

Present: Mayor Campbell
Councillor Land
Councillor Coates
Councillor Elderkin
Councillor Jonah

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

Absent: Councillor Ward-Russell

CALL TO ORDER

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

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

IT WAS MOVED by **Councillor Elderkin** and **SECONDED** by **Councillor Coates** **THAT** the agenda be adopted.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

None.

CAPITAL RENEWAL FUND 4 YEAR PLAN APPROVAL

IT WAS MOVED by **Councillor Elderkin** and **SECONDED** by **Councillor Jonah** **THAT** Whereas administration has created a document titled Fundy Albert 2026 - 2029 Capital Renewal Plan (CRP) for the Capital Renewal Funding (CRF) allocation;

AND WHEREAS Community Financing of Department of Environment and Local Government require the plan to be submitted by December 15th, 2025;

BE IT resolved that the document titled Fundy Albert 2026 - 2029 Capital Renewal Plan (CRP) for the Capital Renewal Funding (CRF) allocation be adopted.

Questions:

Councillor Elderkin asked for clarification regarding whether approving the presented list would authorize staff to proceed with all included projects without further Council approval. Administration confirmed that approval of the list does **not** constitute authorization to move ahead with the projects. Any project exceeding the Municipality's spending authority must return to Council for approval, as has been the established process. It was further noted that major purchases (e.g., equipment such as a three-ton dump truck with plow) would continue to require separate Council authorization.

Councillor Land inquired about the status of the Hillsborough Water Exploration, noting it was not included on the presented list. Administration confirmed the project is actively progressing: the landowner agreement and easement have been signed, and the trust cheque is being delivered. Once completed, engineers will be notified. The engineering team is currently addressing questions related to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). It is anticipated that drilling may begin by the end of February. A full proposal from the engineers, outlining the required tasks, will be brought forward at the next Committee of the Whole meeting. It was clarified that the project is not listed because it is a new asset and cannot be included under renewal items.

Councillor Elderkin asked whether the capital plan would limit the Municipality's ability to seek grant funding before using its own funds. Administration confirmed that it does not. It was noted that projects such as the library upgrades may qualify for grants or efficiencies that could be applied prior to municipal spending. Administration further explained that many funding programs are stackable, and a tracking spreadsheet is being developed to monitor all current and potential funding sources. This will allow staff to reallocate funding when new programs arise and update the capital plan accordingly. The capital plan remains an evolving document and submitting it is required in order to access funding in the new year.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

GIC REINVESTMENT HILLSBOROUGH FIRE DEPARTMENT APPROVAL

IT WAS MOVED by **Councillor Land** and **SECONDED** by **Councillor Elderkin**
THAT Whereas GIC number 0012 \$28,165.02 for the Hillsborough fire department matures on December 30, 2025;
Be resolved that GIC number 0012 be reinvested into a cashable GIC with interest.

Questions:

Councillor Elderkin followed up on a previous discussion regarding fire department capital purchases and asked whether the firefighters had specifically requested that the funds be

withdrawn this year. Administration clarified that during last year's budget process, in order to maintain the tax rate desired by Council, it was planned that a portion of funds would be taken from the reserve to support the purchase of SCBA tanks. Administration noted that several smaller items, such as tires and lighting for the trailer, fall within the CAO's spending authority, but the SCBA purchase does not. As a result, the Fire Chief was advised to bring the SCBA request to Council in January for formal approval and review.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

BUDGET 2026

Administration reported an update following a review with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DTI). An error was identified in the lane-kilometre figures used in the municipal budget. After confirming the correct calculations with DTI's Director of Finance, it was determined that the Municipality has additional funds of **\$16,938** in Summer Maintenance and **\$53,299** in Snow and Ice Removal. Since Council has expressed the desire to keep tax rates unchanged, administration recommended transferring the combined amount of **\$70,237** to the 2026 capital budget for Village Core investments.

It was also noted that the Municipality realized excess revenue of **\$3,078** in Village Core and **\$158,533** in Shared Services. These amounts have been tentatively placed into the Capital Reserve pending Council direction.

Administration outlined several items for Council's consideration based on budget consultations, including potential adjustments for recreation programming (\$10,000), economic development initiatives (\$20,000), quarterly CPA financial review services (\$15,000), additional street lighting in Lower Coverdale (\$1,000), and audio/video upgrades for Council Chambers (\$32,000). Council was asked to deliberate on these recommendations and identify any further adjustments or priorities within the available budget.

Council discussed the recommended budget adjustments, and several councillors expressed appreciation for the increased allocation for community events. Council members highlighted the importance of expanding economic development efforts to support population growth, business attraction, and long-term sustainability of municipal utilities. It was noted that having dedicated economic development funding enables the Municipality to leverage stackable grant programs, which often require municipal cost-sharing.

Several councillors emphasized that upgrading the Council Chambers audio and microphone system should be a top priority due to ongoing public feedback regarding poor sound quality on recorded meetings. Support was also expressed for the quarterly CPA financial review, community programming, and the proposed economic development allocation.

A question was raised regarding whether the beautification budget was reduced. Administration clarified that although some line items were adjusted, this was achieved through operational efficiencies, such as anticipated use of an in-house man-lift, and not by reducing service levels.

