



MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF ARGYLE
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2025

Council Members Present: Warden Nicole Albright, Deputy Warden Ted Saulnier, Councillor Malcolm Madden, Councillor Gordon Boudreau, Councillor Greg Foster, Councillor Darryl LeBlanc, Councillor Kathy Bourque, Councillor Glenn Diggdon, and Councillor Racheal Surette

Absent with Regrets:

Staff Present: Chief Administrative Officer Alain Muise, Director of Recreation Services Natalie d'Entremont and Executive Assistant Julie Atkinson

1. Call Meeting to Order

Warden Nicole Albright called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. Invitation to Stand and Move

Warden Nicole Albright reminded Council that they are permitted to stand and move as they need to during the meeting. This is an initiative by Argyle Recreation which normalizes movement in meetings.

3. Approval of Agenda

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Greg Foster to approve the agenda as amended with the addition of a Community Grant Request, and 10. k. Sympathy Basket for Volunteer Member of our Organization.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Presentation – Astrotourism/Light Pollution

Tim Doucette and David Sollows were present to give a presentation on Light Pollution and the importance of Protecting Our Dark Skies. Since 2014, the Starlight Foundation, supported by UNESCO, has been working to preserve dark skies. The Municipalities of Argyle, Clare, and Yarmouth are home to the first dark sky areas in North America and the fourth in the world to achieve this status. Currently, 80% of the world's population cannot see the Milky Way due to light and air pollution. Additionally, 65% of visitors to dark sky locations have never seen the Milky Way. The Town of Yarmouth, the Municipality of Clare, and the Municipality of Argyle need to develop a plan to continue supporting this effort. A representative from this Council is needed to join the Starlight Society. For more information, visit the website: <http://novascotiastarlight.com>.

After questions from Council, CAO Muise provided an update on the draft Light Pollution Bylaw, with expected completion by May 2025.

5. Approval of Minutes

a. February 27, 2025 – Executive Council Meeting Minutes



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By consensus, the February 27, 2025 – Executive Council Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

6. Recognizing Argyle – Council Announcements

Councillor Kathy Bourque congratulated Cassie Amirault on receiving the King Charles Coronation Medal.

Councillor Glenn Diggdon thanked Gordon Amiro as he has stepped down after 25 years as Fire Chief for the West Pubnico Fire Department, congratulations to Devin d'Entremont who has taken over the Chief position. Thank you to Gordon d'Eon who has retired from the West Pubnico Fire Department after 60 years. Congratulations to Ingrid d'Eon on becoming the new president of Conseil Acadien de Par-en-Bas.

Councillor Malcolm Madden acknowledged and congratulated Denise Babin for receiving the King Charles Coronation Medal. This is awarded to residents from Digby and Yarmouth for their contribution to their communities, Denise has been a member of the CSAP School Board since 2020 and has dedicated her time to Smiles for Canada.

Councillor Gordon Boudreau wished the staff and teachers good luck at the new Wedgeport School.

Deputy Warden Saulnier congratulated John Gratton from West Pubnico and Yolande Donaldson from Quinan on receiving the King Charles Coronation Medal. Thank you to Keir Anthony who took it upon himself to give free sand to anybody who wanted it to put on their driveways during the icy winter. Congratulations were extended to the volunteers, Mike and Mona Scott, as Plymouth Hall is now open for business.

7. Warden's Report

The Warden's Report was attached to the agenda, there were no questions on the report.

8. Committee Reports

Councillor Kathy Bourque provided an update on the Nakile Board meeting. They are currently raising funds for a new bus for Nakile, having raised \$13,000 so far with a goal of \$200,000. A website has been created that includes all the details, along with an interesting story about the bus.

Councillor Darryl LeBlanc reported on several committees. The airport has recently completed a large SWOT analysis, and the board has reviewed the main recommendations and ranked them. There are great opportunities ahead for the airport, and a dedicated team is working hard to move things forward.

Regarding the Mariners Centre, the search for a new Chief Executive Officer is underway. The board members are highly dedicated, knowledgeable, and confident that things will move in the right direction.

On the topic of YASTA, congratulations were offered on their relocation to a new space across the street. They are preparing for the upcoming tourist season. While it's not yet clear how tourism will be this year, the current exchange rate offers hope for a positive season.

