

**WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Committee of the Whole - Meeting Agenda**

February 10, 2026 - 6:00 p.m.

In-person Sanford Council Chambers, 76 Morison Dr, Windsor, NS

Virtual via Zoom (also YouTube Livestream)

Agenda is subject to change due to additions that may not be able to be reflected until after the meeting.



West Hants
something inspiring awaits

1. Call to Order
2. Attendance
3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
4. Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest
5. Announcements
6. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
 - a) 2026-01-13 Committee of the Whole Minutes
7. Presentations
 - a) Agriculture in Hants West - MLA Sheehy-Richard and David Bowlby, MLA for Annapolis and the Ministerial Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture
8. Unfinished Business/Postponed Motions - None
9. Reports
 - a) CAO Activity Update - Information Report
 - b) General Operating
 - c) Water Utility Operating
 - d) Water Consumption
10. Correspondence
 - a) General Correspondence Received Ledger as of February 6, 2026
 - i. Provincial Response Re WHRM's Request to Release the Environmental Racism Report
 - b) Correspondence Sent as of February 6, 2026 - None
11. New Business
 - a) Annapolis Valley Regional Library 2026/27 Budget Request
 - b) REMO agreement with Kings County - CAO Phillips

12. Public Comment Period
13. In-Camera
 - a) 2025-09-08 Committee of the Whole In-Camera Minutes
 - b) MGA 22(2)(f) Legal Matter
 - c) MGA 22(2)(f) Legal Matter
 - d) MGA 22(2)(f) Legal Matter
 - e) MGA 22(2)(c) Personnel Matter
14. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – February 24, 2026 Council Meeting at 6 p.m.

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Committee of the Whole - Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2026 - 6:00 p.m.
In-person Sanford Council Chambers, 76 Morison Dr, Windsor, NS
Virtual via Zoom (also YouTube Livestream)



1. **Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. **Attendance**

Council

Abraham Zebian, Mayor

Rupert Jannasch, Councillor Dist. 1

Scott McLean, Councillor Dist. 2

Chrystal Remme, Councillor Dist. 3

Paul Wheadon, Councillor Dist. 4

Bob Morton, Councillor Dist. 6

Debbie Francis, Deputy Mayor, Dist. 5

Kayla Leary-Pinch, Councillor Dist. 7 (6:14 p.m.)

Paul Morton, Councillor Dist. 8

John Smith, Councillor, Dist. 9

Bonnie Smith, Councillor Dist. 10

Jim Ivey, Councillor Dist. 11

Staff

Mark Phillips, CAO

Todd Richard, Director of Public Works

Carlee Rochon, Director of Financial Services

Kari Fougere, Act Dir Planning & Dev. (ZOOM)

Deanna Snair, Exec. Asst/ Clerk

Kathy Kehoe, Director of Community Dev

Tim Bouter, Project Engineer

Alex Dunphy, Senior Planner (ZOOM)

Presenters:

MLA Sheehy-Richard

David Bowlby, MLA for Annapolis and the Ministerial Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture

One (1) member of the public

3. **Approval of the Agenda including additions or deletions (6:01 p.m.)**

As there were no additions, the agenda was accepted as presented.

4. **Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest (6:01 p.m.) - None**

5. **Announcements (6:01 p.m.)**

West Hants Regional Municipality is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and this land is governed by the treaties of Peace and Friendship signed in 1726. West Hants Regional Municipality also recognizes that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to this land and each other. West Hants Regional Municipality also recognizes African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose history, legacies, and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Council and I as Chair are committed to ensuring this meeting and its participants conduct themselves in a respectful and professional manner as outlined in the municipality's Municipal Code of Conduct. Meeting presenters, staff, and the public are expected to conduct themselves in an equally respectful manner at all times the meeting is being conducted. I thank you all in advance for your commitment to these important meeting principles.

A joint Town Hall meeting with Councillor John Smith, District 9 and Councillor Kayla Leary-Pinch, District 7, was scheduled for February 25, 2026, at 6 p.m. at the Falmouth Community Hall.

6. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (6:02 p.m.)

a) 2026-01-13 Committee of the Whole Minutes

The minutes were approved subject to the proposed amendments being finalized.

7. Presentations

a) Agriculture in Hants West - MLA Sheehy-Richard and David Bowlby, MLA for Annapolis and the Ministerial Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture (6:05 p.m.)

MLA Sheehy-Richard, along with David Bowlby, MLA for Annapolis and Ministerial Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, met with Council to discuss agricultural priorities in West Hants. In advance of the meeting, they shared several questions for Council's consideration, focusing on the status and review of the municipal agricultural plan, community engagement and stakeholder concerns regarding agricultural land protection, the municipality's prioritization of farmland preservation relative to housing and commercial development, and the municipality's support for food security initiatives and their connection to sustaining local agriculture. During the meeting, each question was posed and addressed by members of Council and staff.

Discussion Points:

- West Hants Regional Municipality (WHRM) was currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the three existing municipal planning documents for Windsor, West Hants, and Hantsport. The goal was to consolidate them into a single, unified regional planning document to guide future growth and development.
- Community members and the Hants County Federation of Agriculture have emphasized the need to protect prime agricultural land from rezoning, manage the impacts of urban expansion on neighbouring farms, and reduce land-use conflicts between residential and agricultural uses. They also highlighted the importance of strengthening climate adaptation measures, maintaining and improving dyke systems to address flooding risks, safeguarding freshwater resources and watersheds, and preserving water access for agricultural production.
- West Hants supports food security initiatives through directly supporting local food banks, farm markets, the Station Food Hub, and the development of an online Farm to Table mapping initiative.
- It was important to continue exploring alternative farming methods and innovative agricultural practices; however, Council emphasized that it was equally critical not to lose sight of traditional farming activities such as cattle, sheep, and forage crops, which remain foundational to the region's agricultural economy. The closure of the Nappan Research Farm was viewed as devastating news, and Council expressed that it was imperative to advocate strongly for the facility to remain open. Members stressed that the Province should actively voice its support for maintaining this important agricultural research asset.

8. Unfinished Business/Postponed Motions – None

9. Reports

a) CAO's Report (6:42 p.m.)

The CAO provided an overview report outlining key governance, administrative, operational, and strategic activities undertaken since the last Committee of the Whole meeting. During this period, Council and staff participated in regular and special Council meetings, strategic planning sessions, regional funding discussions, and multiple departmental and intergovernmental meetings. Administration advanced organizational review work, labour management engagement, and accessibility initiatives, while continuing to support the Warming Centre's operations as provincial funding confirmation nears completion. Finance held 2026/27 budget preparation meetings from February 2–5 and an Audit Committee meeting on February 4. Draft operating and capital budgets have been reviewed, with some items, including final Fire Service submissions, still outstanding as staff work toward the March budget deadline. The Audit Committee received presentations on the 2024/25 WHRM Audit and the MNP Water Operational Audit, and a report with recommendations will be brought forward to Council in February. Planning and Development remains busy and managed regulatory hearings. The Windsor Courthouse remains on the market, with a submission deadline of February 27, 2026. Proposals received will be presented to Council in March for review. The listing experienced a brief one- to two-day interruption due to the appointed agent transitioning to a different vendor. Staff continue to engage with the County of Kings regarding development approvals in Hantsport related to the Hants Border Sewage Treatment Facility. Discussions include a review of the existing agreement and the capacity allocation formula, as well as clarification of system improvements resulting from recent infrastructure upgrades. While dialogue remains ongoing, both parties appear to be nearing an impasse on the matter.

As directed at the January 27 meeting, the Mill Lakes Diversion Pipe Project tender award was defeated at its January 27 meeting. The motion to award the tender was defeated, and the project will not proceed under the proposed contract. Subsequently a second motion was approved to direct staff to prepare a report on completing the project in-house for consideration. Unless there are different directions provided, staff will proceed with preparing this report.

