

NOVA SCOTIA UTILITY AND REVIEW BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: An **APPLICATION** pursuant to **section 368 and 369** of the **MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT**,

The Council of the Municipality of the District of Argyle makes application to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board to confirm the number and boundaries for nine (9) polling districts and; confirm one (1) Councillor per polling district for a total of nine (9) Councillors.

1. There are at present nine (9) polling districts in the Municipality and nine (9) Councillors. Thus, one (1) Councillor per polling district.
2. The following is a brief outline of each polling district in the Municipality, including the names of the larger communities, relevant geographic features, and any factors which establish a particular community of interest in the polling district:

Polling District #1:

This district is comprised of two separate geographical locations: Tusket area and East Kemptville. Approximately 69% of the district is Provincial Crown Land which is located in the northern area of the district. The two areas are not socially interactive but have been historically linked by a common Councillor. Physically, they are linked by a road called the Gavel Road in the Municipality of Argyle and the Canaan Road in the Municipality of Yarmouth and Highway #203. The southern area, the smaller of the two, includes the communities of Tusket, Hubbards Point, Abrams River, Gavelton, Pleasant Lake.

Tusket is the location of the municipal office and has a mixed Anglophone and Francophone population. Commercial development includes a wide range of retail and service uses. A business park includes a mix of commercial and industrial uses and a government office. A residential park also includes 7 developed and 3 vacant residential lots and a satellite campus of Université Sainte-Anne, a French-language post-secondary institution. Other services in the community include a post office, restaurants, a brewery, the NS Department of Natural Resources and Renewables office and a combined junior/high school. The community has the oldest Courthouse and Jail in Canada which is the only National Heritage Site in Yarmouth County. An archival facility and farmers' market is also located on this site. Hubbards Point and Abrams River are primarily Francophone communities while the remaining communities are primarily Anglophone.

The northern area includes the community of East Kemptville. Extensive woodlands, lakes and rivers are prominent features of this area. Activity is primarily forestry and agriculture. There is also a lodge/restaurant and an old tin mine site located in this area.

Polling District #2

This district is coastal and includes the communities of Plymouth, Upper Wedgeport, a portion of Wedgeport, Little River Harbour and Comeaus Hill. Fishing is the major industry in this district. The area has had a number of wind energy project developments due to its elevated coastal location. Culturally, the Wedgeports are primarily Francophone while the remaining communities are mixed Anglophone and Francophone.

Polling District #3

This district forms a peninsula which includes the communities of Lower Wedgeport and a portion of Wedgeport. Both communities are highly developed with significant commercial and fishery oriented industrial uses. Lower Wedgeport has a Sport Tuna Fishing Museum and a yearly Tuna Fishing Tournament which attract both tourists and locals. The population is primarily Francophone.

Polling District #4

This district includes a peninsula and two islands connected by bridges and comprises of the communities of Amiraults Hill, Sluice Point, Surettes Island and Morris Island. The fishery is the major activity. The population is primarily Francophone but includes some Anglophone residents.

Polling District #5

This district includes the long coastline of the coastal communities of Rocco Point and Eel Brook and a portion of Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau as well as the interior communities of Belleville South, Belleville, Belleville North, Bell Neck, Springhaven, Quinan, East Quinan and South Quinan. Approximately 61% of the district is Provincial Crown Land and the population is primarily Francophone.

Polling District #6

This district includes the coastal communities of Glenwood, Roberts Island, Argyle, Central Argyle, Lower Argyle and most of Argyle Sound and the inland community of Argyle Head and a large inland woodland. The fishing industry and related uses in the major activity in the district. The population is primarily Anglophone and has established a strong sense of community. Approximately 58% of the district is Provincial Crown Land.

Polling District #7

This district is also an extensive woodlands and coastline features which includes the communities of East Pubnico, Middle East Pubnico and Lower East Pubnico and portions of Pubnico, Argyle Sound and West Pubnico. The fishery and associated industries are significant and can be found throughout the district in coastal areas. The population is primarily Anglophone with a significant Francophone minority. The population has some similarities with West Pubnico but views itself as distinct.

Polling District #8

This district includes the northern half of the peninsular community locally referred to as West Pubnico. The district includes the portions of the communities of West Pubnico and Middle West Pubnico. The district, like its counterpart District #9, has major residential, commercial, and fishing industrial components. This district also has an Acadian Museum, a restaurant and a distillery. The population is primarily Francophone.

Polling District #9

This district is comprised of the southern half of the peninsular community locally referred to as West Pubnico. The district includes the communities of Lower West Pubnico and a portion of Middle West Pubnico. The district has similar culture and development features as District #8. A wind turbine farm is located in Lower West Pubnico. Along with District #8, this district is also tourism oriented and has a living Historic Acadian Village and a restaurant. Collectively, the two districts on the West Pubnico peninsula represent the most densely populated area in the municipality.

3. Below are the approved elector figures per district for the Municipality for the review in 2014:

Polling District	Number of Electors	Variation from the average Number of Electors %
1	785	+12.8 %
2	784	+12.6 %
3	789	+13.4%
4	641	-7.9%
5	791	+13.6 %
6	618	-11.2%
7	597	-14.2%
8	632	-9.2%
9	627	-9.9%
TOTAL	6264	
AVERAGE	696 electors per district.	

4. The following table shows the elector statistics for the current districts from voter information sourced from Elections Nova Scotia which is current to April 4, 2022.

Polling District	Number of Electors	% of Total Electors	Variation from the average Number of Electors	
			#	%
1	789	11.9%	+54	+7.3
2	796	12.0 %	+61	+8.3 %
3	819	12.4 %	+84	+11.5 %
4	637	9.6 %	-98	-13.3 %
5	917	13.9 %	+182	+24.8 %
6	705	10.7 %	-30	-4.1%
7	682	10.3 %	-53	-7.2 %
8	634	9.6 %	-101	-13.7 %
9	634	9.6 %	-101	-13.7 %
TOTAL	6613	100.0 %		

Total number of eligible voters: 6,613

Total number of districts: 9

Average number of eligible voters per Councillor: 735

5. a) Proposed changes to the boundaries of the current polling districts are the following:

- District #1 - The communities of East Kemptville and Hubbards Point will no longer be part of District #1 and will be replaced by the villages of Ste Anne du Ruisseau, Rocco Point and Eel Brook.
- District #4 - The community of Hubbards Point will be added to this district.
- District #5 - The communities of Ste. Anne du Ruisseau, Rocco Point and Eel Brook will be removed from this district and will be replaced by the village of East Kemptville.

- b) The reasons for these proposed changes are as follows:

- The proposal to maintain the current nine Municipal districts involves major adjustments to 3 districts outlined above. The main reason for these amendments was to bring the number of electors per district closer to within 10% of the average to balance the number of voters in each district.
- The proposed reason to move East Kemptville from District #1 to District #5 was because of the community's geography. East Kemptville is closer to District #5 and has similar geographic features such as extensive woodland area, rivers and lakes and the involved communities are both in same remote areas located in the northern region our municipality.
- As noted above, we propose moving Hubbards Point to District #4 as this community is more closely associated this district as the residents share common institutions such as the fire department, church, and social club. They are also all connected by Highway 308 and whereas Hubbards Point is predominantly Francophone they would best be joined with the other Francophone villages in District #4.

c) The following table shows the elector statistics which will result if the changes are approved by the Board using voter information sourced from Elections Nova Scotia which is current to April 4, 2022:

Polling District	Number of Electors	% of Total Electors	Variation from the average Number of Electors	
			#	%
1	799	12.1%	+64	+8.7 %
2	796	12.0%	+61	+8.3%
3	819	12.4 %	+84	+11.5 %
4	795	12.0 %	+60	+8.2 %
5	749	11.3 %	+14	+1.9%
6	705	10.6 %	-30	-4.1 %
7	682	10.4 %	-53	-7.2 %
8	634	9.6 %	-101	-13.7 %
9	634	9.6 %	-101	-13.7 %

TOTAL	6613	100.0 %	
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Total number of eligible voters: 6,613

Total number of Councillors: 9

Average number of eligible voters per Councillor: 735

6. a) The following information provides an overview of the steps taken by the municipality which factored into our proposal:
 - The Municipality designed their approach in two phases. The first phase was to identify how many councillors are needed to serve the municipality. The second phase was to identify the necessary boundary amendments to maintain a balanced number of electors in each district.
 - The Municipality hired WSP, a consulting firm, to deal with the first phase. WSP set up 3 public open houses that we promoted on our social media page, website and broadcasted on our local radio station. These public engagements were held in 3 different locations in our municipality (Pubnico, Wedgeport and Tusket) to try to have residents attend these meetings from different areas. The Tusket meeting was also offered as a hybrid meeting so residents could attend online.
 - WSP also created a survey with 9 questions. The first 8 questions were created to encourage residents to consider the roles and responsibilities of the Councillors before having to answer the final question which was, how many councillors are needed to serve the municipality.
 - The Municipality also had WSP's open house presentation on our social media page, YouTube, and on our website for the residences to view on their own time.
 - The Municipality had business cards created to share with the residents that visit the office. This business card had the URL link to the survey and a QR code for residents to use their computer/phone to complete the survey.
 - At the end of the first phase, we had over 100 residents participate in our survey. The conclusion of this survey was that residents want either 7 or 9 councillors.
 - The Municipality staff took on the responsibility to deal with Phase 2 of this process and provided two options to the residents.
 - a. First option was a reduction to 7 councillors with boundary amendments to all but one current district.
 - b. Second option was to have 9 councillors with major amendments to 3 districts as outline earlier.

- Municipal staff also planned one open house that was held at the Tuskent Municipal building. This open house was set up as a hybrid meeting so residents could register to connect online. This was promoted on our social media page and website.
- Municipal staff set up another short survey with 5 questions, but the main question was asking what was preferred, 7 or 9 councillors with the explanation of the boundary changes for each. This survey was promoted on our social media, website and emailed to over 300 residents on our emailing list.
- The Municipal staff also attended 9 community group meetings and explained the boundary review process to these community groups and promoted the survey after their presentation. We were able to connect directly with more than 150 residents during these meetings. Residents were encouraged to complete the survey after the meeting or were provided with a business card similar to phase 1 where residents could do it on their own computer or on their phone on their own time.
- We received over 125 surveys completed with 75% choosing to stay with 9 councillors and amend the boundaries of 3 districts.
- During phase 1 and phase 2, the Municipality offered 4 open houses however only 7 people attended these meetings. Thus, the reason to have municipal staff attend community group functions was so we could connect and explain the boundary review process with residents.
- Council reviewed the matter at its Council meetings held on the following days:
 - March 29, 2022
 - August 10, 2022
 - September 13, 2022
 - September 27, 2022
 - October 25, 2022
 - November 22, 2022

The motion to recommend that UARB accept the proposal to continue with 9 councillors and amend the boundaries of 3 districts was unanimously passed by council on November 22, 2022.

7. The Municipality of the District of Argyle will submit a digital copy of the boundary lines following the decision by the Utility and Review Board.

DATED at Tuskent
County of Yarmouth
this _____ day December
2022

Danny Muise
Warden

Alain Muise
Chief Administrative Officer
