



Region of Queens Municipality Citizens Advisory Committee

January 30th, 2026

Council Chambers

Minutes

Present:

Holly McConnell, Staff Liaison
Alex Wilson, Staff Representative
Velta Vikmanis
Kerry Morash
Tara Druzina, Vice Chair
Christopher Clarke, Chair
Pamela Brennan
Kate Wong, Recording Secretary

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. Adoption of Minutes

Moved by Velta Vikmanis, seconded by Kerry Morash;

THAT the Citizens Advisory Committee adopt the minutes from the January 23rd, 2026 meeting as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED, unanimously.

3. Municipal Comparisons and Time Commitment

3.1 Selection of Comparison Municipality

The Committee discussed available comparator municipalities and confirmed West Hants as the primary benchmark model, noting updated remuneration figures for the 2025/26 fiscal year referenced in Appendix 10 of the West Hants budget.

The Committee acknowledged that:

- West Hants has 11 councillors, while Queens has 7
- Budget size, population, and governance responsibilities are broadly comparable
- Updated West Hants remuneration figures should be used rather than older survey data

3.2 Mayoral Workload and Full-Time Equivalency

The Committee discussed expectations outlined in the Candidates' Guide, noting that while some duties are described as discretionary ("you may be asked to attend"), public expectation and effective governance require consistent engagement.

Key discussion points included:

- If the Mayor cannot reasonably maintain outside employment due to workload, this should be reflected in compensation
- The Mayor role involves significant accountability, decision-making responsibility, and public exposure
- The Committee agreed that treating the Mayor role as less than full-time would not reflect operational reality

3.3 Councillor Workload Considerations

The Candidates' Guide lists councillor time commitment as 57%–86% of a full-time equivalent. The Committee discussed whether effort, complexity, or performance should be weighted in compensation analysis.

The Committee concluded that:

- “Effort” and intellectual labour are difficult to quantify and fluctuate over time
- Councillor performance is ultimately assessed by voters at election time
- Compensation analysis should therefore be based on expected time commitment, not subjective effort

3.4 FTE Assumptions

Moved by Velta Vikmanis, seconded by Tara Druzina;

THAT the Citizens Advisory Committee assumes the mayoral position is a full FTE, and councillor positions are considered 80% of FTE for compensation analysis purposes.

MOTION CARRIED, unanimously.

4. Deputy Mayor Role Discussion

The Committee discussed the historical practice within the Region of Queens Municipality regarding the Deputy Mayor position. It was noted that the Deputy Mayor does not receive a separate salary except when acting in the Mayor’s absence, that the position is selected for a two-year term, and that no formal additional duties are assigned beyond maintaining readiness to assume mayoral responsibilities when required.

During the discussion, it was suggested that the Deputy Mayor role carries heightened public visibility, expectation, and responsibility. It was proposed that a modest differential above the councillor rate could be appropriate to recognize the readiness and public-facing nature of the role, while noting that any adjustment should remain closer to councillor compensation than to the Mayor’s salary.

The Committee agreed that further discussion and analysis were required before reaching a decision. No motion was made, and consideration of Deputy Mayor remuneration was deferred to the next meeting.

5. Pension and Benefits Discussion

The Committee discussed pension and benefits considerations, noting that:

- Existing benefit structures are designed for long-term employees rather than fixed term elected officials
- Councillors and Mayors may serve one or multiple terms, creating variability in tenure
- Only a small number of Nova Scotia municipalities currently provide pension participation for elected officials

Options discussed included:

- Defined contribution approaches
- An 8% cash-in-lieu alternative to a formal pension plan
- Addressing pension considerations separately from base remuneration

The Committee noted that participation in a pension plan could improve recruitment by reducing barriers for working professionals who may otherwise be discouraged from seeking elected office. At the same time, members acknowledged the importance of considering public perception and overall affordability when evaluating pension and benefit options. No motion was made at this time, and pension and benefits were identified as a separate policy consideration to be addressed at a later date.

6. Report Structure and Public Impact

The Committee discussed adopting a multi-option policy advisory approach, including:

- A primary recommendation
- One or more alternative scenarios for Council consideration

The discussion included recruitment challenges in the current political environment, increased public scrutiny and personal risk faced by elected officials, and the importance of demonstrating moderation and transparency in any recommended adjustments. It was noted that preliminary estimates suggest the recommended increases would result in a minimal annual cost per

household, although final figures will depend on decisions regarding Deputy Mayor remuneration and future CPI adjustments.

7. Remuneration Recommendations

7.1 Mayor Remuneration

Moved by Velta Vikmanis, seconded by Pamela Brennan;

THAT the Citizens Advisory Committee recommend that the Mayor's salary for the Region of Queens Municipality be adjusted to \$68,752.66 effective April 1, 2026, and indexed for the subsequent two fiscal years (2027 and 2028) in accordance with the Nova Scotia Consumer Price Index.

MOTION CARRIED, unanimously.

7.2 Councillor Remuneration

Discussion included consideration of alignment with living-wage principles, the scope and intensity of councillor workloads, particularly in relation to large geographic districts, and the importance of public accountability and comparability with remuneration frameworks used by similar municipalities.

Moved by Tara Druzina, seconded by Pamela Brennan;

THAT the Citizens Advisory Committee recommend that effective April 1, 2026, Councillor remuneration be set at \$41,496.00, with annual adjustments (2027 and 2028) in accordance with the Nova Scotia Consumer Price Index.

Motion Carried, with three (3) for, and two (2) against.

The Committee agreed to defer a decision on Deputy Mayor remuneration to the next meeting.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.