The Fire Services Director position closed on January 26, 2026. Shortlisting was currently underway, and interviews will follow for selected candidates. Representatives from the Nova Scotia Department of Emergency Management have been secured to support the interview and selection process.

Mill Lakes Diversion Pipe Project Discussion Points:

With respect to the Mill Lakes Diversion Pipe Project tender, there was uncertainty raised about which way Council should proceed and was unsure if there was still a desire to have this work completed in house once a report is completed and presented to Council. It was suggested it may be more prudent to shelf the project and move on. Budget was still coming up and Council may have a better understanding of where the Municipality sits financially and help identify priorities going forward.

**MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR J. SMITH THAT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RECOMMENDS COUNCIL RESCIND THE
JANUARY 27, 2026 MOTION, THAT COUNCIL REQUEST A REPORT
FROM STAFF ON DOING THE MILL LAKES PIPE DIVERSION INHOUSE**

**FOR FEBRUARY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING. MOTION
CARRIED.** Nays: B. Morton and McLean

Hants Border Sewage Treatment Facility Discussion Points:

WHRM has a long-standing agreement with the County of Kings, who own and operate the facility, allocating plant capacity at 70% to WHRM and 30% to the County, with operational costs defined in the agreement. WHRM was seeking to revisit the agreement in light of improvements in the Hantsport area that have reduced incoming volumes and potentially freed up additional capacity. Currently, WHRM was exploring options within the existing agreement at the operational level and has not elevated the matter to Council, though some challenges have been identified. Internal discussions were ongoing, and further dialogue with the County of Kings was planned. The goal was to resolve concerns to support continued development and growth rather than remain at a stalemate. WHRM remains hopeful that a resolution can be reached before an impasse occurs.

Financial Service Discussion Points:

The Management Letter and finalized MNP report discussed at the recent Audit Committee have not yet been received. Once available, these reports will be shared with both the Audit Committee and Council, including any reports not previously shared at the Audit Committee meeting.

b) General Operating as of November 30, 2025 (6:57 p.m.)

Director Rochon reviewed the report. The report showed that the general operating budget's projected surplus deficit changed slightly since October, moving by 0.2%. Compared to November of last year, projections were up 0.3%, which was positive. Year-to-date utilization stood at 56.5%, below the expected 66.67% if evenly distributed, but consistent with last November's 58.7% usage trend. Revenue projections decreased by 0.1% since October 2025, while expenses increased by 0.1%. Overall, this resulted in a decrease in the projected surplus of \$86,279.

Discussion Points:

- Sewer billings were accurately reflected for two quarters, while taxes were billed once annually in July. Other revenues vary in timing: some were received quarterly, others in two installments, and some like landfill hosting fees were received in four installments, with the last payment in January. Therefore, not all revenues were evenly distributed throughout the year.
- Sewer revenues for two billing periods indicated WHRM was on track to exceed budget, with projections at about 21% over. Expenses for sewer were included within Environmental Health Services and were projected at approximately \$2.4 million, with some accounts being monitored due to the new sewer bylaw approved recently. It was suggested that updating the report to show sewer separately may help clarify the overall budget picture.

c) Water Utility Operating as of November 30, 2025 (7:02 p.m.)

Director Rochon reviewed the report and noted that the projected surplus for this area had changed little. The main variation was in customer billing under Rate Sales, which used third-quarter averages to project and compare them against last year, even though third-quarter actuals were not yet posted. December typically shows a seasonal slowdown, and current utilization

trends reflect this (19.5% vs. 21% for sewer), as we have individuals who only have water and we have individuals who only have sewer, so these numbers would not be exact matches but it was trending on the higher side especially as the full results from the summer and the fall from the drought conditions were available, this also made it easier to forecast that budget line. The next forecast may include adjustments to transmission and distribution, as Director Richard reviews potential reallocations of capital items, which will be reflected in the report.

