

A special meeting of the Committee of the Whole of Middleton Town Council was held in person, via ZOOM and on YouTube Live on Monday, March 23, 2026.

PRESENT

Chairing the meeting, Mayor Gail Smith; Deputy Mayor Gary Marshall, Councillors John Bartlett (via ZOOM), Dan Smith, Bernadette Knapp, 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: Fire Chief, Mike Toole, Deputy Fire Chief, Scott Veinot

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

260323.01: It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda, as amended. **Motion carried.**

3. NEW BUSINESS

3.1 Overview of Version 2 of the 2026-2027 Draft Operating and Capital Budgets

Director of Finance Profitt gave a brief overview of Version 2 of the 2026-2027 Draft Operating and Capital Budgets.

Councillor Smith asked what impact the staffing reductions and changes will have on operations?

- CAO Crocker indicated that management is not 100% sure of the impact at this time; the plan is to monitor how the year progresses and make adjustments if needed.

Councillor Smith noted there will be two fewer summer students and asked how this will impact recreation programs, specifically canoeing and kayaking, and whether installation at Riverside Park is still planned.

- CAO Crocker confirmed the plan is to proceed with Riverside Park instead of Lily Lake, if feasible to put in the dock; if not, it will not proceed. CAO Crocker added that there will be a reduction in flowers, with a shift toward more low-maintenance plantings.

Councillor Smith suggested running a contest for flower box maintenance as a summer project to help beautify the town.

Deputy Mayor Marshall commended everyone involved in reducing the deficit. Deputy Mayor Marshall noted that community organizations rely heavily on municipal grants.

Councillor Knapp asked how many summer day camp staff will be employed this year.

- CAO Crocker advised that the municipality is exploring the possibility of the YMCA taking over the summer day camp program. She noted that it is a well-used service but may be managed by a different organization moving forward.

Councillor Archibald asked for a breakdown of cost for the by-election.

- CAO Crocker stated that Council will have this information at the Committee of the Whole meeting on April 7th.

There was a lengthy discussion around policing. Council discussed concerns with the new policing funding model and the 5.5 officers included in the budget.

Councillor Smith questioned the municipality's lack of control over policing and suggested challenging the current model, including notifying the Department of Justice (DOJ) that the Town wants to fund less officers than budgeted unless clear justification or improved service is shown.

- CAO Crocker advised that reducing officer funding would require consultation with the DOJ and noted a new billing model is being developed.

Deputy Mayor Marshall supported applying pressure to the Province, stating the Town cannot afford additional officers, while recognizing limits in reducing current commitments.

Councillor Bartlett raised concerns about fairness in officer allocation and overall costs.

Council agreed on the need to seek clarity from the DOJ and advocate for a more equitable and affordable model.

Councillor Archibald inquired about Valley REN and when a recommendation can be brought forward to Council.

- CAO Crocker advised that the matter can be brought to the next Council meeting on March 30th.

3.2 Budget Deliberations

All members of Council were in favor of adding back the community grants of \$18,000. That was the only change Council directed staff to make for Version 3.

3.3 Direction to Staff on Budget Changes for Version 3

CAO Crocker will bring forward a Request for Decision for the March 30th Special Council meeting to request that Council give staff approval to move any 2025-2026 surplus into the operating reserve. This surplus can be used to fund the 2026-2027 deficit of (\$18,797) when community grants are added back.

Councillor Archibald asked whether, in the event of a surplus, could funds be returned to taxpayers.

- CAO Crocker stated that this is not possible in the current year, as final tax bills have already gone out.

4. IN CAMERA

260323.02 It was moved and seconded to move to in-camera at 6:25pm. **Motion carried.**

260323.03 It was moved and seconded to move out of camera at 6:51pm. **Motion carried.**

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 6:52pm.

MAYOR

RECORDING SECRETARY