

**CAPE BRETON REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**  
*Special Council Meeting – Minutes*

**Tuesday,  
June 27, 2023  
11:35 a.m.  
Council Chambers  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall  
320 Esplanade, Sydney, NS**

**Mayor Amanda M. McDougall-Merrill called the meeting to order.**

**Council:** Mayor Amanda M. McDougall-Merrill  
Councillor Gordon MacDonald  
Councillor Earlene MacMullin  
Councillor Cyril MacDonald  
Councillor Steve Gillespie  
Councillor Eldon MacDonald  
Councillor Glenn Paruch  
Councillor Steve Parsons  
Deputy Mayor James Edwards  
Councillor Ken Tracey  
Councillor Darren Bruckschwaiger  
Councillor Darren O'Quinn  
Councillor Lorne Green

**Staff:** Marie Walsh, Chief Administrative Officer  
John MacKinnon, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer  
Jennifer Campbell, Chief Financial Officer  
Deborah Campbell Ryan, Municipal Clerk  
Demetri Kachafanas, KC, Regional Solicitor  
Wayne MacDonald, Director of Engineering and Public Works  
Deanna Evely, Director of Human Resources  
Kirk Durning, Director of Parks and Grounds, Buildings and Facilities  
Kelly McDonald, Clerk's Department  
Sharon MacSween, Recording Secretary

**Absent:** N/A

**Summary of Decisions**

**Land Acknowledgement**

**Roll Call**

**1. Approval of the Agenda:**

**Motion** to approve the June 27, 2023, Special Council Agenda as circulated. **Carried.**

**2. Budget Deliberations (continued): 2023-24 Operating Fund:**

Point of Order

A Point of Order was raised to relax the speaking rules and Council **agreed.**

**Motion** to cut \$1 million from the Police Operational Budget. **Motion Defeated.**

**Motion** to approve the Operating Budget for 2023-24 of \$173,995,545 including the following tax rate adjustments:

- Minimum tax levy increase to \$575
- Hydrant rate \$.1836/\$100 (\$.02 reduction)
- Transit rate \$.125/\$100
- Base rate 3.5% increase
- Transfer from operating reserve \$418,000

Point of Order

A Point of Order was raised that discussion is only to be on the Motion on the floor. The Mayor ruled the discussion in order.

**Motion Carried.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Land Acknowledgement****Roll Call****1. Approval of the Agenda:****Motion:**

Moved by Councillor Green, seconded by Councillor O'Quinn, to approve the June 27, 2023 Special Council Agenda as presented.

**Motion Carried.****2. Budget Deliberations (continued) 2023-24 Operating Fund:**

CFO Campbell spoke to this issue and provided a recap of earlier budget deliberations. She advised that the initial draft operating budget resulted in an unfunded deficit of \$7.7 million. Various departmental budgets and adjustments reduced this deficit to \$4.2 million. The balancing options at that time were increasing tax rates, right sizing the transit rate to fund service through the area rate, alternative funding sources, certain non-mandated discretionary services could be suspended, defer additional staffing requests, adjustments were made to estimates based on updated information and staff investigated potential further departmental budget cuts. Council's approved adjustments total \$1,921,875. Leaving a revised budget shortfall of \$2,303,670.

CFO Campbell advised that various options to balance the remaining shortfall were presented and discussed.

CFO Campbell advised that unless there are other suggestions on how to balance, we are left to revisit the options previously rejected by council throughout deliberations including reconsidering non-mandated services and tax rates to bridge the budget shortfall. She provided the following information:

- Given the \$.02 cent reduction in hydrant rate already built into the draft budget, the net difference would be approx. 1 - 1.5cents or 2-2.35%
- \$ 501,327 - \$.01/\$100 rate adjustment – Residential/Resource property
- \$ 66,866 - \$.01/\$100 rate adjustment – Commercial property
- 1% change in rate = 1.51 cents and adjusts revenue by an estimated \$856,000 (including grants in lieu)
- \$.01 = 1.16% of base residential rate
- .01 = .25% of base commercial rate
- Last year's tax cut was a residential rate reduction of 4.55 cents
- Every .25% generates \$214K in additional revenue

**Continued...**

**Budget Deliberations (continued) 2023-24 Operating Fund (Continued):**

Following the presentation by CFO Campbell, Council discussion took place.

A Point of Order was raised by Councillor Gillespie to relax the speaking rules and Council **agreed**.

**Motion:**

Moved by Councillor Paruch, seconded by Councillor Parsons, to cut \$1 million from the Police Operational Budget.

**Discussion:**

During discussion, the intent of the motion was clarified and the Chief Financial Officer indicated that to take \$1 million from police overtime to apply to shortfall would not be typical as overtime is for staffing regular patrols.

**Motion Defeated.**

*At 12:39 p.m. Council recessed.*

*Council reconvened at 1:18 p.m.*

The following was then put forward:

**Motion:**

Moved by Councillor Bruckschwaiger, seconded by Councillor Tracey, to approve the Operating Budget for 2023-24 of \$173,995,545 including the following tax rate adjustments:

- Minimum tax levy increase to \$575
- Hydrant rate \$.1836/\$100 (\$.02 reduction)
- Transit rate \$.125/\$100
- Base rate 3.5% increase
- Transfer from operating reserve \$418,000

**Discussion:**

During discussion, the following was discussed:

- Services
- Overtime management
- CBRM has the highest property tax rate in the Province

**Point of Order**

Councillor Green raised a Point of Order that discussion is to only be on the Motion on the floor. The Mayor ruled the discussion in order.

**Discussion continued:**

- Monthly overtime reports to Council
- Previous directives by Council on the balancing options

**Motion Carried.**

Continued...

**Budget Deliberations (continued) 2023-24 Operating Fund (Continued):**

At this point in the meeting, Councillor Gillespie suggested that Council begin discussion on the 2024-25 budget before January.

Mayor McDougall-Merrill expressed gratitude to Council and staff on for their time and efforts with the budget process and the Chief Administrative Officer expressed her thanks to Council.

**Meeting adjourned at 1:46 p.m.**

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**Cecil P. Clarke**  
**Mayor**

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**Christa Dicks**  
**Municipal Clerk**  
/slm