



MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF ARGYLE
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2025

<u>Council Members Present:</u>	Warden Nicole Albright, Deputy Warden Ted Saulnier, Councillor Malcolm Madden, Councillor Greg Foster, Councillor Darryl LeBlanc, Councillor Kathy Bourque, Councillor Glenn Diggdon, Councillor Racheal Surette
<u>Absent with Regrets:</u>	Councillor Gordon Boudreau
<u>Staff Present:</u>	Chief Administrative Officer Alain Muise, and Executive Assistant Julie Atkinson

1. **Call Meeting to Order**

Deputy Warden Ted Saulnier called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. **Invitation to Stand and Move**

Deputy Warden Ted Saulnier reminded Council that they are permitted to stand and move as they need to during the meeting. This is a new initiative introduced by Argyle Recreation which normalizes movement in meetings.

3. **Approval of Agenda/Conflict of Interest Declaration**

It is MOVED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc and SECONDED by Councillor Kathy Bourque to approve the agenda with the addition of 14E.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. **Presentation – We’ve Got Your BackPacks**

David Hockley and Rhonda Boudreau were present from the Wesleyan Church to present the “We’ve Got Your BackPacks” program to Council. The program began in November 2022 as a church-led outreach initiative focused on supporting children and families with food insecurity. Inspired by a similar effort in New Brunswick, the team collaborates with seven local schools, which help identify families in need and distribute weekly backpacks filled with groceries. The church remains uninvolved in selecting recipients, relying entirely on school staff. The initiative partners with Superstore for regular grocery orders and receives funding through business sponsorships, grants, donations, and fundraising events, including their National Acadian Day fundraiser at the airport in 2024 where they raised \$5,500. To date, over 1,800 backpacks and \$58,300 worth of groceries have been delivered during the 2024–2025 school year, including holiday gift cards. The program also fosters community among volunteers, who gather each Thursday to prepare and deliver the bags, forming meaningful connections while serving others.

The program has already applied for a grant through the Municipality’s Grants to Organizations. The purpose of the presentation was simply to bring awareness to the program.



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5. **Adoption of Minutes**

a. **March 20, 2025 - Regular Council Meeting Minutes**

It is MOVED by Councillor Greg Foster and SECONDED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc to approve the Regular Council Meeting Minutes of March 20, 2025, as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

b. **April 10, 2025 – 145th Annual Council Meeting Minutes**

It is MOVED by Councillor Glenn Diggdon and SECONDED by Councillor Malcolm Madden to approve the 145th Annual Council Meeting Minutes of April 10, 2025, as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

6. **Staff Reports**

a. **Department Head Report**

The department head report is attached to the agenda. There were no questions on the report.

CAO Muise answered a question regarding the strategic plan.

b. **Clerks Report**

The Clerk's report is included in the agenda. A question was raised about an item from November 22, 2022, concerning the Light Pollution By-Law. CAO Muise stated that the By-Law is still in development and currently about 90% complete. A soft launch will be planned, during which businesses will be approached individually to review the By-Law. It is not scheduled to take effect until 2027.

c. **Building Permit Report**

The building permit report is attached to the agenda. There were no questions on the report.

7. **Appointment of Auditors**

It is MOVED by Councillor Glenn Diggdon and SECONDED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc to approve Doane Grant Thornton LLP as the auditors for the Municipality of the District of Argyle for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

8. **Appointment of Officers**

It is MOVED by Warden Nicole Albright and SECONDED by Councillor Racheal Surette to approve the enclosed list of officers for the Municipality of the District of Argyle for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY



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9. **Appointment of Solicitor – Contract**

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Glenn Diggon to approve the firm Hood Fraser d'Entremont as Solicitors for the Municipality of the District of Argyle for the fiscal year 2025-2026.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

10. **Membership to NSFM and FCM**

It is MOVED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc and SECONDED by Warden Nicole Albright to approve Council's membership to NSFM in the amount of \$6,205 and FCM in the amount of \$2,681 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

11. **7-day Notice – None.**

12. **Financial Approvals**

a. **Sewer Budgets 2025-2026**

It is MOVED by Councillor Glenn Diggon and SECONDED by Councillor Malcolm Madden to establish that the operating fee for West Pubnico per equivalent unit is \$440.00.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Warden Nicole Albright and SECONDED by Councillor Kathy Bourque to establish that the operating fee for Wedgeport per equivalent unit be \$175.00 and the capital fee per equivalent unit is \$550.98.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Councillor Racheal Surette and SECONDED by Councillor Malcolm Madden that the operating fee for Tusket per equivalent unit is now \$405.00.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

b. **East Pubnico Water Utility Charge 2025-2026**

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc that Council establish the following rates for the East Pubnico Water Utility for the 2025 2026 fiscal year:

1. *Middle East Pubnico -Quarterly fee of \$3,978.29 plus \$4.22 per 1,000 imperial gallons.*



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2. Lower East Pubnico – Quarterly fee of \$739.26 for a 1.5-inch pipe plus \$2.49 per 1,000 imperial gallons.

