

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Committee of the Whole - Meeting Agenda Amended May 13, 2026

May 12, 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) 2026-03-26 Special Committee of the Whole Budget Minutes
 - b) 2026-04-08 Special Committee of the Whole Budget Minutes
 - c) 2026-04-14 Committee of the Whole Minutes
7. New Business (**Moved up on the agenda**)
 - a) Tender Award — Falmouth Causeway Trail Replacement Recommendation Report – Project Engineer Bouter
8. Presentations
 - a) Windsor Township Business Association Quarterly Update
9. Unfinished Business
 - ~~a) Councillor Nominations and Appointment for the Coordinated Regional Homelessness Engagement Model~~
10. Reports
 - a) CAO Activity Update - Information Report
 - b) 2026/27 Reserve Budget Information Report
 - c) General Operating ending February 2026 (2025/26 Fiscal Year)
 - d) Water Utility Operating ending February 2026 (2025/26 Fiscal Year)
 - e) Water Consumption ending February 2026 (2025/26 Fiscal Year)
11. Correspondence
 - f) 2024-2028 Council Term General Correspondence Received as of May 8, 2026
 - i. 2027-2028 12 Month Notice Letter to NSF (WHRM copied)

- b) 2024-2028 Council Term Correspondence Sent as of May 8, 2026 - None
- 12. New Business
 - a) Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy Amendments Recommendation Report – Clerk Snair
 - b) Reserves, Budget, Actual and Policy Report – Councillor Ivey
 - c) Secondary Suites – Councillor McLean
- 13. Public Comment Period
- 14. In-Camera
 - a) MGA 22(2)(a) Land Matter
 - b) MGA 22(2)(d) Labour Matter
- 15. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – May 26, 2026 Council Meeting at 6 p.m.

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Committee of the Whole - Meeting Minutes

May 12, 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 6:01 p.m.

2. **Attendance**

Council

Abraham Zebian, Mayor

Debbie Francis, Deputy Mayor, Dist. 5

Kayla Leary-Pinch, Councillor Dist. 7 (8:01 pm)

Scott McLean, Councillor Dist. 2

Paul Morton, Councillor Dist. 8

Chrystal Remme, Councillor Dist. 3

John Smith, Councillor, Dist. 9

Paul Wheadon, Councillor Dist. 4

Bonnie Smith, Councillor Dist. 10

Bob Morton, Councillor Dist. 6

Jim Ivey, Councillor Dist. 11

Regrets:

Rupert Jannasch, Councillor Dist. 1

Staff

Mark Phillips, CAO

Deanna Snair, Exec. Asst/ Clerk

Kathy Kehoe, Director of Community Dev

Tim Bouter, Project Engineer

Carlee Rochon, Director of Financial Services

Regrets:

Kari Fougere, Act Dir Planning & Development

Todd Richard, Dir. of Public Works

Gallery:

Karen Cooper, Windsor Township Business Association (WTBA) Program Coordinator

Ezra Edelstein Windsor Township Business Association (WTBA) Board Chair

3. **Approval of the Agenda including additions or deletions** (6:02 p.m.)

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

4. **Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest** (6:03 p.m.) - None

5. **Announcements** (6:03 p.m.)

Deputy Mayor Francis provided the Land Acknowledgement and Code of Conduct reminder.

6. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** (6:04 p.m.)

a) 2026-03-26 Special Committee of the Whole Budget Minutes

b) 2026-04-08 Special Committee of the Whole Budget Minutes

c) 2026-04-14 Committee of the Whole Minutes

With no proposed changes the minutes were approved as presented.

7. **New Business** (Moved up on the agenda)

a) Tender Award — Falmouth Causeway Trail Replacement Recommendation Report (6:05 p.m.)

Project Engineer Bouter reviewed the report. The 2026/27 Capital Budget included replacing about 411 m of the Falmouth Causeway Trail due to unsafe, deteriorated asphalt. The project will install a 1.8 m wide concrete trail to improve accessibility and durability. Following a competitive tender, Humphreys Landscape and Construction (1996) Ltd. was the lowest compliant bidder and recommended for award. As the project was under budget, additional options were proposed: extending the waterfront trail to the gazebo (approx. 140 m, \$48,720 plus tax) and upgrading the lift station/Water Street section to concrete for improved accessibility. Although originally budgeted at \$100,000 for 2027/28, this section could be completed for \$53,940 plus tax using current rates.

Discussion Points:

- The main contract was scheduled for completion by the end of July. If additional sections are approved, the extra work would take about one more month and be completed this summer, in phases.
- Accessibility discussions began after the tender closed, once it became clear the project was significantly under budget, and this was seen as an opportunity.
- It was recommended and agreed that no construction would take place during Avon River Days.
- The condition of the driveway along the waterfront used by residents for walking was noted as a concern, though it was recognized as part of a broader discussion. As the roadway was not currently cleared in winter, the new concrete walkway was not intended to be maintained for snow removal, as the adjacent sidewalk was cleared and provides an accessible route. Residents would be directed to the sidewalk, resulting in no additional operational costs.
- The trail leading to the stairs would remain as crusher screenings, while the gradual slope along the trail leading to Water Street would be upgraded to concrete.
- It was estimated that \$25,000 from the contingency would be used for accessibility improvements, with the remaining funds allocated to the main contract. Any leftover funds could be discussed further.

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RECOMMENDS COUNCIL APPROVE THE AWARD OF TENDER WHRMPW26-03 — FALMOUTH CAUSEWAY TRAIL REPLACEMENT — TO HUMPHREYS LANDSCAPE AND CONSTRUCTION (1996) LTD. FOR THE TENDERED PRICE OF \$148,248.00 BEFORE APPLICABLE TAXES. MOTION CARRIED

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RECOMMENDS COUNCIL APPROVE THE AWARD OF AN ADDITIONAL 295M OF TRAIL REPLACEMENT ALONG THE WINDSOR WATERFRONT TO HUMPHREYS LANDSCAPE AND CONSTRUCTION (1996) LTD. FOR \$102,660 BEFORE APPLICABLE TAXES. MOTION CARRIED

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RECOMMENDS COUNCIL APPROVE A CONSTRUCTION CONTINGENCY AMOUNT OF \$37,942.38 BEFORE APPLICABLE TAXES, INCLUDING ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS ALONG THE WINDSOR WATERFRONT THAT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE. MOTION CARRIED

8. Presentations

a) Windsor Township Business Association (WTBA) Quarterly Update (6:25 p.m.)
Karen Cooper, Program Coordinator for the Windsor Township Business Association (WTBA) and Ezra Edelstein, Board Chair provided a recap of events that were held between October 2025 to April 2026, a review of the 2026-2027 Plans and an overview of the Environics Report. From October 2025 to April 2026, there was strong growth in events, business engagement, and marketing, highlighted by a successful WinterThing and increased social media and newsletter reach. The Façade Improvement Program was highly utilized, supporting several local upgrades. Data shows more people were visiting Windsor, but less often, indicating increased tourism and first-time visitors but fewer repeat trips. Visitor demographics have also shifted, with average household income rising from \$99K to \$114K, a younger audience profile (shifting from 75+ to under 35), and a move toward more university-educated visitors, indicating a more affluent and engaged audience. For 2026–2027, the focus was on building on this momentum through events, partnerships, and business support, while working to increase repeat visits and strengthen local engagement.

Discussion Points:

- Environics data was available to anyone wishing to access the general insights. For WTBA, the data confirmed they were on the right track and that supporting downtown events was increasing visitors to the area. The growth in unique visitors was strongly tied to these events. Anecdotally, events like Garlic Fest have grown significantly, and now the data was available to support that. These high-quality, local events attract people looking for unique, authentic experiences, and they reinforce the value of continuing and expanding what the WBTS was doing.
- Data showed younger, higher-income visitors were coming from outside the region. This helps as targeted advertising can be done for those areas. It also showed the importance of attracting younger crowds. For example, Windsor updated its long-running Friday night music to include new bands and a mini concert format. This helped bring in different audiences, with the goal of growing events even further and eventually leading to a larger concert on the hill.
- There was a big shift toward visitors aged 35 and under. It likely reflected growth, not a decline in older visitors. Deeper analysis was possible but would cost more, and current data suggests overall visitor numbers increased across all areas.
- The data in the report didn't include highway traffic, even though about 20,000+ vehicles pass by Windsor regularly. It was possible to track that by setting up a geo-fence between

exits 5 and 7, but that would require a separate report. Having this information could help better understand those travelers and find ways to attract them into Windsor.

9. Unfinished Business/Postponed Motions

- a) Councillor Nominations and Appointment for the Coordinated Regional Homelessness Engagement Model – item will be discussed at the May 26th Council meeting.

10. Reports

- a) CAO's Report (6:57 p.m.)

The CAO presented an overview of recent governance, administrative, and operational activities since the last Committee of the Whole meeting, including attending regular Committee and Council meetings and the NSFM Spring Conference with Mayor Zebian and Councillor Remme, where WHRM delivered presentations on stormwater management and the 2025 drought response. Final plans for the Avon View High School Graduation Ceremony on June 29 at the Sports Complex were underway, it was expected to host over 250 students and guests. On May 13 the Pension and Benefit Committee were meeting to discuss potential pension and staffing changes, with union input ongoing; an update will follow. The 2026/27 budgets were now publicly available online. Attended an April 27 meeting with VREN to explore increasing private investment, with a membership model under consideration. A Local Oversight Committee meeting was scheduled for May 28. A meeting was scheduled for May 21 between Staff Sergeant Nugent and the CAO to begin planning the strategic review process for the PAB, with a board meeting to follow once the framework was finalized. In addition, recruitment for the Director of Fire Services was underway through KBRS Consulting, with a national posting and a shortlist of candidates expected on June 3, followed by interviews.

