

A regular monthly meeting of the Committee of the Whole of Middleton Town Council was held in person, via ZOOM and on YouTube Live on Monday, March 2, 2026.

**PRESENT**

Chairing the meeting, Mayor Gail Smith; Deputy Mayor Gary Marshall, Councillors John Bartlett, Dan Smith, Bernadette Knapp, Sandra Fournier and Jonathan Archibald; Chief Administrative Officer, Ashley Crocker, Director of Finance, Leah Profitt, Director of Public Works, Adam Verran and Recording Secretary, Sara Marceau.

Also in attendance: 2 citizens

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**260302.01:** It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda, as circulated. **Motion carried.**

**3. PROCLAMATION**

Mayor Smith proclaimed March 26, 2026, as “Purple Day” in the Town of Middleton.

**4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes

**4.1** Committee of the Whole Meeting – February 2, 2026

No errors or omissions were noted, and the minutes were considered approved.

**5. ANYTHING BY CITIZENS**

Nothing to report.

## 6. NEW BUSINESS

### 6.1 RFD 017-2026 Appointment List Update

CAO Crocker gave a brief overview of the Updated Appointment List.

**260302.02** It was moved and seconded that Council on recommendation from the CAO, appoint David Wright as the Town's Building Official and Fire Inspector. **Motion carried.**

**260302.03** It was moved and seconded that Council approve the 2026 Appointment List, as presented. **Motion carried.**

### 6.2 RFD 018-2026 Valley Waste Temporary Borrowing Resolution

CAO Crocker gave a brief overview of the Valley Waste Temporary Borrowing Resolution.

**260302.04** It was moved and seconded that Council approve the included Town of Middleton's Loan guarantee resolution in the amount of up to, but not exceeding, eight thousand, one hundred and sixty-four dollars (\$8,164) representing one point ninety percent (1.90%) of the total of four hundred, twenty-eight thousand, eight hundred and thirty-five dollars (\$428,835) to be borrowed by Valley Waste for their 2025/26 capital budget. **Motion carried.**

## 7. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 7.1 Community Concerns/Complaints as of February 2026

CAO Crocker stated that the Community Concerns/Complaints as of February 2026 has been circulated to all members.

### 7.2 Town General and Water Utility Financial Report as of end December 2025

Director of Finance Profitt gave a brief overview of the Town General and Water Utility Report as of end December 2025.

## 8. PRESENTATION

8.1 Overview of the 2026-2027 Draft Operating and Capital Budgets.

- **Section 1: Budget Process**

CAO Crocker went over section 1, budget process

- **Section 2: Budget Highlights**

DOF Profitt went over section 2, budget highlights

- **Section 3: 2026-27 Town General Operating Budget**

DOF Profitt and CAO Crocker presented on section 3, 2026-27 Town General Operating Budget

**ACTION:** Update slide 37 with the correct graph to reflect commercial rates, not residential.

- A recreation grant request has not yet been made to the County of Annapolis.
- Fire service funding from the County is policy driven and does not reflect actual call volumes. Council discussed sending letters regarding recreation to the County of Annapolis and concerns with Financial Condition Indicators (FCI) to the Province of Nova Scotia.
- Tracking County use of Town parks and recreation services is challenging but a Councillor suggested that it's needed to support funding discussions.
- Kings Transit and other shared services may require stronger County collaboration, as current arrangements do not appear to be sustainable.

**ACTION:** CAO Crocker to send a letter to the County of Annapolis outlining a request for Recreation Grant.

- **Section 4: 2026-27 Water Utility Operating Budget**

The Water Utility Operating Budget is currently under development.

- **Section 5: 2026-27 Capital Budget**

DOF Profitt presented on section 5, 2026-27 Capital Budget

- CAO Crocker stated that if the grant funding is not received for specific projects, staff do not have the authority to proceed with them.
- Councillor Knapp questioned whether the December surplus could be used to help offset the 2026-2027 deficit.
  - CAO Crocker said that the surplus reported is just as of the end of December and that a forecast is a more accurate representation of where the Town may end up at the end of fiscal 2025-2026. An updated forecast will come before Council in March.

- Councillor Smith suggested any surplus should go back to residents in the next year.
  - CAO Crocker noted that many municipal units have Surplus Allocation policies which guide staff on where to transfer surpluses at the end of the year (usually to reserves for future replacement and upgrading of assets).
- Deputy Mayor Marshall asked about using surpluses for debt payments; CAO Crocker said there's no formal policy, surpluses become retained earnings unless specific motions are made to move a surplus to reserves.
- **Section 6: 5-Year Capital Plan**  
DOF Profitt presented on section 6, 5-year Capital plan

- Councillor Archibald: Asked whether funding is available for the \$1 million allocated to Northlands waterline.
  - CAO Crocker: Confirmed that funding is available through the HAF grant, but that the road network must be laid first.

**ACTION:** Staff to amend the project sheet to reflect that the project is being funded with grant funding and not long-term debt.

- Councillor Archibald: Noted that in future years, the debt service cost of the community hall will be a strain on the Town's budget.
- Councillor Smith questioned the plan for three fire trucks over five years and whether it should be discussed.
- Deputy Mayor Marshall noted that every piece of fire equipment has been deferred for replacement in past budgets, often due to their large expense, and that reserves have not been adequately funded.
- **Section 7: Capital Project Sheets**  
DOF Profitt briefly presented on section 7, Capital Project Sheets.
- **Section 8: Reserve Activity and Budget Discussion**  
CAO Crocker briefly presented on section 8, Reserve Activity and Budget Discussions

#### 8.2 Discussion of Potential Cost Reductions

- Staff put forward a few options for Council's consideration in the budget presentation.
- The last option is no longer an option – changing the Special Industrial Tax Rate would involve changing Provincial Legislation. It is not enabled through a Town Bylaw.
- CAO Crocker reminded council that a one-year notice is required to opt out of Kings Transit and Valley REN agreements.

#### 8.3 Budget Deliberations

- Council debated budget pressures, including the splash pad, parks, grants, staffing, and the police funding formula.
- The splash pad was noted as being popular and an economic driver, but it is a direct Town expense. Some members opposed a tax increase.
- CAO Crocker advised proceeding with the current budget, identifying potential service cuts, and revisiting once there is clarity from the Department of Justice.
- Concerns were raised about maintaining four parks versus prioritizing core infrastructure.
- Council discussed the importance of staff retention and the non-union increase.
- How the Annapolis Valley Regional Library Board intends to move forward with their 2026-2027 budget is unclear given the Province's budget constraints and their request for additional funding to municipal units.

#### 8.4 Direction to Staff on Budget Changes for Version 2

- Potentially cut all grants totaling ~\$18,000
- Add back non-union staff CPI increase
- Prepare a list of assets for Council to review
- Reducing the amount of paving from \$75,000 to something less

**ACTION:** Send a letter to the Department of Justice emphasizing the need for 2026-2027 RCMP budget numbers and an update on the new funding formula.

- CAO Crocker suggested cancelling the March 16<sup>th</sup> Special COTW Budget meeting and seeing how matters unfold with the RCMP budget. A budget discussion can still take place under the March 16<sup>th</sup> Council agenda.

### 9. ANYTHING BY MEMBERS

- Deputy Mayor Marshall reminded residents and Council that the Middleton Fire Department banquet is taking place this Saturday.

10. IN CAMERA

**260302.05** It was moved and seconded to move to in-camera at 9:32pm. **Motion carried.**

**260302.06** It was moved and seconded to move out of camera at 10:03pm. **Motion carried.**

8. ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 10:04pm.

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MAYOR

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RECORDING SECRETARY

DRAFT