



TOWN OF KENTVILLE  
COUNCIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes: March 9, 2026

**Town Hall, 354 Main Street, Kentville, Nova Scotia**

This meeting was held at Town Hall and livestreamed to YouTube with closed captions.

PRESENT: Mayor Andrew Zebian  
Councillor Rob Baker  
Councillor Cathy Maxwell  
Councillor Samantha Hamilton  
Councillor John Andrew

STAFF: Chris McNeill, Chief Administrative Officer  
Victoria Martin, Deputy Clerk  
Dave Bell, Director of Engineering and Public Works  
Darren Shupe, Director of Planning and Development  
Wanda Matthews, Director of Finance  
Craig Langille, Director of Parks and Recreation  
Marty Smith, Chief of Kentville Police Service

REGRETS: Deputy Mayor Debra Crowell  
Councillor Cate Savage

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Mayor Andrew Zebian called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. He respectfully acknowledged that Kentville is on the traditional and unceded land of the Mi'kmaq People. The Town honours their deep connection to this land, past, present, and future; and also recognizes and honours the contributions and heritage of African Nova Scotians whose ancestors have shaped and enriched this community for generations.

**DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None.

## **2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Item 5.d, Investment Advisory Services Contract Extension, was added.

Items Closed Session and Public Comments' order was switched.

**It was moved by Councillor Rob Baker, seconded by Councillor Cathy Maxwell that the agenda of March 9, 2026, be approved as updated above.**

## **MOTION CARRIED**

## **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 9, 2026**

There being no changes, the minutes were approved.

## **4. DEPARTEMENT REPORTS**

### **a. Engineering and Public Works**

Kentville Water Commission:

- Director Dave Bell reported that the Water Operator vacancy was filled internally through the Public Works department following an internal posting process.
- Andrew Prall transitioned from his role as a Public Works Operator to the Water Division and commenced his new position on February 28. He brings experience in water distribution systems and holds the required Level II certification for Kentville's water system.
- Staff are currently preparing the upcoming Water Commission budget.
- Work is continuing with the ICIP consultant to review and confirm design parameters for Phase Two of the Donald E. Hiltz Road project, which includes construction of a new water storage tank on inland property near the existing tank in the Industrial Park.

Regional Sanitary Sewer System:

- Director Dave Bell attended a recent Regional Technical Subcommittee meeting regarding the Regional Treatment System.
- An updated operating budget was reviewed, with Town staff recommending revisions to align with previously approved sanitary sewer budget projections.
- The revised budget is scheduled to be presented to the full Regional Committee on March 12.
- Subject to committee approval, the budget will be brought forward to Council later in the month for consideration.

Operating Budget:

- Public Works staff are currently developing the department's operating budget for presentation to Council in the coming weeks.

Capital Projects:

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- The Mitchell Brook Culvert Replacement Project, previously approved by Council, has been awarded.
- The contractor has been notified, and the project will proceed once the capital budget is formally approved and contracts are executed.
- Construction must occur between June and September to meet environmental regulatory requirements, with work anticipated during mid-summer when conditions are driest.

Donald E. Hiltz Road:

- Design work for Phase Two of the Donald E. Hiltz Road project is underway.
- Phase Two includes replacement of the existing water storage tank in the Industrial Park.

Downtown and Active Transportation Projects:

- Preliminary design work has commenced on several proposed downtown projects, assuming approval of the capital budget.
- Design work is underway for Miller Avenue and other components of the Active Transportation (AT) project scheduled for completion within the current fiscal year.

Provincial Paving Program:

- The Town will submit an application for the 2026–2027 Provincial Paving Grant, focusing on the west end of Park Street.
- Park Street was identified as being in the poorest condition among eligible trunk roads.
- The program provides up to 50% provincial funding, with the remaining cost borne by the Town.
- The program is currently in its third year of a five-year commitment.

Councillor Rob Baker requested clarification on the timeline for replacement of the water storage tank in the Industrial Park. Director Dave Bell responded that land acquisition is ongoing and nearing completion and construction is anticipated to begin in fall 2026 and may span two construction seasons, with completion expected in 2027.

Councillor Rob Baker asked whether the Hiltz Connector Road would remain a construction zone and potentially restrict recreational use during the tank replacement. Director Dave Bell responded that the Connector Road is expected to reopen for recreational use once heavy equipment work is completed, anticipated by fall 2026, and potentially sooner. The water tank site is separate from the roadway, allowing the road to reopen independently of tank construction activities.