Discussion Points:

- Administration and General expenses were projected higher due to estimated depreciation costs. At year-end 2024/25, depreciation exceeded expectations because more work-in-progress items were completed and became depreciable. These costs, referred to as depreciation by the utility, were actually amortization costs, as assets cannot be depreciated until they are finished.
- Projections were based on prior years' averages and financial data. The Director reviewed total amounts billed over a given period rather than using daily averages.
- Because meter readings do not align exactly with March 31 year-end, readings were taken slightly before year-end, billed in April, and accrued back to the correct fiscal year.
- Any billing periods that straddle year-end are reconciled so that 365 days are properly accounted for.
- Fire protection charges were reviewed annually, as they were based on the number of hydrants and billed accordingly. The amount has not been included as WHRM was waiting for confirmation of the number of hydrants for the other municipal units that were part of the fire protection billing.
- Non-operating costs were predictable. Debt payments were fixed, and sludge reserve transfers followed established rules. The only variable was revenue-funded capital, but any amount over the \$76,000 limit needed Council approval. To date, no additional capital funding from the utility has been brought forward to Council.

d) Water Consumption as of November 30, 2025 (7:11 p.m.)

Director Rochon reviewed the report and noted that there were no significant changes since the previous update. The report reflected the October quarterly billing and early third-quarter activity, including accounts closed in October and November. In November, there were 23 closed accounts and three adjustments. Since April 1, there have been 227 closed accounts, representing 5.39% of total utility customers, and 21 adjustments, representing 0.5%. Overall, results remain consistent with financial expectations. Reported consumption currently showed a 58.2% variance. This was expected to change as non-revenue water figures are updated. A significant water main break occurred in December, which will impact future reporting. At present, the report reflected two water main breaks and authorized system flushing.

Discussion Points:

- Water use appeared to rise each quarter despite drought restrictions. Further review showed the increase was mainly due to higher bulk water sales, and overall usage was more in line with expectations once this was considered.

- Higher bulk deliveries during the drought matched treatment plant flows. When one bulk station was down for about six weeks, water was supplied from the Public Works facility at an estimated cost of \$23,000.
- As the utility was now fully consolidated, some bulk meters, originally designed for isolated zones (e.g., Underwood Drive, Wentworth Road, and Dill Road), may no longer provide reliable readings.
- Quarterly reads were not frequent enough to properly track usage or compare it to plant production. More frequent readings, improved billing accuracy, reduced unauthorized use, and additional inspections were needed, but resources were limited.
- Bulk master meter readings were not always synchronized with zone readings, sometimes varying by several days, which affected accuracy. Automated, simultaneous readings would improve reliability, but this system was not yet in place.
- Tracking annual bulk water volumes from Garlands Crossing and Falmouth would improve system management; however, limited staff resources make data collection, analysis, and follow-up challenging.

10. Correspondence (7:21 p.m.)

- a) General Correspondence Received Log as of February 6, 2026
 - i. Provincial Response Re WHRM's Request to Release the Environmental Racism Report
- b) Correspondence Sent as of February 6, 2026 - None

11. New Business

a) Annapolis Valley Regional Library 2026/27 Budget Request Report (7:21 p.m.)
 CAO Phillips reviewed the funding request from the Annapolis Valley Regional Library and outlined its implications. The library's funding formula expired on March 31, 2025, and rising operating costs under a static formula have led to service reductions in recent years. The Board was requesting a one-year, 50% increase in municipal contributions for 2026/27, totaling \$201,600 for WHRM; funding beyond that year has not yet been determined. Without additional support, further service reductions were likely. It was not yet known how other municipalities would respond, but more information was expected before the next Council meeting.

