

**Minutes of a Regular Meeting of Amherst Town Council
Held in Council Chambers
Monday, January 23, 2006 at 6:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor David March
Councillor Robert Angel
Councillor George Baker
Councillor Ed Chitty
Councillor Dale Fawthrop
Greg Herrett, Chief Administrative Officer
Rebecca Purdy, Executive Assistant

REGRETS: Mayor Jerry Hallee
Councillor Terry Rhindress

1. O'CANADA

2. DELEGATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

1) Amherst Curling Club

Rick Douglas, representing the Amherst Curling Club, made the following presentation to Council:

"I hope you have all had an opportunity to read our 2 recent letters, and I appreciate this chance to speak on behalf of the Amherst Curling Club regarding our request for financial assistance.

"The club has gone through good times and bad since its latest incarnation in the building we now occupy, which was built in 1950. Those of you who have lived in Amherst most of your lives will no doubt be well aware that the club has been hanging on financially, just barely, for a long, long time, only because a huge amount of money has been donated by the members, particularly in the last ten years, in addition to paying their yearly memberships. Creating large amounts of savings for future development, in capital improvements account, has simply been beyond the capability of the club and I have reviewed the records going back a long way.

"In the last few years the rising cost of essential services like electricity, fuel and water, as well as the technology and technologists required to make good curling ice, has far outstripped the general cost of living, which has been used as an index for membership dues increases. Since 1985 the cost of operating the club has increased every year no matter how hard we tried to keep expenses under control. It has reached a point this year where it has only been through the good graces of our suppliers and creditors, who did not press us over the summer, which allowed us to start up the club and pay very old bills out of this year's membership dues. The membership drive is over and has fallen at least \$10,000 short of expectations. That would lead us to believe that the club expenditures will be \$20,000 over revenues, because we spent \$10,000 on equipment repairs to get going last fall ... which we certainly did not expect.

"Even more worrisome is our Engineering Study which predicts that we will have tens of thousands of dollars of infrastructure repairs to carry out in the next five years to keep us operating, and in a safe building, including a new ice-making compressor at \$25,000+, a new furnace and maybe natural gas at \$15,000+ as well as a new roof on the ice shed, costing \$15,000+ as well as much needed electrical, plumbing and other critical upgrades.

"We have an absolutely full event calendar, virtually every day from now 'till closing on the first weekend in April is booked. This was just like the previous year when it cost us \$20,000 more to operate the club that we managed to generate, even though we ran a large number of events over the summer too, trying to make up for the previous year's shortfall.

"We have come to the conclusion though that curling, which is now recognized as an Olympic Sport, can grow in popularity. The Amherst Curling Club is the site of at least three fundraising events each year supporting local charities, as well as hosting Provincial Curling competitions, like the Senior Men's Regional Play-downs that just completed on Sunday. We also recently hosted an event as part of the Scottish Ladies Tour of the Maritimes. All those events put money into the local economy.

"Curling is a recreational activity that can be participated in by women and men, boys and girls, on an equal footing throughout their lives. We know this is true because we have representatives from across that spectrum as members of the club today. Even more

interesting is the fact that we have at least eight members of the club who are actively curling who are over 80.

“For many, many years now, and for the last 55 in our current building, curling has been part of the winter scene in Amherst. Curling is a sport that the increasing number of retirees who make Amherst home can participate in for a reasonable yearly fee. At the other end of the spectrum we run an active, reasonably priced Junior Program to introduce our youth to the game.

“Don’t let this facility fade away and die like the rinks in Parrsboro, Springhill and Oxford have in the recent past. We are the only curling rink left in Cumberland County that offers a full curling season long schedule, October to April, as well as host Provincial competitions. River Hebert, the only other rink in Cumberland County, operates only part of the season.

“The Amherst Curling Club has come to you for help, just like you have turned to the County for assistance with the Stadium, because we have a hard working group of members who feel that curling should be preserved for Amherst and all of Cumberland County. We are asking that you help financially, and in any other way that will keep the tradition of curling going. Whether it is in the current curling rink, or in a new recreational facility that benefits the whole county with a wide range of activities, curling should continue. We have the rather ironic situation where the operating costs of the new rink in Springhill are much higher than revenues, Amherst Stadium is in the same boat and looking for help, and the Curling Rink is stumbling and looking for help too, after Parrsboro, Springhill and Oxford curling clubs have already gone under. In the middle of all this there is a group of people in Pugwash, preparing to try and build a new curling rink there. Don’t pass on this opportunity to preserve the curling tradition here in Amherst, please consider providing financial support to the Amherst Curling Club.”

Members of Council had an opportunity to ask Mr. Douglas some questions regarding his presentation and the Curling Club’s operations. He advised that he will be approaching the County of Cumberland with the same request.

2. CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Mayor March called the meeting to order at 6:15 P.M.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Additions to the Agenda

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Councillor George Baker, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that the Agenda be adopted as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED

3. Approval of Minutes

Moved by Councillor George Baker, seconded by Councillor Robert Angel that the Minutes of the December 19, 2005 Regular Meeting be approved as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED

4. Amherst Stadium Project

Moved by Councillor Dale Fawthrop, seconded by Councillor George Baker that Council authorize staff to apply for funding support from the Province of Nova Scotia under the Recreation Facility Development Program in the amount of \$1.2 million, this amount representing approximately one third of the expected total project cost.

MOTION CARRIED

The following letter from Rennie Bugley, CAO for the Municipality of Cumberland, was read by Greg Herrett:

“Please be advised that Municipal Council discussed the partnership proposal/opportunity at its January 18, 2006 Committee of the Whole meeting.

“Council did not reach any clear consensus of opinion regarding this issue. As a result, council has referred the matter to its Long Range Planning process to be included in its deliberations regarding a County-wide recreation strategy.

“I am of the opinion that this strategy will not be developed for several months.

“Should you require any additional information, please contact us.”

Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Councillor Dale Fawthrop that staff be directed to prepare a report for Council on the costs of the proposed Stadium project, and the affect on the tax rate, keeping in mind the other projects Council has identified as priorities, and make a recommendation to Council based on what the Town can afford to spend on this project, and on what possible funding sources there are.

MOTION CARRIED

5. Emergency Preparedness Plan

Moved by Councillor Robert Angel, seconded by Councillor George Baker that Council accept the revisions and adopt the Town of Amherst Emergency Preparedness Plan as presented, effective immediately.

MOTION CARRIED

6. Accounts Receivable Recommendation – Write Off of Uncollectible Accounts

Moved by Councillor George Baker, seconded by Councillor Dale Fathrop that Council accept the recommendation from Administration, and write off uncollectible accounts totaling \$46,738.11, having exhausted all reasonable collection efforts.

MOTION CARRIED

7. Salt Management Plan

Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Councillor Robert Angel that Council accept the recommendation from Administration and adopt the Salt Management Plan prepared for the Town by Jacques Whitford and Associates dated May 2005, to show the Town’s commitment to the effective management of road salt, such plan to include the following processes:

1. Identification of all current practices including a winter maintenance operations to form a benchmark against which progress can be measured;
2. Comparison of current practices with salt best management practices;
3. Setting objectives and targets to better manage the use of road salts through the implementation of best management practices;
4. Identification of measures to identify progress in the implementation of best management practices;
5. Monitoring progress through the tracking of these measures and comparing these measures to the baseline on an annual basis;
6. Identification of training needs of winter maintenance staff;
7. Annual review by senior management to confirm the objectives are being met;
8. Update of policies, procedures, and best management practices to be implemented the following winter maintenance season;
9. Reporting progress ins alt management to the Federal Minister of Environment on an annual basis.

MOTION CARRIED

8. Salt Management Policy

Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Councillor Dale Fawthrop that Council accept the recommendation from Administration to adopt a Salt Management Policy, to confirm the Town’s commitment to measurable improvements in our management of highway salt usage.