10. For Decision and Discussion

a. Article C50 - Council Procedural Policy

It is MOVED by Deputy Warden Saulnier and SECONDED by Councillor Racheal Surette to approve the amendments made to Article C50 – Council Procedural Policy.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

b. Article C6 - Public Presentation

It is MOVED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc and SECONDED by to approve the amendments made to Article C6 – Public Presentation.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

c. NEW Article C55 - Internal Controls Policy

It is MOVED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc and SECONDED by Deputy Warden Saulnier to approve the new Article C55 - Internal Controls Policy.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

d. NEW Article C56 - Credit Card Policy

It is MOVED by Councillor Glenn Diggdon and SECONDED by Councillor Bourque to approve the new Article C56 – Credit Card Policy.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

e. ADA - Councillor Malcolm Madden

Councillor Malcolm Madden began by addressing the council, stating that he was speaking as a resident of Argyle, not as a councillor. He mentioned his background, including being a business owner in Eel Brook and serving as a Councillor from 2008 to 2012. His purpose in sharing this information was to demonstrate his long-standing interest in the community and the municipality. He has been in regular contact with local oyster farmers, who have expressed interest in expanding their businesses.

Councillor Madden shared that he attended a municipal meeting at the SAR club and recalled asking Warden Danny Muise about the municipality's involvement in the agricultural movement. He noted that Warden Danny Muise had said it would benefit the municipality's growth but mentioned that no financial investments were being made by the municipality. Councillor Madden expressed confusion over the municipality's involvement in agriculture, as it did not align with how the municipality generates revenue.



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As a current council member, Councillor Madden emphasized that council members have access to more information than the public and trust that the information received is accurate. After reviewing the detailed 93-page local engagement report, he feels that while DFA and other interested parties may agree with the council's approach, the public still remained largely uninformed about ADA.

He addressed the council's engagement efforts, specifically focusing on the "popup" sessions mentioned on page 11 of the engagement report. He expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of passing information in retail establishments. He also noted that he would not engage in a debate at that moment due to a lack of sufficient information.

Councillor Madden shared that, as a business owner in the area, he only received information about Nova Scotia tourism attractions provided by oyster farmers, but no information on ADA. He then referred to page 15 of the engagement report, which mentions an open house held at Glenwood Hall. While the report stated that the location was central and convenient, Madden disagreed with this explanation. He noted that the open house photos on page 16 of the report showed empty rooms, questioning the success of the events. He also pointed out that there were no signup sheets available to track who attended these open houses, raising concerns about the accuracy of attendance records.

Councillor Madden expressed that, despite his involvement with oyster farmers, he still could not see a benefit to taxpayers from the expansion of aquaculture farming. He noted that the subject is most relevant to residents of Eel Brook, SAR, Rocco Point, and Abrams River, with some residents from District 6 (Central Argyle, Robert's Island) also approaching him with concerns. He spoke with a seaweed harvester in Rocco Point who reported no outreach about aquaculture expansion, and some swimmers from Abrams River expressed concerns about contaminated waters. Additionally, he mentioned speaking to pleasure boaters who were approached by an oyster farmer asking them to cancel an event involving boats from outside areas, citing concerns about invasive species.

Councillor Madden mentioned that his first few weeks were busy with new councillor orientation and meetings with department heads. At one point, he asked for an orientation on ADA, and it was conveyed that the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DFA) would present to the new council at a future meeting. During that meeting, it was revealed that six sites were under review and that the council would be informed once the successful bidders were known.

While listening to the DFA presentation, Councillor Madden heard that only a few residents were opposed to the ADA proposal. However, he disagreed, emphasizing that the reason he was in office was due to the discontent of these residents. One notable incident was when he raised concerns with DFO about the swimmers from Abrams River, who were experiencing irritation after swimming. Despite their concerns, no action was yet taken to test the water, and they were told they would need to do it themselves. Councillor Madden pointed out that the municipality had conducted water testing for agriculture businesses in the area, making him believe that DFO was aware of the issue.

Councillor Madden expressed his belief that proper consultation had not been conducted with residents most affected by the proposed business park at sea, and he criticized the limited advertising and information about the open houses. He mentioned that only after the establishment of the Association



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for Responsible Agriculture (ARA) did the municipality seem to engage in "damage control," with various efforts to distribute information.

Councillor Madden referenced a presentation he attended during his orientation in Halifax, where the former Mayor of HRM, the Honorable John Savage, emphasized that changing one's mind is not an admission of making a wrong decision. He acknowledged that, as an elected representative of over 300 residents, his role was to voice their concerns.

He concluded by suggesting that a pilot project should benefit all residents, citing the example of a walk-in medical clinic in Tusket as a potential project that could help many people. Councillor Madden reiterated that he believed the engagement report was inadequate and did not reflect the concerns of the residents.

Councillor Madden proposed to make a motion that we send a letter to DFA asking them to pause awarding leases to all 53 sites until proper public consultation is completed.

The motion did not receive a seconder. As a result, the motion was not considered further.

A point of order was raised regarding the chair's potential conflict of interest with a motion, and the member of the gallery questioned whether the chair should step away. The chair explained that it was the responsibility of council members to declare any conflicts of interest, she had sought independent legal advice, confirming there was no conflict.

The issue of whether a point of order could be raised by someone outside of council was also discussed. The solicitor for the municipality clarified that the decision on points of order rests with the chair, and an appeal of that decision is not appropriate in this context. The meeting continued, with no seconder for the motion having been obtained.

f. Letter to Mayors, Wardens, CAOs - Setback Regulations

There have been new regulations made regarding setbacks for Wind Turbines to cut back some of the setbacks, additionally the amendments stipulate that visual impact or aesthetic appearance of a wind turbine development is not a matter that Council can consider prior to approval.

The distance of the proposed Wedgeport windmills cannot be changed.

g. REMO - CRPP Funding Application Update

It is MOVED by Councillor Gordon Boudreau and SECONDED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc to make the following resolution:

Whereas the Municipality of Argyle has the following interests:

- *To create a world-class, dynamic Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Assessment using cutting-edge technology, and;*
- *To create a prioritized, risk-based climate adaptation plan that reflects the unique characteristics of our municipality, and;*



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- *To ensure that the diversity of our people, our economy, our culture, and our environment are protected through risk-informed planning, operations, and emergency management, and;*
- *To complete the above with no capital nor ongoing costs, and to do so in a manner that enables discretionary sharing with other municipalities so as to explore common experiences and adaptation opportunities that build tomorrow's resilience, today.*

Whereas, the Municipality of Argyle seeks to undertake "A Climate Risk Assessment and Prioritized Adaptation Plan for The Municipality of Argyle" in coordination with thirteen other municipalities across Nova Scotia and Newfoundland & Labrador, all of whom are partnering with McAllister & Craig Disaster Management for highly technical project elements and technical expertise.

Be it resolved that the Municipality of Argyle directs staff to apply for a funding opportunity from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Local Leadership for Climate Adaptation initiative for A Climate Risk Assessment and Prioritized Adaptation Plan for the Municipality of Argyle.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

h. Review of Accessibility and Equity & Anti-Racism Plans

Director of Recreation Services, Natalie d'Entremont gave a brief presentation of the Accessibility and Anti-Racism plans.

It is MOVED by Councillor Racheal Surette and SECONDED by Deputy Warden Ted Saulnier to approve the Accessibility Plan for 2025-2028.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Racheal Surette to approve the Equity and Anti-Racism Plan for 2025-2028.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

i. Flooding – Highway 308 & 3 – Councillor Malcolm Madden

Councillor Malcolm Madden raised an issue regarding the flooding on Highway 308 and 3. The flooding may in fact be due to water issues on private property.

It is MOVED by Councillor Malcolm Madden and SECONDED by Councillor Greg Foster to ask staff to investigate the flooding on Highway 308 and 3 and report back to Council.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

j. Article C39 - Community Litter

It is MOVED by Councillor Greg Foster and SECONDED by Councillor Gordon Boudreau to approve the amendments made to Article C39 – Community Litter.



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MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

k. Sympathy Basket for Volunteer Member of our Organization

It is MOVED by Deputy Warden Ted Saulnier and SECONDED by Councillor Kathy Bourque to send a Sympathy Card from Council and Staff, and a token of Sympathy of up to \$150.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

11. For Correspondence and Information

a. Letter from Minister Smith RE: Argyle Aquaculture Development Area (ADA) Update

Council has received correspondence from Minister Kent Smith of Fisheries and Aquaculture giving an update on the Aquaculture Development Area. The letter was read to Council by the Warden as it related to the ADA item previously discussed.

12. Financial Requests

a. Council Community Grant Requests - District 9

It is MOVED by Councillor Racheal Surette and SECONDED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc to approve the District 9 Community Grant Requests in the amount of \$700 for:

- Friends of TNR
- Comité des Aînées et Aînés de la région d'Argyle
- West Pubnico Golf Association
- Voix de la Mer Normandie

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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

14. Question Period

Chris Thibedeau, a local resident of Argyle with experience in government policy and technology, addressed the council about concerns related to the aquaculture expansion program (ADA). He highlighted several issues, including a lack of public consultation, conflicts of interest, and unfair advantages given to certain oyster farmers, particularly the d'Eon family, due to insider access and privileged information. Thibedeau stated that the municipality and the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture allowed the d'Eon family to influence ADA decisions and locations, claiming it amounted to bid rigging, which is a criminal offense in Canada. He stated that the ADA program's rollout was biased, with significant public consultation failures, and called for a redo of consultations on all 53 locations, not just a select few. Thibedeau emphasized that his goal wasn't to end the ADA program, but to ensure fairness and balance, with all stakeholders; lobster fishermen, rockweed harvesters, and the tourism industry being properly consulted. He expressed frustration that his request to send a letter to DFA to initiate a redo of the consultations was not seconded, leaving the issue unresolved. He warned that if these issues were not addressed, public trust in the ADA program would collapse, potentially leading to external investigations, going to the press, or further audits.