**b. Finance**

Director Wanda Matthews addressed Council and advised that her written report had been circulated in advance. She provided key highlights and noted a minor correction.  
Audit Update:

- Director Wanda Matthews advised that an error was identified in the report regarding the interim audit timeline.
- The report referenced a meeting being scheduled with the Finance and Audit Committee; however, this meeting has not yet been scheduled due to short notice provided for the interim audit.
- Once the external auditor is onsite on Wednesday, staff will have a clearer understanding of the audit timeline and will ensure sufficient notice is provided before scheduling the committee meeting.

#### Financial Forecast:

- The Town is currently forecasting a surplus of approximately \$126,000, assuming no major year-end adjustments.
- Director Wanda Matthews expressed confidence in this projection, noting:
  - Only one month remains in the fiscal year;
  - Reduced likelihood of further snow-related costs;
  - Accounting records have been maintained on a quarterly basis.
- No significant year-end adjustments are anticipated at this time.

#### Sanitary Sewer – Quarter 3 Report:

- The Quarter 3 sanitary sewer report indicates a projected deficit of approximately \$128,000.
- Contributing factors include:
  - Lower-than-expected revenue due to reduced consumption; and
  - An estimated \$75,000 additional charge resulting from the Regional Sewer Contract, as regional costs are exceeding budget.
- Director Wanda Matthews noted that year-end financial statements are presented on a net basis across water operations, the general Town budget, and sanitary sewer operations.
- Staff remain hopeful that the combined result will be a net neutral position at year end.

#### Capital Projects:

- All capital projects are reported to be on target, with no significant changes from the previous reporting period.

#### Additional Financial Updates:

- A sanitary sewer update was provided, with no major issues to highlight.
- Tax accounts outstanding as of late February / early March stand at approximately 1.5% of total tax levy, an improvement from 2% in the previous month.
- Director Wanda Matthews indicated this downward trend is positive.

### **c. Planning and Development**

#### Planning Advisory Committee:

- Director Darren Shupe reported that the Planning Advisory Committee is scheduled to hold its first meeting on March 25.

- The committee will have plan review as a standing agenda item, and staff expressed enthusiasm about beginning work with the new committee.

Staff Update:

- Council was advised that Alice Jebiwott has commenced her role as Climate Action Coordinator, having started the previous week.
- She is currently being integrated into the Planning and Development team.
- Her work will help inform the municipal plan review process, particularly with respect to environmental considerations.

Development Activity:

- For the month of February, the department issued five development permits, with a total construction value of just under \$800,000.
- The report also included:
  - Two subdivision applications; and
  - One new planning application.

Planning Application – Land Use By-Law Amendment:

- Director Darren Shupe highlighted a new application for a text amendment to the Land Use By-law.
- The proposed amendment would permit group classes of up to eight people in home-based businesses, which differs from current permissions.

Mayor Andrew Zebian asked for an update on a previously submitted residential development application on River Street, involving proposed apartment buildings near the police department. Director Darren Shupe responded the application remains open but on hold. The applicant has been reviewing the proposal internally. There has been limited communication from the applicant for some time, but the application has not been withdrawn.

Councillor Rob Baker requested clarification on the timing, location, and details of the public hearing related to the Large Lot Residential (R5) review, noted as scheduled for March 23. Director Darren Shupe responded that public hearings would occur prior to the Council meeting, at Town Hall. One hearing is scheduled for 4:30 p.m., with details posted on the Town's website. Members of the public interested in attending can find the full information online.

#### **d. Parks and Recreation**

Staffing Updates:

- Lucas Vanderaa has joined the team as Parks Project Facilitator. This is an eight-month position, primarily working with HWA.
- Tyler MacLeod, a student in the Acadia University Community Development Program, has joined the department for a nine-week placement and will assist with development of the 10-Year Recreation Plan.

- Spencer Grantwell has departed from the Town to pursue a new opportunity. Director Craig Langille acknowledged his contributions to the Parks Division and conveyed best wishes.

#### Winter Warm-Up Program:

- The Winter Warm-Up initiative was reported as a success.
- The Wellnify app functioned well overall; however, staff have identified areas for improvement and will work with the software provider to make adjustments.
- Director Craig Langille noted potential to integrate or align the program with June is Recreation Month to encourage increased physical activity within the community.

#### Spike Fund Update:

- Donations for the current year totaled approximately \$12,500, a significant increase compared to previous years.
- Approximately \$2,400 has been distributed back into the community to date.

With upcoming spring programs and a pilot June program, staff hope to see increased community applications to support participation in Parks and Recreation programs.

Mayor Andrew Zebian thanked Parks and Recreation staff for reopening the arena promptly following a recent incident and asked whether there was significant damage or primarily cleanup required. Director Craig Langille responded there was no major structural damage. The situation involved extensive cleanup and restoration, including removal of items from walls, cupboards, and cabinets. Staff focused on ensuring the facility was safe for public reopening.

Councillor Cathy Maxwell asked for an update on the pool deck paver repairs and whether a target completion date had been identified. Director Craig Langille responded that a confirmed date has not yet been set. Staff are aiming for completion toward the end of April, if possible.

Councillor Cathy Maxwell noted that arena salary costs were projected to exceed budget and asked for clarification. Director Craig Langille advised that the overage is primarily due to overtime, as the refrigeration plant requires monitoring seven days per week. Two staff members are currently completing training and certification for refrigeration operations. Once certified, staffing levels are expected to reduce overtime requirements going forward.

#### **e. Kentville Police Service**

Chief Marty Smith provided highlights from the January reporting period.

#### Call Volume:

- The Kentville Police Service responded to 328 calls in January, compared to 273 calls in the same month the previous year, representing a significant increase.

- Chief Marty Smith noted a typographical error in the report regarding the year reference but confirmed the comparison reflected an increase year-over-year.

#### Youth Programs:

- Police youth programming officially commenced with the swearing-in of seven cadets, ranging in age from 13 to 17.
- The cadets have completed multiple sessions and were reported to be highly engaged.
- Chief Marty Smith described the program as a positive and early success.

#### First Responders Wellness Symposium:

- Chief Marty Smith highlighted the work of Sergeant Kevin Pick and administrative staff member Jennifer Myers in organizing the First Responders Wellness Symposium.
- The 2026 symposium is scheduled for April 25 at the NSCC Kingstec campus.
- This is the fourth year of the event, which rotates locations and is offered at a low cost to first responders.

#### Operational Highlights:

- Approximately 35% of calls occurred in the downtown core.
- A flight from police incident resulted in five Criminal Code charges.
- Theft-related files increased during the reporting period.

#### Community Engagement and Navigation Program:

- The Community Engagement Sergeant continues to support youth and community initiatives.
- The Police Navigator completed her second full month, attending 18 agency meetings and recording 56 client interactions.
- Chief Marty Smith noted this is a new tracking metric and indicated that the number of calls diverted from sworn officers to the Navigator is likely higher than currently captured.

#### Investigative Section:

- The General Investigation Section executed seven search warrants, which resulted in:
  - Firearms seizures;
  - Three arrests; and
  - A major fraud investigation leading to five charges.

#### Financial Update:

- The Police Service is under budget overall, despite expectations.
- Criminal record check revenues are ahead of schedule, at approximately 88% of forecast.

Mayor Andrew Zebian requested data regarding police calls or visits associated specifically with the Open Arms shelter, noting that not all downtown calls are shelter-related. He expressed interest in more specific data to inform public discussion and comparisons with other communities. Chief Marty Smith agreed the data could be

helpful and advised that tracking shelter-specific call data could be discussed further at the next Police Commission meeting.

Councillor Cathy Maxwell asked about police overtime expenditures, noting that overtime was approximately \$6,000 over budget, and inquired whether this was related to sick leave or other staffing issues. Chief Marty Smith confirmed staffing levels are currently full and that overtime was largely attributable to:

- Workplace injury (WCB) claims that required temporary coverage;
- Increased sick leave, including seasonal illness;
- Special events such as Apple Blossom Festival and the Devil's Half Marathon, which are included within the overtime budget.

He noted that the overtime budget may be insufficiently estimated and advised that discussions are underway with the CAO regarding the development of a Town-wide attendance policy.

Councillor Cathy Maxwell asked for clarification on crime statistics tables, including the meaning of "not cleared" files and apparent discrepancies between reported incidents and charges laid. Chief Marty Smith explained that:

- "Not cleared" often reflects files still under investigation or awaiting system updates.
- Charges may be laid in subsequent reporting periods.
- Many provincial statute calls (e.g., mental health, family law, welfare checks) do not typically result in charges.

Acknowledged that the report represents a snapshot in time and may not reflect final outcomes.

Councillor Cathy Maxwell asked whether particular types of calls were driving increased downtown activity. Chief Marty Smith identified trespassing, shoplifting, and mental health calls as the most common recurring issues downtown.

Councillor Cathy Maxwell asked whether officers are observing intravenous drug use in public spaces. Chief Marty Smith said that officers do encounter drug-related activity, including:

- Calls for discarded needles;
- Occasional direct observations;

Noted that while concerns exist, the level observed is lower than in some other jurisdictions.

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Recommended Sundry tax write off**

Councillor John Andrew asked for clarification regarding the nature of the outstanding receivable, specifically what type of booking and space the charge related to.

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Staff advised that the outstanding amount related to an arena rental for an Apple Blossom concert. It was clarified that the booking was separate from the official Apple Blossom Festival and was an independent event that occurred approximately two years ago. Staff further advised that:

- A \$500 deposit was collected at the time of booking.
- The remaining balance has been outstanding on the Town's receivables for approximately two years.

Councillor John Andrew asked whether deposits are typically required for arena rentals and whether that practice was followed in this case. Asked whether the Town could pursue payment through the Apple Blossom Committee. Director Wanda Matthews and Staff confirmed that deposits are typically required, and that a deposit was received. Clarified that the event was not part of the Apple Blossom Festival proper, and therefore the outstanding amount was not the responsibility of the Apple Blossom Committee.

Councillor Cathy Maxwell expressed concern and disappointment that an individual or organization could rent a Town facility—particularly for an event where admission may have been charged—and fail to settle the full invoice. She emphasized the importance of ensuring the Town does not repeatedly face similar situations or have to write off unpaid facility rental fees. She voiced hope that stronger measures or controls are in place to prevent recurring outstanding receivables.

**It was moved by Councillor John Andrew, seconded by Councillor Samantha Hamilton that Council approve writing off outstanding sundry accounts receivable, including interest, totaling \$1,963.60 related to customer account – Kevin Davison.**

## **MOTION CARRIED**

### **b. Fire Protection Services Act**

CAO Chris McNeill advised that the province has introduced a new Fire Services Act, currently before the Nova Scotia Legislature. Council was informed that the legislation has undergone several revisions since its initial draft. Earlier provisions that would have made municipalities fully responsible for fire services, including the direct hiring of fire chiefs, have been removed from the current version.

However, the proposed legislation still includes several measures that may impact municipalities, including:

- Establishment of standards for firefighters across the province;
- Creation of regional fire training centres, details of which remain unclear;
- A requirement that all municipalities conduct an independent Fire Services Review to assess the competency and capacity of their fire protection services.

The CAO advised that:

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- The required Fire Services Review would be conducted by an external consultant and would represent a new and unbudgeted cost for the Town.
- With potentially 49 or more similar studies required across the province, there are concerns about limited consultant availability, which could increase costs.
- At this time, the Town does not know:
  - Whether the legislation will pass;
  - The required scope of the review; or
  - Whether the review would be required in the 2026–2027 fiscal year or could be deferred to 2027–2028.

The CAO noted that:

- The legislation primarily applies to municipal fire departments.
- The Kentville Volunteer Fire Department is a separately incorporated organization, meaning the regulations would not apply directly.
- The Town would still be responsible for ensuring an independent assessment is completed to confirm the fire service is capable of meeting community needs.

Additional requirements may include:

- Streamlined records management and data reporting to the province; and
- Participation in a provincial committee to help establish firefighter standards.

The CAO advised that if the legislation passes, expedited implementation by the province could occur as early as this summer or fall. While the overall impact is expected to be less significant than initially proposed, there will still be operational and financial implications for the Town and Fire Service.

Councillor Rob Baker asked for an estimate of the cost of the required Fire Services Review. CAO Chris McNeill estimated the cost to be in the range of \$30,000 to \$50,000, depending on:

- The level of detail required;
- The parameters set by the Province; and
- Potential economies of scale if multiple studies are undertaken provincially.

Councillor Cathy Maxwell asked whether any portion of the Fire Services Review cost could be shared with Kings County, given the collaborative nature of some fire service activities. CAO Chris McNeill advised that this has not yet been determined. Cost sharing will depend on the final scope and parameters of the study once defined by the province. Until those details are known, it is unclear whether the cost would be borne fully by the Town or shared.

### **c. OHS Policy Statement**

**It was moved by Councillor Samantha Hamilton, seconded by Councillor John Andrew, that Council approve the Occupational Health and Safety Policy Statement.**

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**MOTION CARRIED**

**d. Investment Advisory Services Contract Extension**

**It was moved by Councillor John Andrew, seconded by Councillor Cathy Maxwell, that Council approve a seven (7)-month extension of the investment advisory services agreement with TD Wealth, extending the term to October 31, 2026.**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**6. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**It was moved by Councillor Cathy Maxwell, seconded by Councillor John Andrew, that Council move into closed session at 5:45 p.m.**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**7. CLOSED SESSION**

- a. Municipal Government Act – Section 22(2)(a) – Sale of Municipal Property**
- b. Municipal Government Act – Section 22(2)(a) – Sale of Municipal Property**

**RETURN FROM CLOSED SESSION**

**It was moved by Councillor Rob Baker, seconded by Councillor Cathy Maxwell, that the meeting return from closed session at 6:04 p.m.**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

APRIL 13/26  
Approval Date

  
Mayor Andrew Zebian