MOTION CARRIED

**TOWN OF AMHERST POLICY
TITLE: SALT MANAGEMENT POLICY**

NUMBER 230-15

BACKGROUND

The Town of Amherst is committed to measurable improvements in the management of its road salt, while continuing to provide effective winter maintenance for the safety of motorists and winter maintenance workers.

POLICY

The Town will demonstrate environmental responsibility by implementing and maintaining a Salt Management Plan (SMP) and associated best management practices, under a systematic framework.

To ensure the Town successfully meets its commitment, it will:

- Conduct operational activities in a manner that protects the environment and prevents or minimizes pollution;
- Continue to provide snow and ice control on Town streets so that public satisfaction levels and condition ratings are maintained;
- Address concerns raised by the federal government’s review of road salts and their effect on the environment;
- Comply with environmental legislation, relevant standards, and industry codes of practice that apply to the Town’s facilities and operations;
- Provide all winter maintenance personnel with appropriate training and resources so they are able to complete their assigned tasks in a manner that is consistent with the requirements of this Policy;
- Establish and track objectives and targets to verify effectiveness and identify opportunities for continual improvement of processes and operations;
- Monitor operations and implement appropriate corrective and/or preventive actions to improve performance;
- Communicate the requirement of this Policy and the Salt Management Plan to all employees.

9. First Reading, By-Law to Amend the Tax Exemption By-Law

Moved by Councillor Dale Fawthrop, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that Council accept the recommendation from Administration and approve First Reading of the By-Law to Amend the Tax Exemption By-Law by deleting and amending properties in Schedule D due to changes involving the sale of a property and a change of address.

MOTION CARRIED

Proposed Revised Schedule D to Tax Exemption By-Law, B-1:

Properties to be taxed under Section 71(2) of the Municipal Government Act on the percentage of the assessed value of taxable residential properties as is determined by Council from year to year to the extent set out in column four.

PROPERTY	OWNER	EXTENT OF APPLICATION	EXTENT OF EXEMPTION
Land & Building 20 Lawrence Street	Amherst Masonic Society	The Whole	100%
Land & Building 3 Robie Street	Cumberland Columbia Club	The Whole	100%
Vacant Land 4 – 6 Robie Street	Cumberland Columbia Club	The Whole	100%
Land & Building 189 Church Street	Pythian Castle Ltd.	The Whole	100%

Land and Building 5 Electric Street	Amherst Lions Club	The Whole	100%
Playground Hickman Street	Amherst Lions Club	The Whole	100%
Land & Building 45 Prince Arthur St	Amherst Curling Club	The Whole	100%
Board Room and Counselling Rooms Cumberland County Transition House 45 Russell Street	Cumberland County Transition House Association	The Whole of Commercial Portion	100%
Land & Building 234 Church Street	AME Church Trustees	The Whole	100% (Effective April 1, 2002)

5. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Traffic Lights Upgrade

Councillor Ed Chitty presented the following report on our progress in installing the upgrades to our traffic control lighting:

South Albion Street at A&W:

The new crosswalk lights and pedestrian buttons have been installed and the controller programmed to accept the lights and buttons. They have not been activated due to the fact that the necessary crosswalk markings and access areas for the buttons have not been installed. This work will be completed as soon as the weather permits.

It was determined during the carrying out of this work that the detector loop located in the driveway to the A&W was too large. Traffic entering the driveway was crossing the loop activating the traffic lights. This caused the lights to change to red on South Albion Street, halting traffic when there was nobody on the side streets. A new, smaller loop was installed to help alleviate this problem.

South Albion Street and Robert. Angus Drive:

The north and south bound lanes have had the traffic light heads upgraded to allow for dedicated left turns. This required the installation of a new pole at the Square One corner and the changeover of the primary, secondary and auxiliary heads located on South Albion Street. A new controller has been installed to allow for the needed programming change. New timings for the intersection were supplied by Atlantic Road and Traffic Management and installed.

Albion and Pleasant Streets:

Traffic detector loops were installed at all traffic lanes for this intersection. As well, the existing pedestrian buttons have been reactivated. The detector loops have allowed us to change the programming of the traffic controller to allow Albion Street's to remain green until a vehicle enters the intersection on either East or West Pleasant Street. It will then change to green on the side streets to clear this traffic. In the future, when traffic warrants, a further change to allow a left turn arrow can be done. We have used the existing timings for this intersection and are awaiting new timings from Atlantic Road and Traffic Management. The new timings will reflect the amount of traffic entering the intersection from the side streets (East and West Pleasant Streets). The green will be long enough to clear the traffic, whether it be one car or six cars. Once these are received they will be programmed into the controller.

Church Street and East Victoria Street:

The existing cabinet at this intersection was struck and damaged last summer. The electronics inside the cabinet had become unreliable due to this. A new cabinet and controller have been installed with the usable parts from the old cabinet put in storage to be used in emergency cases only. The new controller has been ordered with the necessary wiring to allow for the addition of loops in the future. When the new controller was installed, the dedicated walk phase was eliminated. It is not common practice to have a dedicated walk phase. Unless pedestrian traffic is found to be excessive an added benefit is that motorists are longer delayed while the dedicated walk phase is executed, often at times when there is no pedestrian traffic. With the new configuration this intersection is now consistent with the intersection of Havelock Street and East Victoria Street.

2. **VON**

Councillor George Baker thanked Council for appointing him to the VON Board of Directors, and provided a brief verbal report on the many programs they offer, including: Visiting Nursing Program (the Parrisboro Lions Club assisted in purchasing a new car for this program); Flu Clinic; Home Support Program; Meals on Wheels, Foot Care Clinics; Senior Check-In Program; and Vial for Life.

6. **DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES**

1. **Planning and Development Department**

Moved by Councillor George Baker, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that Council accept the following Planning and Development Department Report:

Building Activity

As of December 31, 2005 the total value of building permits issued in the Town was \$5,120,630 compared to \$8,560,010 last year. During the lat month one significant permit issued for a commercial alteration.

Dangerous and Unsightly Premises

As usual, the unsightly premises issues slow down in winter, and as such there was only one new complaint received in December. Staff are in the process of developing a new Dangerous and Unsightly policy, which we hope to have in place for next season. So far this year, we have had 69 complaints, 67 of which have been resolved. There have been 10 orders issued to properties. Only one order remains outstanding, however work is currently progressing on that property.

Staff Training

Both Tim LeFurgey and Monty Maddison will be attending a National Construction Codes seminar in January which will explain the technical changes to the new National Building Code.

School Divestiture

R. B. Dickey Elementary School has been sold to Callaghan and Weatherbee Land Developments Limited. They have agreed to remove the school this winter and construct a 17 lot residential subdivision on the property this summer. The name of the subdivision will be (Henry) Ketchum Corner, honouring a local engineer who attempted to construct the Chignecto Ship Railway. We will continue to work with the potential purchaser of St. Charles Elementary School.

Other Units

Staff continue to support the efforts of the Town of Oxford Affordable Housing committee. As well, we are in the process of reviewing the Town of Parrisboro Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law.

MOTION CARRIED

2. **Corporate Services Department**

Since Deputy Mayor March was chairing the meeting, the Corporate Services Report was presented by Councillor Dale Fawthrop.

Moved by Councillor Dale Fawthrop, seconded by Councillor George Baker that Council accept the following Corporate Services Department report:

MONTHLY EXPENDITURES

Expenditures during the month of December 2005 totaled \$1,090,042 compared to \$1,247,986 for the same month last year.

YEARLY OPERATING STATEMENT

As of December 31, 2005 we are 9 months into our fiscal year. Our total revenue to date is \$11,755,921 compared to the budgeted amount of \$11,800,503. Our total expenditures to date are \$9,060,119 compared to the budgeted amount of \$9,627,375.