Discussion Points:

- An update will be provided regarding the speed radar signs near the Brooklyn schools.

- b) 2026/27 Reserve Budget Information Report (7:05 p.m.)

Director Rochon reviewed the approved Capital and Operating budgets and outlined Operating, Capital, and Special reserves. Reserves support operations, fund projects, reduce borrowing, and stabilize budgets. 2026/27 projections are based on approved budgets and may change after year-end; only accessible reserves were included.

Operating Reserves

Operating reserves were required to equal 10% of revenue, but the projected balance of approximately \$2.2M–\$2.25M was about \$1.7M below the \$3.9M target. Spendable reserves were expected to reach \$2.25M by the end of 2026/27, with planned spending of \$2.97M and contributions of \$1.7M, including surplus funds and allocations for fire services, boundaries, and elections. Key expenditures included debt servicing, the Home Flood Protection program, PACE, and a \$1.05M withdrawal from the RCMP Reserve to support area rates. The Fire Asset Reserve, which funds equipment replacement, targets contributions equal to 2% of asset value, but despite a \$25K increase, it was only meeting about 48% of the \$211K policy target. Water Utility Reserves, prepared in accordance with provincial regulations, were reviewed separately during budget deliberations.

Capital Reserves

Capital Reserves support major projects and were guided by policy targets set by Council based on affordability. Key reserves include Building, Road, Vehicle, Equipment, and General Capital (funded through asset sales). For 2026/27, reserves were projected at \$1.68M, with \$1.22M in spending and \$962K in contributions, including \$850K from the operating budget. Sewer reserves, funded separately, had no contributions due to deficits. Overall, contributions reached only 47.2% of the policy target.

Special Reserves

Special reserves fund specific obligations and must be used only for their intended purpose. They were time-limited (e.g., CCBF, Housing Accelerator Fund, ARO) and restricted by agreements, legislation, or area rates.

By March 31, 2027, the balance was projected at \$3.48M, with \$6.31M in spending and \$3.35M in contributions (including \$969K from operating). The ARO Reserve was being funded over five years to meet obligations, with annual updates for key municipal assets.

Five-year CCBF Capital Reserve Balance

The five-year CCBF Capital Reserve was projected to decline from \$1.53M by March 31, 2027 to \$230,627 by 2031, based on planned spending and contributions

Reserves Comparisons

Operating reserve contributions increased by \$25,000 from 2025/26, capital reserve contributions remained unchanged at \$850,000, and special reserve contributions decreased by \$110,565.

Total Municipal Reserves (non-water related)

Total municipal reserve balance (excluding water) was projected at \$7.42M by the end of 2026/27, with \$10.50M in spending and \$6.02M in contributions.

Five-year Water Capital Reserve

The five-year Water Capital Reserve assumes a 1% annual increase in depreciation, with a projected balance of \$1.93M by March 31, 2027/2031.

Discussion Points:

- Capital reserves have no fixed policy target, Council sets contributions each year.
- Operating reserves cover day-to-day and unexpected costs.
- Current contributions fall well below policy guidelines (about 47.3%), with \$850K contributed vs the \$1.8M recommended for building, road, and vehicle reserves. Increasing this would impact taxes.
- Only spendable reserves were shown, some funds (e.g., tax sale reserves) were restricted and unavailable for years.
- Committed funds (e.g., grants, past Council approvals, internal transfers) were excluded since they were already allocated.
- Internal loans between funds were handled operationally, not at the Council level.
- Concerns were raised that contributions were not meeting policy expectations.

c) General Operating as of February 2026 (2025/26 Fiscal Year) (7:33 p.m.)

Director Rochon reviewed the report and noted there was not a lot of change.

The overall projected surplus changed by only \$7,002. Previously, revenues were projected at \$23.6 million in January and are now estimated at \$3.3 million, while expenses decreased from

\$1.7 million to approximately \$1.4 million. These adjustments resulted in the minimal change to the surplus. As year-end approaches, projections were becoming more refined. No concerns were noted for transportation, as lower snowfall in March reduced related costs.

d) Water Utility Operating as of February 2026 (2025/26 Fiscal Year) (7:37 p.m.)