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Mike Scott, a lifelong resident of Plymouth in District 2, addressed the council regarding concerns about the public consultation process for the ADA aquaculture expansion. He expressed frustration that the consultation focused only on Lobster Bay and Pubnico Harbor, while other areas, like the Tusket River, were excluded despite being part of the initial proposal to Fisheries and Oceans. He criticized the lack of communication from elected officials to the public about these developments, noting that community meetings did not mention oyster sites in the Tusket River, even though he actively participates in local committees. Mike Scott was also disturbed by evidence from Freedom of Information requests showing that professional facilitators were hired to direct the public consultation meetings. He found it troubling that these facilitators, potentially hired by the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia, could manipulate the conversation and avoid listening to residents' concerns. Additionally, there were reports that the association requested RCMP contact information in case the meetings became contentious, which he felt was inappropriate. He emphasized that the public's voice should be heard directly, without manipulation or interference, and he expressed disappointment in the council for not ensuring this.

Kerri Lawson, a resident with deep ties to Argyle and a background in mental health, shared her concerns about the potential impact of new fish farms in the Tusket River. She highlighted her family's long history in the area. Lawson has spent the last 35 years working with youth and individuals struggling with mental health issues, using nature, particularly the Tusket River, to connect people to the environment. She expressed disappointment upon learning that fish farms, which she has sailed around in Argyle, may expand into the Tusket River, a place she uses for mental health retreats and community activities, connecting people with nature. She expressed frustration at not being able to get clear information on how these oyster farms might affect her work and the community. Lawson called for more transparency and respect for her concerns, particularly regarding the effect of the oyster farms on the nature-based activities she runs for youth and mental health.

Bruce Hancock, the Executive Director of Aquaculture for the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, explained the regulatory process for aquaculture in the region. He clarified that his department is responsible for issuing licenses and leases for aquaculture, and that decisions regarding these licenses ultimately rest with the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and not with the municipality. He also discussed the differences between the conventional licensing process and the Aquaculture Development Area (ADA) pilot project, emphasizing that the ADA was focused on proactively identifying potential sites for aquaculture, rather than telling farmers which specific sites should be used. Hancock highlighted that the ADA process involved consultation with various government agencies and stakeholders, and that the 53 identified sites were simply potential areas for aquaculture, not approved locations. He explained that once applications are made for these sites, there will be a 30-day public comment period before decisions are made. He addressed concerns about conflicts of interest, asserting that the process was transparent and in line with regulatory procedures. Hancock also responded to criticisms about communication, stating that while there were no changes to the previously made commitments, efforts would be made to improve engagement and transparency in the future. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of ongoing dialogue to ensure the process benefits both the community and the aquaculture industry.



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Mike Scott quoted a comment from a resident in PEI, which he came across through research by Dalhousie on the aquaculture industry. The resident had initially thought sharing waters with the aquaculture industry was a good idea. However, over time, she became frustrated, expressing that there was no longer any "sharing" but rather a one-sided approach where the industry simply took over. She criticized the lack of consultation and how the oyster farms were spread without proper community engagement. This led her to state, "We now have no trust for the oyster industry or the government,"

CAO Muise clarified a couple of points during the discussion. First, he explained the role of WSP, a firm hired to assist with public engagement at open houses in Glenwood and Tusket, among other activities. He clarified that WSP's involvement was not solely for public consultation but for broader engagement efforts. He also addressed a reference by a resident relating to potential RCMP involvement. Muise clarified that any reference to the RCMP was made by staff of the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia and not the municipality. The association organized an open house for potential sea farmers to which we attended, but did not organize. There was no RCMP discussion related to any municipally hosted public meetings. The CAO wished to remind Council and residents that in 2024, a motion was passed by the previous council to request a pause on 47 aquaculture sites that had not yet been called by the province. This motion was approved by the province. He emphasized that the province acknowledged ongoing community concerns and agreed to pause any further site calls until those concerns were addressed.

15. In-Camera

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Darryl LeBlanc to move to the in-camera session at 9:17 p.m.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- a. **Section 22:2 (g) - Legal Matters**
- b. **Section 22:2 (c) - Personnel Matters**

Consensus to come out of the in-camera session at 10:32 p.m.

It is MOVED by Councillor Kathy Bourque and SECONDED by Councillor Racheal Surette to approve \$32,541.77 for the Mariners Center operations as per the In-Camera Discussion Section 22:2 (g) Legal Matters.

16. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:33 p.m.



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Date Approved

Chair

Clerk/Recorder

DRAFT