively working on this project since 2016, well before the zoning change took place. Ms. Matheson's current request is simply to restore the original zoning designation (R2) that was in place prior to amalgamation.
- Community Benefits: Affordable Housing, No Municipal Burden This proposed development will provide 48 affordable housing units on a 60-acre parcel. Importantly, this project will require minimal support from the municipality: Roads: Privately maintained Sewer & Water: Privately managed systems Garbage collection: Privately contracted
- Addressing Concerns About Property Values
 Ms. Matheson advised that another concern she's heard repeatedly is that mini home
 communities reduce nearby property values. In reality, the Canada Mortgage and Housing
 Corporation (CMHC) has conducted multiple studies showing this is not the case.
 In fact, mini homes can appreciate significantly in value. For example, in the Cross Creek
 Home Park, a home installed in 2006 for approximately \$60,000 is now listed at
 \$250,000. The stereotype of "trailer parks" is outdated, modern manufactured homes are
 well-built, attractive, and highly livable.
- A Modest Path to Homeownership Ultimately, the goal is to create a safe, attractive, and affordable community that offers modest-income families and individuals a chance to own their own home. Ms. Matheson believes this project will be a long-term benefit not just to the future residents, but to the wider community as well.

<u> Micha Fardy – Alma Welcome Centre</u>

Ms. Fardy advised that in 2024, the municipality partnered with Friends of Fundy to operate the Alma Visitor Welcome Center, located in the Alma Cultural Center. As part of the agreement, the municipality contributed \$7,500 to support staffing at the center, equivalent to minimum wage for 35 hours/week. Friends of Fundy supplemented this to hire a local individual at \$20/hour for 20 weeks to manage the center.

For the 2025 season, Friends of Fundy is proposing a continuation of the partnership but notes that the matter was not included in the municipal budget discussions this year. As such, Ms. Fardy is requesting that the municipality waive four months of rent (\$2,400 total) for the visitor center as an in-kind contribution. In return, Friends of Fundy would cover staffing costs and keep the center open from June through September, with the potential to extend into the fall if budgets allow.

The organization also partners with the municipality on employee training, including tools like J-Prep (focused on local natural and cultural assets) and DRIFTSCAPE (a wayfinding and visitor guidance platform). These efforts aim to better connect tourists with regional attractions and



local businesses.

Councillor Ward-Russell acknowledged the proposal's value but noted the waived rent would need to be addressed in the budget as it constitutes revenue. Further internal discussion was recommended to assess feasibility.

Councillor Elderkin asked administration whether there was a student budgeted for the Alma Welcome Centre, per Ms. Beers no there was not.

Jim Lindsay – Municipal Emergency Measures Plan

Mr. Lindsay outlined the current status and next steps related to the regional Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) plan, developed in coordination with provincial authorities and local fire departments. The core goal is to standardize and streamline emergency preparedness and response across the region.

Mr. Lindsay highlighted the following points:

Regional EMO Plan Adoption

- A comprehensive 96-page regional emergency plan has been developed as a standard document for municipalities.
- This plan ensures mutual aid, shared resources, and legal alignment during emergencies.
- The plan was originally initiated by the fire chiefs of Riverview and Moncton and is backed by provincial EMO authorities.
- Council is required to formally adopt the plan to ensure legal coverage and access to provincial emergency resources.
- Most surrounding municipalities have already signed on.

Simplified Operational Tools and Local Customization

- The 96-page plan serves as a reference ("library copy") and will not be used actively in a crisis.
- A condensed, action-oriented version is being developed for practical use by local officials and first responders.
- Examples include Checklists for the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC); Duty Officer procedures (like a rotating contact person with a dedicated phone line)

Local Emergency Resources and Contractors

- A key challenge: no local contractors currently meet the required liability insurance standards to be called during emergencies.
- This prevents their inclusion in standing offer lists for rapid deployment.