Director Rochon noted a significant change from the January report due to higher than expected costs in the Transmission & Distribution maintenance account, largely driven by numerous water main breaks and leak repairs. This resulted in an additional \$137,000 in expenses. Revenue projections were also reduced by \$49,802 based on updated March billing. Overall, expenses remain close to last year's projections, with \$29.6 million compared to \$30.7 million in February 2025. Additionally, non-operating expenditures increased by \$35,000 due to the need for more water meters than anticipated.

e) Water Consumption as of February 2026 (2025/26 Fiscal Year) (7:40 p.m.)

Director Rochon reported no changes from the January report regarding bulk water consumption variances. In February, there were eight closed accounts with no adjustments; updates reflected final fourth-quarter billing for those accounts. It was also noted that the report format was being revised to a more Public Works oriented version, expected to be available in March.

10. Correspondence (7:42 p.m.)

a) 2024-2028 Council Term General Correspondence Received Log as of May 8, 2026

- i. 2026-05-04 Honourable John A. MacDonald Re 12 Month Notice Letter to NSFM-2027/2028 (WHRM copied)

b) 2024-2028 Council Term Correspondence Sent as of May 8, 2026 - None

11. New Business

a) Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy Amendments Recommendation Report (7:43 p.m.)

Clerk Snair reviewed the report. Recent Council motions have prompted a review of the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy to ensure alignment with current practices. The resulting proposed amendments, including the integration of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) considerations and the addition of new appendices were now being presented to Council for review and direction prior to final amendment and ratification of the policy.

Discussion Points:

The proposed amendment supports improved accountability for both staff and Council as decision-makers, with the goal of making this review approach a standard part of the decision-making process. It was felt that staff would be able to incorporate it into reports without significant added workload, and it was viewed as a worthwhile, adaptable, and user-friendly model.

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RECOMMENDS COUNCIL DIRECT THE CAO TO ENGAGE STAFF TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CHANGES TO THE MEETING AND COMMITTEE PROCEDURAL POLICY RCOGE-003.00 FOLLOWING THE DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL AT THE MAY 12, 2026 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING. MOTION CARRIED

b) Reserves, Budget, Actual and Policy Recommendation Report (7:47 p.m.)

Councillor Ivey reviewed the report and expressed concern about inconsistencies between the audited reserve amount and the projected figure used in budgeting. He noted that this discrepancy makes the report difficult to interpret. He also questioned the concept of “spendable reserves,” pointing out that Council recently reallocated funds between reserves to support initiatives, which adds to his uncertainty about the report.

It was emphasized that reserves, such as capital, operating, and special should be formally approved by Council and properly accounted for. It was further suggested that the Reserve policy should be reviewed, as it lacks detail in comparison to the approaches used by other municipalities, which outlines each reserve, its purpose, permitted uses, and target balances. Given these concerns, he proposed deferring the report to the next meeting to allow time to revise and clarify the information.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS IVEY AND P. MORTON THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RECOMMENDS THE REPORT BE DEFERRED UNTIL THE MAY 26TH COUNCIL MEETING FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION. MOTION CARRIED

c) Secondary Suites (7:52 p.m.)

Councillor McLean reviewed the report. Residents have been inquiring whether West Hants Regional Municipality offers financial assistance, specifically grants, to support the construction of Secondary Suites. While other municipalities such as Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) have implemented grant programs, West Hants currently does not offer similar funding. Given the rising interest and economic benefits associated with Secondary Suites, a suggestion was made to explore the feasibility of a grant program and to develop a draft policy for Council’s consideration.

Discussion Points:

- Nova Scotia ended its 3-year forgivable loan program (up to \$40,000) for affordable backyard secondary suites in March 2026. In addition, in West Hants now allow detached secondary suites across most residential areas and through the Housing Accelerator Program, development and building permit fees have been waived (about \$4,000 in savings), and pre-designed housing options have been created to encourage and speed up infill development, with an expiry date of March 31, 2027 as it was attached to the Housing Accelerator Fund. .
- There was support to see a focused approach on supportive measures like waiving fees, removing barriers, and speeding up applications rather than offering grants or loans, with efforts aimed at making processes easier, raising awareness, and helping people access available options.
- Concerns were raised that this matter was not discussed during the budget process or = budgeted for.

13. Public Comment Period – None

Councillor Leary-Pinch joined the meeting at 8:01 pm.

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

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS WHEADON AND P. MORTON THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE DIRECTS THAT THE MEETING MOVE IN CAMERA AT 8:01 PM. MOTION CARRIED

MOVED BY MAYOR ZEBIAN AND COUNCILLOR P. MORTON THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE DIRECTS THAT THE MEETING MOVE OUT OF IN CAMERA AT 8:45 PM. MOTION CARRIED

15. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – May 26, 2026 Council meeting
With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Debbie Francis, Chair

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk