

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
**Monday, June 30, 2025, at 6:00pm**

A special meeting of the Committee of the Whole of Middleton Town Council was held in person, via ZOOM and on Facebook Live on Monday, June 30, 2025.

**PRESENT**

Chairing the meeting, Mayor Gail Smith; Deputy Mayor Gary Marshall, Councillors John Bartlett, Dan Smith, Bernadette Knapp, Jonathan Archibald and Sandra Fournier; Chief Administrative Officer, Ashley Crocker, Events and Communications Coordinator, Gina Pearson, Contract Accountant, Karen Kluska, and Recording Secretary, Sara Marceau.

Regrets: Director of Public Works Verran

Also in attendance: resident Joanne Hightower

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**250630.01:** It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda, as circulated. **Motion carried.**

**3. PRESENTATION**

**3.1 Overview of the 2025-2026 Draft Operating and Capital Budgets**

The 2025-2026 Draft Operation and Capital Budgets have been circulated to all Committee members.

CAO Crocker went through the budget presentation with members of Council, which included:

- An overview of the budget process
- Key budget assumptions and highlights
- An overview of the Town General Budget
- The water utility operating budget will be presented at a later meeting
- Reserve Activity

Members of Council asked questions throughout the presentation:

- Councillor Archibald inquired whether any staff members are anticipating retirement.
  - Staff indicated that no official notices have been received at this time
- Councillor Fournier inquired about the classification of public health services
  - Contract Accountant Kluska stated that this line item used to be where the Western Regional Housing Authority invoice was posted, but through the recent Service Agreement, the province has taken over this cost.
- Councillor Smith inquired whether staff quantify in-kind grants.
  - Staff responded that that is not currently done, but it could be moving forward
- Councillor Bartlett asked whether there is an estimated revenue projection for the 438 Main Development currently under construction.
  - Staff responded that because the building is not yet finished, the Town will not see any property tax revenue in 2025-2026. Staff will follow up with PVSC on when a property is added to the assessment roll.
- Section 5, 2025-26 Capital Budget

Contract Accountant Kluska gave an overview of the 2025-26 Capital Budget and the 5-Year Capital Plan.

- Contract Accountant Kluska stated that the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board approved the School Street Waterline project.
  - Councillor Archibald asked if the grant is contingent upon its approval
  - ACTION: CAO Crocker will have to investigate the grant specifications.

### **3.2 Discussion of Potential Cost Reductions**

The CAO went over some of the options to address the \$240,000 deficit:

- Increase residential and commercial tax rates
- Use the 2024-2025 prior year surplus which is currently estimated at \$60,000
- Use operating reserves
- Reduce grants to organizations

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The CAO communicated that management has made every effort to reduce expenses where possible and maximize revenue through the use of grants.

A lengthy conversation took place among Council members regarding the budget options

- Councillor Smith asked about the current balance of the operating reserve and whether staff could provide Council with an outlook for next year. Staff replied that the current balance in the operating reserve is about \$1 million.
- Councillor Bartlett stated that, with assessed property values increasing, caution should be taken to avoid raising rates too much
- Councillor Knapp asked about the current standstill with Northlands. The CAO responded that she needs to follow up with the Town's planner on this matter.
- Deputy Mayor Marshall stated that the Town of Wolfville underwent a policing review and suggested reaching out to them
- Councillor Archibald inquired about snow removal in private parking lots, asking whether the Town is currently charging for the service and if it is permitted to do so. The CAO indicated that those agreements would come to Council at a later date.
- Deputy Mayor Marshall suggested quantifying the rink, water, and sewer components, and considering the broader picture of the in-kind services provided by the Town
- Councillor Smith suggested providing Council with an estimate to quantify what the Town provides to organizations as in-kind services. The CAO will have this for the July 7, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting.
- Councillor Smith inquired if there is any documentation indicating that recreation activities like the Shad Derby are cost-neutral or breaking even. The CAO will include the event budgets at the next meeting.

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

The Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.

  
MAYOR

  
RECORDING SECRETARY