Comfort & Warming Centers

• Draft policies are in progress for: Warming centers; Evacuation centers; Food distribution standards

Training and Exercises



- All council members are strongly encouraged to complete ICS 402 (Incident Command System) training to understand emergency command structures.
- A Comfort Center Workshop is scheduled for June 16, with lunch provided; at least two council members should attend. *Councillor Coates* is already registered.
- Provincial funding is available for training and emergency exercises.

Communications

- The Voyent Alert system is underutilized. Council and staff are encouraged to help register more residents and promote usage.
- Alerts can be sent to phones and landlines, ensuring residents without internet can still be reached.

INFORMATION ITEMS

The following reports were presented to Council as information items only: <u>Development Activity Report – Plan360 (March)</u> <u>Maritime By-Law Enforcement Services Report</u> <u>Update – Assessment Freeze for 2026</u> <u>Audit update</u>

COUNCIL DIRECTION REQUESTS

<u>Alma Gazebo</u>

Ms. Beers advised there is a total budget of 24,514.00 which has been allocated for the replacement of the Alma Gazebo. A Request for Proposals (RFP) resulted in three submissions, and the recommendation is to approve the Hickory Dickory Decks: 21,197 + HST, a modular, 16' x 16' gazebo similar to the existing structure, within budget, and includes a 2-year warranty. This option closely resembles the existing gazebo, offers quality and durability, and fits within the budget.

Councillor Garden asked whether the helical piles were included in the price and how soon work could start. Mr. Barrett will confirm.

Alma Snow Removal Contract

Ms. Beers advised that the snow removal contract for roads in the community of Alma, held by D S Butland, has reached its initial expiration date as of April 30, 2025.

• The original contract for road snow removal began on November 1, 2021, and expired on April 30, 2025.



- The agreement includes a clause granting D S Butland the first right of refusal to extend the contract for an additional two years.
- D S Butland also held the contract for snow removal in the Alma municipal parking lot, which also expired
- D S Butland has indicated he wishes to extend the snow removal contract for two years, including the parking lot contract under the existing terms.

It is recommended that Council approve a two-year extension of both the roads and parking lot snow removal contracts with D S Butland. This would honor the right of first refusal, maintain service continuity, and is consistent with the approved 2025 budget.

Riverside-Albert Water Treatment Plant Upgrades Cost Overrun

Ms. Hutchinson advised that The Riverside-Albert Water Treatment Plant Upgrades Project experienced a cost overrun of \$13,888.67, which could not be accommodated within the previously approved rescope of the broader Water Systems Upgrade project.

Recommendation:

• Use existing funds from the Riverside-Albert Utility Capital Account (current balance: \$18,058.05).

Councillor Elderkin asked whether the contingency fund of \$30,000 was allocated for contingency or had it been used? Also, some figures are below the estimate but not below the actual costs, which is causing confusion.

Councillor Elderkin acknowledges Ms. Hutchinson may not have all the answers at the moment and is open to getting clarification later.

Ms. Hutchinson explained that some budget items were moved from one project to another to ensure completion. Specifically:

- Certain items initially included in the original project (water treatment project) were reallocated to a "rescope" due to a lack of funds.
- Leftover funds from the water systems upgrade were used to cover these items.
- These costs are now being reported under a different project (the water systems upgrade) even though the work originally belonged to the water treatment project.
- This reallocation allowed the team to complete the necessary work, just under a different budget line.

In short, the actual expenses didn't disappear, they were just shifted to a different project using available funds to allow completion and proper reporting.

Councillor Elderkin expressed concern about a budget overage and the lack of prior awareness about it and the following points:

• The project is over budget by \$13,000, and this was not clearly communicated earlier.



- The contingency fund has been fully used, which suggests the actual overage might be more than \$13,000 when factoring in that contingency.
- The water utility account is already in a negative balance, which raises financial concerns.
- While there are funds in a GIC those were not originally intended for this project, and the questioned why they weren't used earlier if needed.
- **Councillor Elderkin** emphasized the importance of being kept informed when a project goes over budget, to ensure timely decision-making and transparency.

Councillor Ward-Russell expressed her concerns about budget overruns and a lack of timely communication regarding those issues and pointed out significant discrepancies between estimated and actual project costs and emphasize that these overruns should have been flagged earlier, the project in question is an older, ongoing one, which makes the oversight more concerning, questions when the budget overage was first recognized and communicated, indicating uncertainty about the project's financial tracking, how the municipality plans to reimburse or recover the overage, noting that a \$13,000 shortfall is significant for a Riverside-Albert residents. **Councillor Ward-Russell** requested greater financial transparency, better communication, and a clear repayment or recovery plan for the unexpected budget shortfall.

Councillor Land asked whether the project is complete? Per Ms. Hutchinson once the final report is completed, yes.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Refer to the following reports: <u>Director, Legislative Services</u> <u>Director, Operations</u>

Mr. Barrett provided updates since he submitted his report:

- 1. Hillsborough Water Exploration:
- The site and proposed plot have been clearly marked.

The landowner has been informed and invited to ask questions if needed.

2. Paving and Patching Projects:

Browns Paving (handling Albert and Riverside areas) expects to start work in 3–4 weeks, delayed by a recent asphalt plant breakdown.

Work should begin soon, with street patching in Hillsborough planned before June.

DTI is scheduled to begin pothole patching in Hillsborough by mid-July.

3. Bridge in Alma (by Fundy National Park):

There's a collapsing sidewalk due to a washout beneath it.

The issue has been reported to DTI for inspection and to assess potential damage to the road surface.

Ms. Heather Cail (Water operator in charge) advised that the team is still looking for the leak in Riverside-Albert and will be focusing on Water Street next.



Ms. Cail advised they now have the appropriate equipment and tools needed to address the problem effectively. The team is focused and putting effort into resolving the issue quickly.

Councillor Garden asked whether a date has been set for DTI to patch route 114, 915, 910? **Mayor Campbell** advised there is a meeting with DTI scheduled for this week.

Councillor Garden asked if there is an update regarding the lighting upgrades for the Alma Activity Centre. Mr. Barrett has not received a date from the contractor; he will follow up.

Councillor Garden asked whether the new pumps have been received for the Alma lift stations. Mr. Barrett confirmed the parts have been received. However, we are waiting for the new pumps to arrive and Mr. Barrett confirmed there will be no disruption in services when being installed.

Councillor Garden asked about the letters sent to residents regarding the Alma water project, and why letters were not sent to all residents on Chignecto Drive. Per Mr. Barrett letters were sent to specific individuals and he has been contacted by some residents who did not receive a letter. Mr. Barrett forwarded these addresses to Englobe.

Councillor Garden asked if there is an update for the public consultation for the Alma Water Project Update? **Mayor Campbell** advised we will plan a meeting shortly.

Councillor Land asked how the water levels have been in Hillsborough with the laundromat being in operation. Mr. Barrett advised the reservoir is good. There have been some spikes in usage, prompting the team to coordinate with the laundromat to review their schedule and verify that the usage aligns with their agreement.

Councillor Land asked whether the pool has been repaired. Per Mr. Barrett, yes, the repairs are done.

Councillor Land asked whether administration has reached out to inquire whether the Disaster relief funding is still available and whether the contractor is still interested. Mr. Barrett advised the last time he spoke to the contractor he was still interested. Ms. Beers advised that she contacted the funder and was advised that the funds are still available, and we have until 2028 to submit the final report. Ms. Beers is currently waiting for more information from the funder to confirm the funding amount.

Councillor Land advised the concrete barricades on Golf Club Road could use reflective signage for safety reasons.

Councillor Land asked if the administration has heard anything about the tender for Grey Brook (Route 114). Mr. Barrett advised he has not heard anything regarding a date he is 7



currently waiting for the plan to be finalized by DTI.

Councillor Land asked whether the water line could be tapped rather than shutting down. The water operator in charge, Ms. Cail, advised that it would be best to let the engineers bring a couple of options forward for discussion.

<u>Treasurer</u>

<u>Alma Utility</u> <u>Hillsborough Utility</u> <u>Riverside-Albert Utility</u> <u>Fundy Albert General Operating</u>

Councillor Elderkin advised she had some questions about differences between the current and previous reports and the administration team responded promptly and noted that the answers were satisfactory and understandable.

Councillor Elderkin emphasized the importance of consistent financial reporting for informed decision-making. Noting that the formatting of financial reports has varied month to month but now recognizes that budget data appears to be integrated into the accounting system. **Councillor Elderkin** asked whether the current format, comparing budgeted versus actual amounts will be used going forward. Ms. Hutchinson confirmed this can be maintained if council is satisfied with it.

Councillor Elderkin advised there are unusually high budget percentages early in the year (e.g., 70% spent after only four months), explanatory notes should be included. Ms. Hutchinson will provide notes next month.

Councillor Garden advised that on he received an email on May 2nd from the interim CEO stating that, as of April 30th, the Alma utility bank account had a positive balance of \$53,760. However, the current financial report shows a significantly different figure: a negative balance of approximately \$300,483. Ms. Hutchinson advised that the difference is due to timing and cash flow. Although the income statement may show one picture, cash flow tells another story. A large invoice was entered into the system, which caused the reported deficit, even though temporary funds were pending to cover it. While the bank account may show available cash today, expenses are ongoing, including payments to Englobe.

Councillor Garden asked whether the discrepancy between reported figures is due to cash flow differences rather than the actual bank account balance. **Councillor Garden** asked whether, after factoring in a recent invoice from Camille Leger, the utility account is now showing a negative balance of approximately \$300,483. Ms. Hutchinson confirmed that while the utility account currently shows a deficit, this is temporary and tied to cash flow. Once the remittance from RDC is received and the invoice from Camille Leger is paid, the account is expected to show a surplus. Ms. Hutchinson emphasized that the account balance fluctuates frequently, changing even multiple times since the latest report was prepared and the negative balance showing is not reflected in the bank account.



Councillor Garden asked whether there is a status update regarding the Camille Leger invoice being split in two. Ms. Beers advised no, not yet.

Councillor Garden asked about the Fire Fighting Force showing over target, due to annual expenses such as Work Safe and McDonald's insurance that were paid in the first quarter. Ms. Hutchinson explained that some of the higher-than-expected expenses are due to large annual payments. These lump-sum payments can temporarily inflate expense figures early in the year. However, once those are accounted for, the remaining budget for those areas is minimal and typically involves smaller, routine expenses.

Councillor Garden asked about the process for service disconnections related to unpaid receivables across the three former villages. Ms. Hutchinson advised that if an account goes unpaid for more than two quarters, disconnection warnings are issued. If no payment or arrangement is made, a disconnection notice follows, and services are ultimately cut off, and clarified that accounts listed as "in collections" on the report have already reached the disconnection stage.

Councillor Garden also asked about procedures for charging additional units if a resident or business adds more units to a service. Ms. Hutchinson advised an evaluation of such situations are conducted and notice is given to the resident/business.

Councillor Ward-Russell asked what the overdraft amounts are. Ms. Hutchinson advised the Alma utility has a \$50,000 overdraft and Riverside-Albert has a \$100,000 overdraft.

Councillor Ward Russell asked about the number being reported, \$300,000 deficit in the Alma utility account. Ms. Hutchinson explained that while the figure is technically accurate, it reflects cash flow timing and outstanding liabilities and not necessarily a current overdraft.

A key issue is the Camille Leger invoice, approximately \$400,000, which has been recorded but not yet paid (under capital investment line item). This entry increases liabilities on the balance sheet but doesn't affect the bank balance until payment is made. Therefore, although the income statement shows a large deficit, the actual bank account may still hold significant funds (over \$200,000, as of the latest check).

Councillor Elderkin advised she believes the confusion is between the income statement and the actual cash flow, noting that the income statement reflects budgeted vs. actual spending but doesn't show accounts payable or cash on hand. This leads to confusion about financial health, especially when large one-time payments are involved.

Ms. Hutchinson will work with e6 to develop a cash flow statement to accompany the budget vs. actual going forward. This would help bridge the gap between financial reporting and actual fund availability.

Councillor Land asked whether utility invoices are paid out of general operating. Ms.



Hutchinson advised that that each utility has its own dedicated bank account, and funds are only moved across accounts in rare cases, only with a council resolution and a ministerial order.

MAYOR AND COUNCILLOR STATEMENTS AND INQUIRIES

Councillor Coates thanked *Councillor Ward-Russell* for arranging the meeting with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Councillor Land has nothing to report.

Councillor Jonah has nothing to report.

Councillor Elderkin reported the following:

Ongoing discussion around the need for updated firefighting equipment to ensure future community safety.

Appreciation expressed to the Kiwanis Club for hosting a well-attended and enjoyable breakfast.

Attended the Harvey Hall AGM with *Councillor Garden*; noted strong progress and looks forward to future accomplishments in 2025.

Encouraged council members and staff to participate in the ParticipACTION Community Challenge in June, urging everyone to sign up and spread awareness via social media and community platforms like Connecting Albert County and the Fundy Albert Facebook page. Noted postal code discrepancies affecting how certain communities (e.g., Lower Coverdale and Germantown) are being counted in regional challenges, efforts are underway to address this.

Concerns raised over the condition of Albert Mines Road, which is a provincial responsibility. Despite not being a municipal road, *Councillor Elderkin* believes the municipality should advocate for improvements on behalf of its residents.

Raised the issue of flower bed maintenance in Riverside-Albert, questioning current plans and available support from public works.

Fundy Tourism has been very active:

- Locator maps for 2025 were delivered to members and post offices, with distribution extending to provincial information centers.
- Non-member businesses will also receive maps to ensure visitors are well-informed.
- Held two successful educational workshops on May 14.
- First President's Breakfast to be held May 21, providing a platform for local organizations to share updates, goals, and challenges.
- Digital tourism initiative "Driftscape" is being promoted, with Fundy Tourism offering member discounts and contributing financially to the partnership.
- While digital promotion is growing, traditional paper maps are still seen as vital for visitor engagement.



Councillor Ward-Russell reported the following:

Recognized and thanked the public works staff for their continued efforts, during National Public Works Week.

Attended a special meeting on behalf of the mayor regarding the provincial freeze on property assessments.

- Positive for residents, as property taxes won't increase.
- Challenging for municipalities, as frozen assessments may limit budget flexibility, impacting staffing, infrastructure, and service planning.
- Recommended that council hold a dedicated discussion soon to identify and plan for potential financial impacts.
- Noted that UMNB is requesting a letter from the municipality outlining concerns to support ongoing negotiations with the province.

Upcoming Meeting with DTI (Department of Transportation and Infrastructure): Scheduled for Friday at 10:00 a.m., with a focus on non-municipal roads maintained by the province.

Councillor Garden reported the following:

Recommendation to invite MLA Sherry Wilson to upcoming meetings, especially those related to the assessment freeze, to ensure provincial-level representation and support. While the decision was not made by her party, having her voice at the table was seen as valuable for advocacy.

Congratulations extended to Harvey Hall on a successful year and its continued contribution to the community. Appreciation was noted for their hospitality at the AGM.

Attended a joint meeting with the three local fire departments. The meeting included:

- Collaboration on equipment needs.
- A presentation on the team radio system, which highlighted the complexity of communication infrastructure. Support was expressed for informed decision-making moving forward.

Strong emphasis was placed on the importance of local volunteers and community groups, particularly their role in fostering collaboration and enhancing quality of life in Fundy Albert.

- Special mention was made of the Alma Garden Stewards, who have proposed a low-cost beautification plan for Ward One.
- The plan aligns with the 2025 budget and requests modest support from the public works team.
- A formal request was made for the Director of Operations to review the proposal and reach out to the group's main contact for further coordination.