3. Lower East Pubnico -Quarterly fee of \$1,182.14 for a 2-inch pipe plus \$2.49 per 1,000 imperial gallons.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

c. Fire Area Rates 2025-2026

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Racheal Surette that Council approve the area rate set out by the East Pubnico Fire Department for year 6 of 6 at 0.05 cents per \$100 of assessment the fiscal year 2025-2026 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Councillor Malcolm Madden and SECONDED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc that Council approve the area rate set out by the Eel Brook Fire Department for year 7 of 10 at 0.125 cents per \$100 of assessment the fiscal year 2025-2026 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Warden Nicole Albright and SECONDED by Councillor Greg Foster that Council approve the area rate set out by the Islands and District Fire Department for year 4 of 5 at 0.08 cents per \$100 of assessment the fiscal year 2025-2026 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc and SECONDED by Councillor Malcolm Madden that Council approve the area rate set out by the Lake Vaughn Fire Department for year 10 of 10 at 0.05 cents per \$100 of assessment the fiscal year 2025-2026 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Councillor Racheal LeBlanc and SECONDED by Warden Nicole Albright that Council approve the area rate set out by the Quinan Fire Department for year 7 of 12 at 0.10 cents per \$100 of assessment the fiscal year 2025-2026 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc that Council approve the area rate set out by the Wedgeport Fire Department for year 3 of 6 at 0.07 cents per \$100 of assessment the fiscal year 2025-2026 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Councillor Glenn Diggdon and SECONDED by Councillor Racheal Surette that Council approve the area rate set out by the Wedgeport Fire Department for year 2 of 2 at 0.09 cents per \$100 of assessment the fiscal year 2025-2026 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

13. For Decision and Discussion

a. Article P5 - Hiring and Probation of Staff

It is MOVED by Councillor Malcolm Madden and SECONDED by Warden Nicole Albright to approve the amendments made to Article P5 – Hiring and Probation of Staff as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

b. Article P31 - Flexible Work Schedules

It is MOVED by Warden Nicole Albright and SECONDED by Councillor Kathy Bourque to approve the amendments made to Article P31– Flexible Work Schedules as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

c. Article P39 - Four Day Work Week

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Racheal Surette to approve the amendments made to Article P39– Four Day Work Week as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

d. Strategic Plan Refresh

It is MOVED by Warden Nicole Albright and SECONDED by Councillor Kathy Bourque to accept the updated and refreshed Strategic Plan as presented for 2023-2028.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

e. Appointment of Investigator - Code of Conduct

It is MOVED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc and SECONDED by Councillor Malcolm Madden that Burchell MacDougall Lawyers LLP be appointed as the third-party investigator for the Municipality of Argyle for complaints under the Code of Conduct Legislation, Section 520 of the Municipal Government Act.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

f. Adoption of Auditors Report – Deferred

The adoption of the auditor's report is deferred to a future meeting date.

g. Youth Wellbeing Network - Request for Committee Member

It is MOVED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc and SECONDED by Warden Nicole Albright to defer Youth Wellbeing Network - Request for Committee Member until the next council meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

h. Argyle ADA Project - Malcolm Madden

Councillor Malcolm Madden prepared various questions for council and acknowledged ongoing concerns some residents have regarding the aquaculture project and attempted to address community concerns by seeking answers on the project's origins and evolution. Many of the questions were answered by the Chief Administrative Officer as he led investigation in the process.

The project began with a 2015 presentation from the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture about regulatory changes, sparking discussions about streamlining the long lease application process for oyster farmers. Informal conversations, presentations from stakeholders like Bouctouche Bay, and provincial interest in pre-assessed aquaculture sites followed. In January 2020, the project—now known as the Aquaculture Development Area (ADA)—was formally introduced through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Municipality of Argyle and the Province of Nova Scotia, unanimously approved by council. This led to the formation of stakeholder and scientific advisory committees, with the municipality taking a lead role in the former. The goal was to explore sustainable aquaculture development in the region and reduce application times for interested sea farmers.

The topic of whether there is credible evidence supporting claims of potential economic growth from aquaculture in the municipality was discussed. CAO Muise read a response that cited data provided by the Province of Nova Scotia, including a 2017 study showing a significant GDP contribution from aquaculture and recent interest from multiple proponents in oyster farming, with a potential \$7.9 million in annual production and 10 new full-time jobs. However, a council member expressed frustration over the reliance on provincial letters instead of direct engagement, emphasizing the need for local, verifiable input. Councillor Madden, a local business owner noted only minor gains from oyster-related activity, while another business, Tusket Sales and Service, reported more significant benefits. Councillors further discussed that economic feasibility studies are produced after implementation. They also emphasized that all businesses, regardless of size, collectively contribute to the community's economic development.

The public consultation report, a 93-page document, was primarily prepared by WSP, a global consulting firm specializing in planning and public engagement. While WSP led much of the stakeholder engagement and drafted the report, municipal staff played a significant role by supplying information, participating in stakeholder conversations (including with local fishermen), and amending the report to ensure accuracy. Preliminary research and water testing were also conducted by municipal staff, specifically Charlene and Alix, who used procured devices and rented boats to gather data, with assistance from university scientists. Though some community members questioned whether this work was outside staff's typical responsibilities, it was clarified that council had mandated the project and staff were fulfilling council's directives. The work, while unconventional, was considered effective and valuable both for data collection and staff development.

The ADA project received \$23,000 in funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2017, designated for purchasing water monitoring equipment and engaging Invest Nova



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Scotia for testing support. Approximately \$9,000 was spent on equipment, with additional funds allocated to external assistance. No financial contributions were received from the Aquaculture Association, farmers, or other organizations. Municipal staff time and resources constituted the remaining investment. The municipality held a \$250 annual membership with the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia from 2019 to 2022 to stay informed on industry developments, similar to its membership with the Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce. Information gathered was shared freely with local stakeholders, including farmers, without any fees charged. While some questioned the use of municipal resources, it was clarified that almost all municipal services do not result in fees attached to them.

The last part of the discussion focused on the financial benefits of the aquaculture initiative for taxpayers, comparing it to wind turbine projects which generate direct tax revenue. While oyster farms currently do not provide direct taxation income, some councillors emphasized broader economic benefits, such as job creation, increased housing development, and local spending, which ultimately contribute to municipal growth. They acknowledged concerns about the lack of immediate financial return but stressed that the project was aimed at long-term industry development and sustainability, especially as traditional industries like fishing face uncertainty.

It is MOVED by Councillor Malcolm Madden and SECONDED by Councillor Glenn Digdon that Council request that the Province lead a community consultation, in addition to their regulatory submission process in support of the proposed ADA sites.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

i. **CHOICE - Malcolm Madden**

There is a community Housing Forum on May 1, which will be very informative for anyone looking to get involved. The forum is for new housing and low cost housing. Councillor Madden asked for some clarification regarding the future development of J.E. Hatfield Court and CAO Muise indicated that there will be some housing zoning requirements and developers will be contacted.

14. **Correspondence and For Information**

a. **WE CARE Radiothon - Letter of Thanks**

Council received a letter of thanks from the Yarmouth Hospital Foundation Board, for sponsoring the WE CARE Radiothon.

b. **Correspondence from Honourable Kim Masland re: 911 Cost Recovery Fund**

Council received correspondence from Honourable Kim Masland regarding the 911 Cost Recovery Fund. A direct deposit in the amount of \$2,763.89 will be made to the municipal account, the purpose of this funding is to provide recovery for the costs associated with the administration of civic addressing programs.

c. **D'Eon Oyster Company - New Land-based Shellfish AQ#1471 Lower Eel Brook, Yarmouth)**

Council received correspondence from the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture giving notice of Proposed New Land-based Nursery - Application AQ#1471 – Lower Eel Brook, Yarmouth County.

d. **12 Month Notice to Municipalities**

Council received correspondence from Honourable John A. Lohr Minister of Municipal Affairs to provide notice of such changes for fiscal year 2026-2027 and beyond. The full letter is attached to the agenda.

e. **Correspondence from Minister Kent Smith**

Warden Albright received correspondence from Minister Kent Smith clarifying roles between the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Municipality of Argyle for the ADA Pilot Project.

It is MOVED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc and SECONDED by Councillor Kathy Bourque to have the letter added to the Aquaculture Argyle website.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

15. **Financial Requests**

a. **West Pubnico Golf Club**

Deferred to capital budget deliberations.

b. **Ice Pad Replacement**

Deferred to capital budget deliberations.

16. **Agenda Topics for the next meeting/Notice of Motion by Councillors**

None

17. **Question Period**

There were three questions from the public.

- Can a member of the public lodge a code of conduct complaint against a member of council?
 - o Yes, according to legislation, members of the public can lodge a code of conduct complaint against a member of council. Complaints can also be made by other council members or staff. The process maintains the confidentiality of the complainant, the subject of the complaint, and all involved in the investigation.

- The stakeholders report says the municipality donated 1,400 hours to the development of the ADA. Is this correct?
 - o CAO Muise indicated he cannot confirm the exact wording in the report but states that if the report mentions 1,400 staff hours contributed to stakeholder engagement for the ADA, then that would be a correct statement.
- Is the ADA going to affect the Kiack fishers?
 - o The kiack association was involved in the stakeholder engagement process and provided specific information on where kiacks operate, which helped ensure ADA sites were located away from those areas. While various factors could affect kiaking jobs (such as water temperature), the ADA sites were deliberately considered to avoid impacting kiacking areas. Both the association and local kiackers were consulted through the process.

18. **In-Camera**

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Warden Nicole Albright to go in-camera at 9:16 p.m.

a. **Section 22:2 (c) Personnel Matters**

19. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 9:55 pm



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Date Approved

Chair

Clerk/Recorder

DRAFT