COLLECTIONS

Total amount owing to the Town at the end of December 2005 was \$1,302,866. During the month of December 2005 we collected \$477,070.

MOTION CARRIED

3. Operational Services Department

Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Councillor Dale Fawthrop that Council accept the following Operational Services Department report:

In late December we made our application for a water rate increase to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. They will hold a public hearing here on Tuesday, March 7 between 11:00a.m. and 3:00 p.m. for the purpose of receiving public input regarding our request to increase water rates.

To enhance the Town's ability to plan capital expenditures and manage our assets, Operational Services and Planning Staff are in the process of developing criteria to be used in ranking the need for capital replacement for streets, sidewalks, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, water systems, equipment, vehicles, buildings and land.

The main purpose of this planning exercise is to produce a capital planning tool to assist Council in developing and updating a five year capital budget.

Secondary benefits include:

1. the ability to have current inventory of our assets, and
2. the ability to track maintenance activities and project maintenance needs for our municipal infrastructure.

Our staff are working on using salt brine to pre-wet the highway salt before it is distributed to increase the effectiveness of the salt being used and allow us to fully utilize the salt spreader that was purchased in 2005 and ultimately reduce the amount of salt we use to meet our current levels of service.

Since October we have gradually raised our chlorine residual levels and selected more appropriate sampling sites to comply with Department of Environment requirements. It now appears that we can achieve the required chlorine residual levels with no further increase in chlorine dosage.

MOTION CARRIED

Councillor Chitty also reported that citizens have expressed concerns about the chlorine taste in the water, wanting the Town to stop chlorinating. He advised that Provincial regulations require us to chlorinate.

4. Police Department

Moved by Councillor Robert Angel, seconded by Councillor Terry Rhindress that Council accept the following Police Department report:

Criminal Intelligence Service of Nova Scotia - Infrastructure

Sgt. Lepper and Cst. Fenton began work in their new positions as Criminal Intelligence Officers for the Province of Nova Scotia on January 3rd 2006. In the following week they traveled to Halifax for three days of orientation, and were given their first assignment. A Memorandum of Understanding with CISNS is being reviewed, which will govern the conditions of their secondment to these positions.

Revised Police Act of Nova Scotia

The revised Police Act and regulations came into effect on January 1st 2006.

Police Commission Bylaw

Discussions were underway at the last meeting of the Amherst Board of Police Commissioners to review the roles of the members of police commission in view of the new Act and Regulations. A review of the current bylaw is ongoing.

Training

Two new members of the department received training in PROS on Prince Edward Island in late December. Cst. Murray successfully completed the supervisory portion of the PROS training in early January. Cst. Steven Maddison and Cst. Dwayne Pike have been approved to receive correspondence training from Dalhousie's Henson College Police Leadership program.

Digital Audio/Video Recording System

Our department has acquired a digital audio/video system in our building, replacing the outdated VHS system. This was purchased from Instructor Aids in Dartmouth after a tendering process.

Operation Christmas 2005

Approximately twenty check points were conducted over the holiday season by our members, in conjunction with Operation Christmas. During December, four individuals were charged with Impaired Driving, seven charges and three warnings were issued under the Motor Vehicle Act.

MOTION CARRIED

5. Fire Department

Moved by Councillor Terry Rhindress, seconded by Councillor Ed Chitty that Council accept the following Fire Department report:

ALARM RESPONSES:

From Dec.08/05 - Jan. 11/06, the members of our Fire Department responded to sixteen calls in the Town of Amherst and six calls to the County coverage area.

TRAINING AND FIRE DEPT. ACTIVITIES:

We have nineteen firefighters from several County Fire Departments and five members from the Amherst Fire Department, taking the level one Firefighter Training Program this year. The program was changed some this year to reflect the needs of all departments, and the training locations are move around to various departments to help reduce the travel costs. The training is very intense, but all firefighters are doing well. Registration for required courses related to the Level One Program, have been arranged with the Nova Scotia Fire School, and members will be traveling to Halifax, as those course dates come up.

FIRE PREVENTION and Emergency Preparedness:

As a major part of our fire prevention program, fire inspections are being carried out on apartment building, containing more than three apartments. To this point property owners have been very co-operative, resulting in many deficiencies being addressed, making these buildings safer for the people who are renting them, as well as reducing the risk of property loss due to a fire.

Training has been arranged for several people from various Town Departments, to better prepare them for their duties in the event of a major emergency. Two strategy meetings have taken place, between the Town of Amherst, Municipality of Cumberland, the Towns of Oxford, Springhill and Parrsboro, to cover pandemic influenza planning. These meeting are important, to ensure that a plan is in place to cover this type of emergency.

MOTION CARRIED

6. Community and Economic Development Department

Moved by Councillor Dale Fawthrop, seconded by Councillor George Baker that Council accept the following Community and Economic Development Department report:

Business Development

Construction continues on two commercial projects in Amherst: Amy's Used Books is building a new retail facility on South Albion Street and Stenek Corporation continues to work on their new operations and distribution facility in the Industrial Park. Also, IMP has forged a new partnership, which will result in an addition 40 new jobs in the next three to five years. Unfortunately, however, Co-op Basics has just announced it is closing.

Winter Fest 2006

The fifth Amherst Winter Fest program will be held from February 8 to 12. Information on this event has been forwarded to clubs and organizations in the community to encourage their participation. Winter Fest 2006 activities will be promoted through local media and we encourage residents to fully participate in this year's activities. For further information on Winter Fest of if you and your organization are interested in participating, please contact Dwight Jones at 667-6503.

Athletic Achievement Awards

The Town of Amherst will once again be hosting the Athletic Achievement Awards on February 8, 2006. These awards recognize individuals and teams who have accomplished a provincial or higher championship or honour during the past calendar year. We are currently asking for the assistance of the general public in obtaining information about any individual or team from the Town of Amherst who has accomplished such a distinction during 2005. These individuals and teams will be formally recognized by Mayor and Council on February 8 at the Fire Hall.

MOTION CARRIED

7. Other**i) Laidlaw Bus Drivers' Strike**

Moved by Councillor George Baker, seconded by Councillor Dale Fawthrop that Council instruct staff to prepare a letter to express concern over the effect of the school bus strike on our children, and that this letter be sent to: Laidlaw, CUPE local, Chignecto Central Regional School Board, and the Minister of Education.

MOTION CARRIED**ii) County of Cumberland/Stadium Project**

Moved by Councillor Ed Chitty, seconded by Councillor George Baker that Council send a letter to the Municipality of the County of Cumberland to acknowledge their letter (as read by Mr. Herrett this evening) and to express the Town's disappointment in the delay on their decision regarding partnering in the Amherst Stadium, but to welcome their participation in the future.

MOTION CARRIED**7. ADJOURNMENT**

On motion by Councillor Ed Chitty, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

APPROVED:

 Gregory D. Herrett, Clerk & CAO

 Jerry Hallee, Mayor

AGENDA

1.	O'CANADA
2.	DELEGATIONS – Amherst Curling Club
3.	CALL TO ORDER
4.	BUSINESS ITEMS
	1. Additions to Agenda 2. Approval of Agenda 3. Approval of Minutes – December 19, 2005 5. Amherst Stadium Project 6. Emergency Preparedness Plan 7. Accounts Receivable 8. Salt Management Plan 9. Salt Management Policy, proposed 10. First Reading, By-Law to Amend Tax Exemption By-law
5.	INFORMATION ITEMS
	1. Traffic Light Upgrades 2. VON Update (verbal report)
6.	DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS
	1. Planning and Development 2. Corporate Services 3. Operational Services 4. Police 5. Fire 6. Community and Economic Development
7.	ADJOURNMENT