Discussion Points:

- A funding request has also been submitted to the province, who have not yet finalized their budget. There was cautious optimism that additional provincial support would be forthcoming.
- The proposed increase would be on top of West Hants' current funding, which already covers operating and maintenance costs for the Hantsport and West Hants branches.
- Libraries were vital community assets and remained one of the only fully free and accessible public spaces available to all residents in the region. The Annapolis Valley Regional Library Board has been actively exploring opportunities for operational improvements and cost savings; requesting additional funding from municipalities was not the first immediate option considered.
- Municipal contributions were pooled and distributed equitably among all regional library branches. If West Hants were to provide additional funding and other municipalities did

not, the increased contribution would not be allocated exclusively to West Hants libraries; rather, they would be equally shared across the entire regional library system.

It was suggested that the matter be revisited at the Council meeting in two (2) weeks, at which time additional information may be available regarding the intentions of other municipal units. The Provincial budget remains a key outstanding factor in the funding discussion.

b) REMO agreement with Kings County Recommendation Report (7:37 p.m.)

CAO Phillips reviewed the report. Through the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Act, municipalities are responsible for local emergency management, while the Province, through the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), provides oversight, standards, and coordination. DEM has introduced new Provincial EMO Standards that require municipalities to participate in a Regional Emergency Management Organization (REMO) rather than operate independently, reflecting best practices for shared resources, consistency, and resilience. In response, the West Hants Regional Municipality has pursued partnerships with neighboring municipalities and identified a strong alignment with Kings County municipalities. Under the proposed Kings/WHRM REMO model, existing emergency plans will be updated to meet provincial standards, with governance provided through a REMO planning committee and service delivery supported by a dedicated REMO coordinator. This approach ensures legislative compliance, enhances regional capacity, and supports an efficient, coordinated response across all phases of emergency management.

Discussion Points:

- The Province has identified potential “seed” funding to assist with the initial establishment of a REMO, which would help offset initial startup costs. Access to this funding was conditional upon entering into a formal REMO agreement with another municipal partner and submitting the required application.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS LEARY-PINCH AND P. MORTON THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RECOMMENDS APPROVE COUNCIL THAT THE WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY ENTER INTO AN INTERMUNICIPAL SERVICE AGREEMENT, SUBSTANTIVELY THE SAME AS THE KINGS REMO AGREEMENT PRESENTED AT THE FEBRUARY 10, 2026 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING, TO FORM A REGIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION WITH NEIGHBOURING KINGS COUNTY MUNICIPALITIES FOR THE PROVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR THE GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF KINGS COUNTY AND THE WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY. MOTION CARRIED

13. Public Comment Period (7:43 p.m.)

Rick Smith, a resident of Windsor, expressed his interest in the water utility and offered comments he described as an effort to address what he viewed as outstanding and unresolved issues within the utility. Concerns were raised about significant inconsistencies and large variances in the Water and Sewer Utility financial reporting, including differences between internal forecasts, audited

statements, and rate study projections. The fluctuations in projected deficits and surpluses created uncertainty about the reliability of the numbers and whether the utilities were on track to be self-supporting as intended. There was a need for clearer explanations, improved financial alignment with rate studies, and more transparent reporting, particularly around revenues, non-operating expenses, and water consumption data to ensure Council had a solid understanding of the utilities' financial position before year-end.

14. In-Camera (8:01 p.m.)

- a) 2025-09-08 Committee of the Whole In-Camera Minutes
- b) MGA 22(2)(f) Legal Matter
- c) MGA 22(2)(f) Legal Matter
- d) MGA 22(2)(f) Legal Matter
- e) MGA 22(2)(c) Personnel Matter

There was unanimous consent that short break would occur prior to going in-camera. At 8:01 p.m. a break occurred. Following the break, the meeting moved in-camera at 8:08 p.m.

**MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR LEARY-PINCH THAT
THE MEETING MOVE IN-CAMERA AT 8:01 P.M. MOTION CARRIED**

**MOVED BY COUNCILLORS P. MORTON AND B. MORTON THAT THE
MEETING MOVE OUT OF IN-CAMERA AT 9:35 P.M. MOTION
CARRIED**

15. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – February 24, 2026 Council meeting
With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Debbie Francis, Chair

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk