

Present: Mayor Campbell
Councillor Jonah
Councillor Ward-Russell
Councillor Land
Councillor Elderkin

Absent: Councillor Coates

Staff Present: Sean Wallace – CAO
Kim Beers – Director, Legislative Services
Jillian Hutchinson - Treasurer

Call to Order

Mayor Campbell called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Adoption of Agenda

Mayor Campbell requested an addition of Closed Session Local Governance Act, s. 68(1)(c) information that could cause financial loss or gain to a person or the local government or could jeopardize negotiations leading to an agreement or contract, and Local Governance Act, s. 68(1)(j) labour and employment matters, including the negotiation of collective agreements.

IT WAS MOVED by Councillor Land and SECONDED by Councillor Jonah THAT the amended agenda be adopted.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

Conflict of Interest Declarations

NONE

2026 – Budget

Ms. Hutchinson advised that in order to maintain the current tax rate as requested by Council, an additional **\$105,496** would need to be allocated to Shared Services to balance the budget. It was further noted that, under this approach, all shared services would be fully shared among participating areas for transparency.

Mr. Wallace presented several recommendations and updates for Council's consideration:

- Gray book Trail Bridge: Numerous public inquiries have been received regarding the bridge closure. Staff recommended repairs to restore access.
- Push Camera Purchase: Staff proposed the acquisition of a push camera, noting its

versatile use for identifying issues in utilities, buildings, roofs, and foundations. The equipment would reduce reliance on external contractors, who currently charge approximately \$2,000 per inspection, and would pay for itself within a year.

- **Community Awards Program:** Staff suggested establishing a municipal-wide recognition program to celebrate volunteers and community contributors across all areas of Fundy Albert.
- **Lookout Driveway Repairs:** It was noted that significant deterioration exists along the road and requires attention.
- **Economic Development:** Preliminary survey results indicated strong community interest in prioritizing economic development initiatives.
- **Council Chambers Audiovisual Equipment:** Staff recommended upgrades to improve meeting technology but advised that such costs are ineligible under the Community Renewal Fund, which supports only building-related projects.

Additional input from upcoming community consultations may further inform these recommendations.

Councillor Elderkin inquired about the proposed Community Awards Program, specifically seeking clarification on how staff envisions the program being developed and implemented.

Mr. Wallace outlined a preliminary concept for the Community Awards Program, explaining that each Councillor could nominate individuals from their ward who demonstrate strong volunteerism. Additional nominations could be gathered through a public survey process. Identified candidates would then be reviewed through an adjudication process, with selected recipients recognized at a modest community ceremony, intended as an affordable, unifying event to bring residents together across the municipality.

Councillor Elderkin thanked staff for the clarification regarding the push camera, noting they had initially understood it to be limited to water and sewer use rather than a shared municipal asset with broader applications. Mr. Wallace advised that his previous experience using a push camera in other municipalities, noting its wide range of applications beyond water and sewer work, including detecting roof leaks, foundation issues, and blocked drains. It was emphasized that investing in such multi-use equipment would enable more work to be completed in-house, reducing reliance on contractors and generating long-term cost savings for the municipality.

Councillor Elderkin inquired whether the Gray Brook Trail Bridge, with an estimated cost of \$30,000, represents a structure of substantial size. Mr. Wallace and Mr. Barrett confirmed that the Gray Brook Trail Bridge is designed to be a substantial, durable structure that will withstand flooding events. While potential funding may be available through programs such as the Trans Canada Trail or partnerships identified by the Southeast Regional Service Commission under the Trail Town initiative, funds should still be set aside in the budget as a precaution. It was further noted that the bridge area has required multiple repairs in the past, and constructing a more permanent structure would reduce future maintenance costs.

Councillor Elderkin asked whether the cost for the Lookout Driveway repairs was an estimate, noting that the condition of the driveway is in very poor shape and requires significant attention. Mr. Barrett confirmed that the Lookout Driveway repair cost is an estimate, based on similar work completed in the past year. The proposed plan involves removing the existing surface, laying new gravel, and, if the budget permits, applying asphalt to improve durability and appearance. It was noted that a gravel-only surface would likely experience washouts due to the steep terrain. **Councillor Elderkin** also commented that the driveway is currently unattractive and in rough condition, despite the area's growing popularity, often seeing 15–20 vehicles per day from visitors accessing the nearby falls.

Councillor Land asked if the push camera purchase would include all associated equipment, such as the screen and related components, ensuring a complete and functional setup. M. Barrett confirmed that the push camera purchase would include all necessary components, such as the screen, locators, and approximately 300 feet of cable, depending on available funding. The equipment will allow staff to pinpoint the exact location and depth of underground infrastructure, reducing the need for unnecessary excavation. Mr. Wallace advised that having in-house capability will help resolve liability disputes by providing photographic evidence of issues and improve efficiency, as staff will no longer need to wait for multiple jobs before hiring external contractors due to high rental costs.

Councillor Jonah commented on the proposed audiovisual equipment upgrades for the Council Chambers, noting ongoing concerns that the existing system is inadequate. He indicated that the proposed \$25,000 allocation should be sufficient to resolve these issues and greatly enhance the overall audio and video quality to meet required standards.

Councillor Elderkin advised that the audiovisual equipment upgrades are a definite need and will be beneficial for the municipality, particularly with an upcoming election, as they will help ensure the new Council is well equipped and set up for success.

Councillor Ward-Russell reiterated the importance of distinguishing between wants and needs when evaluating proposed projects. While expressing support for the audiovisual upgrades as a necessary improvement, she noted that several other items appear to be “wants” rather than essential needs.

Councillor Ward-Russell emphasized that available funds should prioritize capital investments, particularly for the arena and municipal office, both of which require significant renovations. She suggested exploring whether funds could be directed to capital reserves to support these future infrastructure needs.

Additionally, she raised the issue of by-law enforcement, noting that the current officer is only available two days per week, and suggested assessing what additional resources or funding would be required to expand that service.

Councillor Ward-Russell also commented on the push camera proposal, recognizing its long-term cost-saving potential but suggesting that the majority (approximately 70%) of its use would relate specifically to sewer work, which should be taken into account when considering cost-sharing.

Overall, **Councillor Ward-Russell** advised the need to focus municipal spending on core infrastructure priorities such as the arena, municipal building renovations, and essential service enhancements, while supporting technology improvements like the audiovisual system as part of a balanced investment approach.

Ms. Hutchinson provided an update on the Capital Renewal Fund, advising that the province has allocated between \$100,000 and \$200,000 in funding to support the renewal of municipal infrastructure and assets. Details of the program are still being finalized, with additional information expected following a provincial presentation scheduled for the next day. Ms. Hutchinson noted that this initiative will be brought forward to the Committee of the Whole, as municipalities are required to develop a Capital Renewal Plan extending to 2029.

Councillor Elderkin clarified that the current budget figures are preliminary and not fixed, noting that adjustments are often required as new priorities or unforeseen expenses arise throughout the year.

Councillor Jonah advised that the Gray Brook Bridge, noting it has become a frequently raised topic within the community, comparable to the interest previously seen with the Alma gazebo project. Mr. Barrett advised that now that the prior project is complete, efforts will begin to identify funding opportunities not only to replace the bridge but also to undertake additional site improvements, such as reinforcing the area to prevent washouts and developing a picnic or rest area to enhance community use of the site.

Ms. Hutchinson advised there are potential enhancements to the Gray Brook Bridge project, suggesting that once the bridge is rebuilt, solar lighting could be added along the trail to encourage year-round use. Reference was made to similar illuminated trail features observed during a recent conference in Le Pays de la Sagouine, noting that while Fundy Albert would pursue a simpler version, such as Edison-style solar lights, the goal would be to create an inviting, accessible space that encourages outdoor activity even during the darker winter months.

Councillor Ward-Russell advised the importance of actively pursuing available provincial and federal funding opportunities before committing significant municipal funds to projects. She noted that substantial funding programs exist but require greater effort in identifying and accessing them, suggesting that the municipality should seek external funding first and contribute municipal dollars only as a supplement where necessary.

Mr. Wallace advised that further clarity on available funding programs is expected in the coming weeks following the release of the federal budget. It was mentioned that some national funding

programs may face reductions, while community-based funding streams are anticipated to increase, potentially creating new opportunities for the municipality to access financial support for local projects.

Mayor Campbell advised that the purpose of the discussion was to gauge Council's feedback on the proposed projects and priorities, noting that items listed are flexible and interchangeable. Adjustments can be made by removing, replacing, or reordering projects as Council deems appropriate, and decisions do not need to be finalized at the current meeting.

Councillor Elderkin advised that priorities may shift over time, citing the arena as an example. If a significant need arises later in the year, such as in February, funds that have been earmarked for other projects could be reallocated to address more urgent municipal requirements.

Ms. Hutchinson suggested that unallocated or flexible funds could be placed in the Capital Reserve section of the budget. This approach would allow Council to reallocate funds later, as needed, through formal Council approval, ensuring financial flexibility while maintaining proper oversight.

Mr. Wallace advised that community feedback from upcoming public consultations on November 12th and 13th, as well as results from the recently closed municipal survey, may influence Council's priorities. Preliminary survey results indicate that infrastructure ranked among the top community concerns, and Council will have an opportunity to review this input before making final budget or project decisions.

Mr. Wallace advised that approx. 153 survey responses were received. While the number was higher than in previous years, Councillors observed that it still represents a small portion of the population, making it difficult to base major decisions solely on the results. Mr. Wallace also noted that survey data can sometimes be skewed if certain groups coordinate their responses, which may influence the overall findings.

Councillor Land advised he supports prioritizing the Gray Brook Trail Bridge and audiovisual equipment upgrades, identifying them as the most important immediate projects and recommended that the remaining proposed items be placed in capital reserves for future consideration, noting that while all projects hold value, these two should remain at the forefront of current priorities.

Ms. Hutchinson advised that year-end financial projections are currently being prepared. If available funds are identified within the current budget, the municipality could consider transferring surplus funds into capital reserves before year end to support future projects and infrastructure needs.

Councillor Elderkin advised the importance of maintaining financial flexibility given that a new Council will soon take office and may choose to revise or reprioritize projects. It was

acknowledged that while the current Council can plan and earmark funds, future members may take a different approach. **Councillor Elderkin** emphasized that the key objective is to ensure adequate funding is set aside so the incoming Council is well positioned to continue or adjust ongoing projects and succeed moving forward.

Closed Session

IT WAS MOVED by **Councillor Ward-Russell** and **SECONDED** by **Councillor Elderkin** **THAT** Council have an in-camera session at 5:20 pm.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

Mr. Barrett and Ms. Hutchinson exited the meeting.

Local Governance Act, s. 68(1)(c) information that could cause financial loss or gain to a person or the local government or could jeopardize negotiations leading to an agreement or contract.

Local Governance Act, s. 68(1)(j) labour and employment matters, including the negotiation of collective agreements.

IT WAS MOVED by **Councillor Ward-Russell** **SECONDED** by **Councillor Land** **THAT** Council return to regular session at **6:11 pm**

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

Adjournment

Moved by **Councillor Land** that the meeting be adjourned at 6:11 pm.

Mayor

Clerk