

A regular monthly meeting of Middleton Town Council was held in-person at the Town Hall, via Facebook Live, on Monday, January 19, 2026, starting at 7:00pm.

**PRESENT**

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Deputy Mayor Marshall presented Mayor Gail Smith with a Certificate of Recognition for 10 years of being on Council.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

**260119.01** It was moved and seconded that Council approve the agenda as circulated.  
**Motion carried.**

4. PROCLAMATIONS

Mayor Smith proclaimed February 2026, as African Heritage Month in the Town of Middleton.

5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

5.1 Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes

2025.12.15 Council Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved with the following corrections:

- Business Arising: Councillor Knapp inquired whether DPW Verran had investigated the hydrant adapters.

**ACTION:** CAO Crocker to follow up with DPW Verran.

- Councillor Fournier would like the December 15<sup>th</sup> minutes to reflect that she too wished everyone well for Christmas.

6. ANYTHING BY CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 **PAC Recommendations**

a. RFD 007-2026 Northlands Secondary Planning Strategy

CAO Crocker provided Council with a brief overview of the Northlands Secondary Planning Strategy.

**260119.02** It was moved and seconded that Council directs staff to initiate work on amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) to consider a development proposal on the Parsons lands within the Northlands Secondary Plan area. Staff is further directed to work with Parsons Investments Ltd. to fully understand its proposal and to use the principles, approaches, and technical work from the Northlands Secondary Planning Strategy to the greatest extent possible when preparing recommendations to Council. **Motion carried.**

- Council discussed concerns over areas included for development where owners are uninterested, miscommunication with Fathom on project scope, and money spent on a Secondary Planning Strategy which may not be approved. Councillors emphasized ongoing coordination with Parson's Investments Ltd and engaging the developer for compromise.

7.2 **RFD 001-2026 Appointment List Update**

CAO Crocker provided a brief overview of the Appointment List Update.

**260119.03** It was moved and seconded that Council, on recommendation from the CAO, appoint Jennifer Daniels as the Alternate REMO Coordinator for the Town of Middleton. **Motion carried.**

Councillor Knapp asked whether the Audit Committee advertisement is ready to proceed.

**ACTION:** Recording Secretary Marceau to add "Vacant" to the appointment list since one member has resigned from the Audit Committee.

**260119.04** It was moved and seconded that Council approve the 2026 Appointment List, as amended and presented. **Motion carried.**

### 7.3 RFD 002-2026 Code of Conduct Investigator

CAO Crocker provided a brief overview of the Code of Conduct Investigator RFD.

**260119.05** It was moved and seconded that Council appoint Burchelle Wickwire Bryson LLP as the Code of Conduct Investigator and that the CAO is authorized to enter into a 2-year contract for services. **Motion carried.**

- Councillor Smith inquired whether the term is fixed and if there is no annual fee for being on retainer.

### 7.4 RFD 003-2026 Grants to Organizations Policy

CAO Crocker gave a brief overview of the Grants to Organizations Policy.

**260119.06** It was moved and seconded that Council approve the replacement of the existing Grant Administration Policy with the Grants to Organizations Policy as presented. **Motion defeated.**

There was a lengthy discussion around the Grants to Organization Policy.

Council discussed policy adjustments for one-time and community grants. Councillor Bartlett raised the need for an end date tied to the budget. CAO Crocker noted deadlines existed on forms rather than in the policy and reporting back on amounts will be part of the application. Councillor Archibald clarified the policy applies to capital campaigns or projects, not specific organizations. Councillor Smith emphasized that council should retain authority over all grants, including smaller amounts. Deputy Mayor Marshall expressed that the concern is \$1–\$5,000 grants.

**ACTION:** CAO Crocker to revise the policy, adding a clause in section 4 that all one-time requests require council approval.

**260119.07** It was moved and seconded that Council approve the replacement of the existing Grants Administration Policy with the Grants to Organizations Policy as amended to include that all one-time grants, and community grants be approved by Council. **Motion carried.**

### 7.5 RFD 004-2026 Employee Benefits Policy

CAO Crocker provided a brief overview of the Employee Benefits Policy.

**260119.08** It was moved and seconded that Council approve the revised Employee Benefits Policy as presented. **Motion carried.**

- Councillor Archibald inquired about the definition of a floating holiday.
  - Active Living Coordinator Fenton clarified that it used to be a day off for an employee's birthday, but because some birthdays fell on the weekend, it was changed to a floating holiday.

## 7.6 RFD 005-2026 Events for 2026

CAO Crocker provided a brief overview of the Events for 2026.

CAO Crocker proposed the following actions moving forward:

- Proceed with the Shad Derby.
- Proceed with Canada Day, with Council providing direction on children's activities.
- Proceed with the Heart Run and Century Ride.
- Proceed with the Haunted House and Witch Walk.
- Meet with the MacDonald Museum to collaborate on events.
- Proceed with the Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting.
- Staff recommendation: host a Family Fun Day in July for 2026 and work to establish a volunteer committee for 2027 to revive the Heart of the Valley Festival.
  
- Councillor Smith noted that the Haunted House and Witch Walk are currently scheduled for Saturday and Sunday this year and asked for clarification on whether the intended dates are Friday and Saturday, October 23 and 24.
  - Staff responded that yes, the dates should have been October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>
  
- Councillor Fournier expressed appreciation for how thoroughly the proposal was prepared.
  
- Councillor Knapp suggested exploring volunteers and local talent for events, noting that this could reduce costs. Councillor Knapp proposed starting sponsorships now.
  
- Councillor Bartlett supported the idea of requesting sponsorship on a yearly basis.
  - Active Living Coordinator Fenton suggested that some businesses may prefer certain events and proposed using a checklist to accommodate preferences.
  
- Deputy Mayor Marshall emphasized that sponsorship efforts need to begin before April and fundraising should start immediately, noting there is insufficient time to plan a full festival. He also recommended separating the

Tree Lighting and Parade events, as in 2025 they concluded by the end of November.

- Mayor Smith agreed, suggesting the events be separated and scheduled closer to the holiday season.
  - CAO Crocker confirmed that the Tree Lighting can remain on November 27<sup>th</sup>, and another date in December will be set for the Parade.
- CAO Crocker proposed Saturday, July 18 as a Family Fun Day and noted plans for the 2027 Heart of the Valley (HOTV) Festival.
- Deputy Mayor Marshall suggested that for Canada Day, the Town could collaborate with the MacDonald Museum to enhance children's activities.
- Councillor Archibald supported having one major event per season and emphasized setting schedules early, recommending that they be shared with local businesses in advance.

#### 7.7 RFD 006-2026 Fire Department Utility Truck

CAO Crocker gave a brief overview of the Fire Department Utility Truck.

**260119.09** It was moved and seconded that Council approves the transfer of the fair market value of the old fire department utility truck to the Fire Capital Reserve account funded from either the sale of the old truck, or a transfer from the General Capital Reserve account, in the event the truck is transferred to the Public Works Department. **Motion carried.**

- Deputy Mayor Marshall clarified for the public that the actual proceeds were generated through fundraising efforts.

#### 7.8 RFD 008-2026 Housing Accelerator Fund

CAO Crocker provided a brief overview of the Housing Accelerator Fund RFD.

**260119.10** It was moved and seconded that Council direct staff to investigate the possibility of reducing or eliminating building and development fees with the goal of reducing barriers to housing development. **Motion carried.**

There was a lengthy discussion around the Housing Accelerator Fund.

Council discussed the financial implications of the matter, including the amount involved and comparison data with Annapolis County. Debate focused on staff

capacity and timing, with concerns about prioritization given the Northlands situation. Councillors emphasized the potential benefits of the initiative for the town and the importance of encouraging development, property tax growth, and clear, transparent processes. Councillor Smith declared a conflict of interest and temporarily left the table. Staff confirmed the Town is on track with the initiative.

#### 7.9 **2025-26 Capital Projects Update**

CAO Crocker provided a brief overview of the 2025-26 Capital Projects Update.

#### 7.10 **Information Report – Temporary Borrowing New Reservoir**

CAO Crocker gave a brief overview of the Information Report for Temporary Borrowing New Reservoir.

- Councillor Knapp asked whether any response had been received regarding the tariffs.
  - CAO Crocker advised that a credit will be applied to the most recent invoice.

#### 7.11 **Information Report – Budget Schedule for 2026-2027**

CAO Crocker gave a brief overview of the Information Report for the Budget Schedule for 2026-2027.

### 8. REPORTS

- 8.1 Management Report
- 8.2 Middleton Fire Department Dispatch Report for December
- 8.3 IDEA Committee Meeting Dec 9/25 DRAFT Minutes
- 8.4 IDEA Governance Committee Meeting Dec 11/25 DRAFT Minutes
- 8.5 Valley Regional Services Board Dec 17/25 Meeting Minute
- 8.6 Valley REN LOC Meeting Nov 27/25 DRAFT Minutes
- 8.7 Planning Advisory Committee Meeting Jan 12/26 DRAFT Minutes
- 8.8 Mayor's Report
- 8.9 2023-2024 Municipal Profile and Financial Condition Indicators
- 8.10 Middleton Fire Department – End of Year Report 2026

Mayor Smith noted that the above reports were circulated to Council members with the agenda package and called for questions/discussion.

- Councillor Knapp asked whether tax sale notices occur annually.
  - CAO Crocker advised that the town is currently going through the tax sale process.

- Councillor Smith asked whether there is a timeline for completion of the website.
  - CAO advised that the developer has received all required information from the town and that the framework has been completed.

**ACTION:** CAO Crocker to follow up on the website completion timeline

- Deputy Mayor Marshall noted that the 2025 Middleton Fire Department Annual Report was informative, highlighting that the department is comprised of full-time volunteers and that there has been an increase in incidents. The Deputy Mayor also commended the department for recruiting 12 new volunteers.

9. CORRESPONDENCE

- 9.1 December 19, 2025, Letter from Build Nova Scotia re: Public Housing Development
- 9.2 December 15, 2025, Letter from Kim Masland re: End of the Bottled Water Reimbursement Program.
- 9.3 January 15, 2026, Letter from Pastor Jeff Milne re: Doors to Hope Society Dissolution Notice.

Three (3) notices of correspondence were distributed to Council members.

- Councillor Smith requested clarification regarding an item referenced in the third paragraph of item 9.1.

**ACTION:** CAO Crocker will follow up to obtain clarification, including confirmation of when construction is expected to begin.

10. ANYTHING BY MEMBERS

- Councillor Archibald thanked staff for providing portions of the agenda package early.
- Councillor Bartlett asked who is responsible for the benches and noted that the benches require repair.
  - **ACTION:** Confirm responsibility for bench maintenance and address required repairs.
- Councillor Smith gave a shout-out to Public Works staff for doing an excellent job during the recent weather events.
- Deputy Mayor Marshall also recognized Public Works.
- Councillor Fournier expressed appreciation for receiving all information in advance.

- Councillor Knapp commented on the strong performance of Public Works staff.
- Mayor Smith stated they were very pleased with the work of the Public Works team.

11. IN CAMERA

**260119.11** It was moved and seconded to move to in-camera at 9:14pm. **Motion carried.**

**260119.12** It was moved and seconded to move out of camera at 10:03pm. **Motion carried.**

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

  
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Mayor

  
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Recording Secretary