Council further reviewed the excess revenues identified in both Village Core and Shared Services budget lines. Council discussed the implications of over-budgeting and the need for transparency when reallocating funds between shared and core services. Administration recommended transferring the \$70,237 in confirmed DTI variances to the capital transfer line, allowing flexibility for future capital needs, including the potential purchase of a replacement truck without requiring a debenture. Council acknowledged the importance of recognizing when Village Core funds are used for shared assets, noting that similar flexibility must occur in both directions.

Councillors expressed general comfort with the administrative recommendations, prioritizing cameras/microphones first, followed by accounting services, with other items to be included as funding permits. Discussion then turned to ensuring that motions clearly separate the excess DTI amounts from the excess Village Core and Shared revenues. Council concluded that two separate motions would be required to address each matter appropriately.

IT WAS MOVED by *Councillor Elderkin* and **SECONDED** by *Councillor Jonah* to have a recess at 5:30 pm.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

Mayor Campbell welcomed everyone back at 5:44 pm.

IT WAS MOVED by *Councillor Elderkin* and **SECONDED** by *Councillor Land* **THAT**

Whereas our draft of the general budget shows excess revenue for Village Core of \$3,708 and Shared of \$158,533, tentatively budgeted under 2.8.2.1.1 – Transfer to Capital Reserve;

And whereas budget line 2.3.2.3.2.2 – Summer Maintenance DTI has an excess budget of \$16,938;

And whereas budget line 2.3.2.3.8.2 – Snow and Ice Removal DTI has an excess budget of \$53,299;

And whereas Council requests that the following amounts be moved from 2.8.2.1.1 – Transfer to Capital Reserve to the following budget lines respectively:

- 2.7.1.1.9 – Recreation Other in the amount of \$10,000
- 2.6.7.1.2 – Economic Development Other in the amount of \$20,000
- 2.1.2.2.4 – Accounting Other in the amount of \$15,000
- 2.3.2.6.1 – Street Lights – Power in the amount of \$1,000
- 2.1.2.1.7 – Office Building in the amount of \$32,000

And whereas Council requests that the excess budget from 2.3.2.3.2.2 – Summer Maintenance DTI and 2.3.2.3.8.2 – Snow and Ice Removal DTI be moved to budget line 2.8.2.1.1 – Transfer to Capital;

Be it resolved that \$78,000 be moved from 2.8.2.1.1 – Transfer to Capital Reserve to:

- 2.7.1.1.9 – Recreation Other
- 2.6.7.1.2 – Economic Development Other
- 2.1.2.2.4 – Accounting Other
- 2.3.2.6.1 – Street Lights – Power
- 2.1.2.1.7 – Office Building

respectively;

And be it further resolved that the excess budget of \$16,938 from 2.3.2.3.2.2 – Summer Maintenance DTI and \$53,299 from 2.3.2.3.8.2 – Snow and Ice Removal DTI be moved to budget line 2.8.2.1.1 – Transfer to Capital;

And be it further resolved that the remaining excess revenue of Village Core (\$3,708) and Shared (\$80,533,533) remain in 2.8.2.1.1.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

Administration outlined the next step as adopting a recommended motion for the 2026 General Operating Budget, noting an operating budget of approximately \$7,201,635 and a warrant of approximately \$5,809,733, which would maintain the existing tax rates with no increase from the previous year. **Councillor Elderkin** questioned whether Council should first resolve the utility budgets, since utility figures are embedded in the overall budget.

Council then discussed the three utilities. There was general comfort with the Alma and Hillsborough utility budgets and rates, but no consensus yet on Riverside-Albert. Councillors expressed concern about the proposed restructuring of Riverside-Albert's water and wastewater rates, particularly that lowering wastewater rates while significantly increasing water rates (about \$60 per quarter for some users) would shift costs inequitably, with water-only users seeing a large increase while some sewer-only users receive a decrease. Administration and the Director of Operations explained the pressures driving the increases, including rising treatment costs, underinvestment in past years, aging infrastructure, debenture and capital needs, and upcoming work (e.g., lagoon desludging, lift station issues, additional sampling, and potential major wastewater impacts from future housing development). They also referenced ongoing work on a new water by-law, connection and installation fees, and legal costs for easements and compliance.

Several councillors stated they were not yet comfortable with the Riverside-Albert and Alma rate changes, particularly the approach of lowering wastewater while raising water, and emphasized the need to avoid creating future sharp increases after a temporary decrease. Council agreed that they needed to review accurate, up-to-date rate scenarios line by line.

IT WAS MOVED by **Councillor Land** and **SECONDED** by **Councillor Elderkin** to have a

recess at 6:08 pm.

MOTION CARRIED (unanimously)

Mayor Campbell welcomed everyone back at 7:52 pm.

Councillor Elderkin stated that, following discussion during the break, several inconsistencies were identified in the spreadsheets provided prior to the meeting. Council agreed that administration should verify the calculations, with particular attention to the utility budgets for the former municipal areas. The councillor also emphasized the importance of identifying the source of the 2024 utility surpluses, noting that these surpluses will influence water user rates in the 2027 budget. Understanding where the surpluses originate will help Council assess future impacts on water users in Riverside-Albert, Alma, and Hillsborough.

Council agreed to reconvene the following evening to review the updated information. A councillor requested that the meeting begin at 6:00 p.m. rather than 5:00 p.m. due to a scheduling conflict, and Council reached consensus to meet at 6:00 p.m. December 9, 2025.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND INQUIRIES

None

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by **Councillor Land** to adjourn at 7:55 pm

Mayor

Clerk