

TOWN OF LUNENBURG  
**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES**

January 7, 2025 | 6 pm

Lunenburg Town Hall – Council Chamber and virtually through Zoom

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Present Mayor Jamie Myra, Deputy Mayor Rachel Bailey, Councillors Renea Babineau, Debbie Dauphinee, Gale Fullerton, Alex Greek and Alison Strachan

Also present Hilary Grant, Interim CAO  
Tyson Joyce, Director of Public Works  
Marc Kiely, Interim Director of Community Development  
Kayla Byrne, Legislative & Policy Manager

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

Land acknowledgment It was acknowledged that Lunenburg is located in the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Approval of Agenda Moved by Councillor Strachan, seconded by Councillor Greek, that Council approve the agenda for the January 7, 2025 meeting as presented.

**Motion carried unanimously**

The Committee discussed the Lunenburg Daycare Center's request for town-owned land for its proposed new facility. Committee members expressed general support for the project and emphasized the importance of selecting a site that balances community needs with practical considerations.

Discussion points included:

- Floodplain Risks: Concerns were raised about potential flood risks for some proposed sites, particularly the Blue Building site. Members highlighted the need to review past reports and explore mitigation strategies.
- Parking and Accessibility: The adequacy of parking for daycare staff and visitors was discussed, with members noting the importance of reviewing the draft parking study for potential

solutions.

- **Site Feasibility and Preference:** The Blue Building site emerged as the preferred option due to its proximity to recreation facilities and existing services, despite concerns about its current use by Public Works.
- **Public Works Relocation Projections:** The Committee stressed the need for a detailed projection of what it would involve to relocate the functions currently housed in the Blue Building. This includes identifying alternative locations for storage, the carpentry shop, and other operations, as well as the associated costs, timelines, and feasibility. Members expressed interest in exploring temporary and long-term relocation options, noting that any solution must minimize disruption to town operations.
- **Urgency of Decision-Making:** Members acknowledged the tight timeline for securing funding and meeting project deadlines, stressing the importance of having clear recommendations and preliminary cost estimates by the January 14, 2025, Council meeting.

The Committee invited representatives from the Lunenburg Daycare to provide input on the matter. The daycare representative emphasized that the facility would serve not only the Town of Lunenburg but also surrounding communities, where daycare options are limited. They noted that the daycare's waitlist of over 220 children reflects growing demand driven by population increases and more accessible daycare fees. The representative clarified that the daycare is open to various locations for the facility, provided the site is serviceable and functional, though walkability is a preference. They also answered questions from the Committee regarding staffing, parking needs, and the facility's capacity, explaining that the proposed facility would accommodate after-school and summer programs in addition to childcare.

Moved by Councillor Babineau, seconded by Councillor Fullerton, that Committee of the Whole direct staff to prepare a report for Council's January 14, 2025, meeting, incorporating the Committee's direction on the Lunenburg Daycare Centre's request for Town-owned land and

potential partnership opportunities, including the preferred site option of the Blue Building.

**Motion carried unanimously**

Recess

The Mayor called a recess from 6:55 p.m. until 7:04 p.m.

The Committee discussed the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) report, focusing on its purpose, restrictions, and implementation. Members sought clarification on eligible expenses and noted that HAF funding could be used for infrastructure upgrades, such as water, sewer, and community assets that support housing growth. The Committee recognized the importance of meeting all six initiatives outlined in the application to secure the full grant but appreciated that failing to meet the target of 135 housing units by 2027 would only result in the loss of the final installment rather than requiring repayment of funds already received.

Housing  
Accelerator Fund

Concerns were raised about the Town's infrastructure challenges and their potential impact on realizing housing development. Members emphasized the need to prioritize infrastructure improvements to support growth and ensure the feasibility of incentivized development projects. The Committee highlighted the importance of balancing housing incentives, such as tax breaks, with the Town's capacity to deliver necessary services to new developments.

Members also discussed affordability metrics, expressing a preference for using 30% of median renter income as a more reasonable basis for defining affordable housing.

Affordable  
Housing Tax  
Forgiveness  
Program

The Committee discussed the proposed Affordable Housing Tax Forgiveness Program, focusing on its potential benefits, implementation challenges, and the need for clear parameters.

Discussion points included:

- **Affordability Definition:** Some members suggested that the Town establish its own affordability thresholds, as even the lower threshold of \$1,085 per month based on renter income may still be burdensome for many residents.

- **Tax Forgiveness Concerns:** While some expressed reservations about providing tax incentives to for-profit developers, others viewed the three-year tax break as a practical incentive to stimulate affordable housing development without directly impacting the Town's current tax revenue.
- **Pilot Project Approach:** The idea of launching the program as a pilot project was favoured to evaluate its effectiveness and determine whether it achieves its intended goals.
- **Tenant Protections:** The Committee discussed the importance of tying the affordability requirement to specific units rather than tenants to ensure that rents remain affordable throughout the tax forgiveness period, regardless of tenant turnover.
- **Program Scope and Duration:** Members debated whether the program should be limited to new builds or include renovations and conversions of existing properties, with some advocating for broader eligibility to maximize affordable housing development.
- **Administrative Considerations:** Concerns were raised about the administrative burden of overseeing the program. Suggestions included exploring best practices from other municipalities and potentially leveraging external systems like the Residential Tenancies Board to streamline compliance monitoring.
- **Expanded Tax Base Benefits:** Members expressed interest in understanding the potential long-term financial benefits of an expanded tax base after the tax forgiveness period ends.

Moved by Councillor Strachan, seconded by Councillor Babineau, that Committee of the Whole direct staff to develop a draft Affordable Housing Tax Forgiveness Program based on the Committee's feedback, and present the draft program for Council's consideration.

**Motion carried unanimously**

MPS Amendment: The Committee discussed proposed amendments to the Municipal  
DAs for Town Planning Strategy (MPS) to allow development agreements on Town-  
Lands owned lands. These amendments are part of the Housing Accelerator

Fund initiatives and aim to ensure enforceable development rules, particularly for the lower slopes of Blockhouse Hill, which were declared surplus.

Discussion points included:

- **Broadening the Scope:** Members debated whether to expand the proposed amendments to allow development agreements for all lands throughout the Town, not just Town-owned properties. There was general agreement that a broader policy could address various development concerns, such as parking and short-term rentals.
- **Parking Requirements:** Concerns were raised about the 2021 changes to the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) that removed off-street parking requirements for new developments. Members suggested reinstating parking requirements, citing practical challenges for a rural town.
- **Short-Term Rentals:** Members discussed the impact of short-term rentals on housing availability and community dynamics. There was strong support for developing a policy to regulate non-occupied short-term rentals, with suggestions to tax them commercially.
- **Need for Development Agreements:** The Committee emphasized the importance of using development agreements to maintain control over the use of Town-owned lands, ensuring that new developments align with community goals and avoid unintended consequences, such as the proliferation of short-term rentals.
- **Efficiency of the Amendment Process:** Members supported streamlining the MPS amendment process by incorporating multiple potential amendments during the same public engagement timeline, maximizing efficiency while addressing broader community planning concerns.

Motion by Councillor Strachan, seconded by Councillor Fullerton, that Committee of the Whole refer the proposed amendments to the

Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS), as outlined in Attachment A, to Council for consideration, enabling the use of development agreements on lands throughout the Town.

**Motion carried unanimously**

Affordable  
Housing Grant  
Program Policy

The Committee discussed the development of a policy for an Affordable Housing Grant Program, which is part of the Town's Housing Accelerator Fund initiatives. Staff clarified that an internal report on the program is due by February 2025, with a final policy to be approved by February 2026.

Discussion points included:

- The importance of clear affordability criteria, with some questioning whether the 30% of renters' median income threshold was still too high.
- The need to evaluate the track record and experience of developers applying for grants.
- Suggestions to explore alternative affordability definitions, including consulting examples from other municipalities or organizations like the South Shore Housing Action Coalition.

Moved by Councillor Fullerton, seconded by Councillor Strachan, that Committee of the Whole direct staff to prepare a draft policy for an Affordable Housing Grant Program for Council's consideration.

**Motion carried unanimously**

Accessible  
Housing Incentive  
Policy

The Committee discussed the proposed Accessible Housing Incentive Policy, which is part of the Housing Accelerator Fund initiatives. Staff presented a framework focused on waiving hookup and subdivision fees for new accessible dwelling units.

Discussion points included:

- Definition and Eligibility: Council sought clarification on whether the policy applies only to new builds or also to retrofitting existing housing units. Staff clarified that it is currently aimed at new builds, aligning with the Housing Accelerator Fund's focus

on creating new units.

- **Multi-Unit Housing Encouragement:** Councillors expressed a preference for the policy to prioritize multi-unit developments, recognizing the potential for greater community impact.
- **Pilot Project Approach:** There was consensus that the policy could be implemented as a pilot project to evaluate its effectiveness and refine the framework based on real-world outcomes.
- **Compliance and Verification:** Councillors emphasized the importance of robust compliance measures to ensure developers meet accessibility standards before receiving incentives.

The Committee invited a member of the gallery, Jennifer Corson, a local architect and developer, to speak on the matter. She emphasized the importance of aligning the Town's policy with existing CMHC Affordable Housing Fund criteria for affordability, accessibility, and energy efficiency. Corson highlighted the need for accurate local rental rate data to support developers in meeting CMHC's affordability thresholds and stressed that leveraging existing standards would streamline processes and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Moved by Councillor Fullerton, seconded by Councillor Babineau, that Committee of the Whole direct staff to prepare a draft Accessible Housing Incentive Policy for Council's consideration.

**Motion carried unanimously**

Revised Street  
Services Extension  
Policy &

The Committee discussed the Street Services Extension Policy, which was brought forward as a current policy for updates and revision to better support cost-sharing for infrastructure extensions. Staff clarified that the policy aims to make development projects more financially feasible and aligns with the Housing Accelerator Fund, enabling funding for infrastructure extensions through this program.

Motion by Councillor Strachan, seconded by Councillor Greek that Committee of the Whole direct staff to refine the Street Services Extension Policy based on the Committee's discussion and bring a

revised draft to Council for consideration.

**Motion carried unanimously**

Adjournment

There being no further business, the January 7, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

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The minutes were read and approved.