Mayor Campbell reported the following:

Mayor Campbell advised he is 20 days into their term and actively working to learn, ask questions, and catch up on responsibilities.



Gratitude was expressed to Kim for her direct answers and support.

Attended a Fundy Parkway announcement (25% discount promotion) where they met and spoke with the Premier and Tourism Minister.

- Shared Fundy Albert's priorities and pushed for a meeting to collaborate on regional development.
- Expressed persistence in following up, noting no response yet but intent to keep pressing for answers.

Participated in two local breakfasts (Alma Fire Department & Kiwanis in Hillsborough) alongside fellow council members, reinforcing a message of unity and local support.

Pledged to continue asking questions and seeking improvements within municipal operations. In honor of Public Works Week, staff appreciation initiative will be held on Friday to

recognize staff contributions.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND INQUIRIES

Ms. Susan MacCallum asked whether the Steeves House Museum is owned by the Municipality. *Mayor Campbell* confirmed it is owned by the Village.

Mr. Lee Warnock made the following statement:

- It is more cost-effective to have the original auditor continue than to train a new one.
- Alma Water Project: Emphasizes hydro testing or air testing of underground pipes to prevent future leaks. If not originally specified in the contract, it now may incur change order costs.
- EMO Contractor Insurance: Recommends using project-specific or incident insurance policies for emergency events, particularly when working with smaller contractors lacking coverage.
- Alma Gazebo design should account for increased storm severity.
- Well Water Infrastructure in Chignecto Bay Estates: Noted that increased water extraction from new wells has previously affected private wells and recommends testing all wells in the area to understand hydrogeological impacts.
- Riverside Albert Project Overrun: Notes cost surprises on past projects and stresses the importance of a solid project delivery strategy and unit pricing to avoid inflated costs and inefficiencies.
- Hot Taps in Water Systems: Recommends considering hot tapping (connecting to a live pipeline without shutdown) as a potentially more cost-effective alternative to water shutoffs.

Ms. Judy Tait advised Council of the serious concerns about the deteriorating condition of the Albert Mines Road, supported by a petition with over 150 signatures. Key points include:

• Severe Road Damage: The road is causing vehicle damage and costly repairs for residents. Patchwork repairs have been ineffective.



- Underlying Issues: Water drainage, heaving due to freeze-thaw cycles, and salting have worsened the condition. Heavy logging trucks exacerbate the damage.
- Tourism Impact: The road serves as a critical access route to one of the province's major tourism destinations. If Route 114 fails, access would be severely disrupted.
- Petition Strategy: The petition will be sent to the MLA Sherry Wilson

Mayor Campbell advised Ms. Tait there is a meeting scheduled with DTI on Friday.

Ms. Kathy Weir raised concerns about the unsightly mess left by NB Power's tree-cutting operations beneath hydro lines. The current state of the cut trees, left half-cut and scattered in ditches, is drawing negative attention from tourists.

Mayor Campbell advised that the community has been told by NB Power that once tree cutting is completed as far as Alma, crews will return to chip and clean up all the ditches. Cleanup has reportedly begun on Mines Road. Cutting is still actively underway in Germantown and along Route 114.

CLOSED SESSION

IT WAS MOVED by *Councillor Elderkin* and SECONDED by *Councillor Coates* that Council have an in-camera session at 6:22 pm. MOTION CARRIED (unanimously).

- a. Local Governance Act, SNB 2017, 68(1)(h) the access to or security of buildings and other structures occupied or used by the local government or access to or security of systems of the local government, including computer or communication systems.
- b. Local Governance Act, SNB 2017, 68(1)(j) labour and employment matters, including the negotiation of collective agreements.

IT WAS MOVED by *Councillor Elderkin* and SECONDED by *Councillor Coates* to return to the regular session at 8:00 pm. MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

ADJOURNMENT

IT WAS MOVED by *Councillor Coates THAT* the meeting be adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Mayor

Clerk