

Region of Queens Municipality Special Council

Thursday, April 24, 2025

6:00 p.m.

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kq-W_NsH3OI&list=PLfAvc-FvNEDdGdggKG1k12NuV_PbQ4_2o

Minutes

Present:

Mayor Scott Christian, Chair

Councillor Roberta Roy, District 1

Deputy Mayor Maddie Charlton, District 2

Councillor Courtney Wentzell, District 3

Councillor Vicki Amirault, District 4

Councillor Jack Fancy, District 5

Councillor Stewart Jenkins, District 6

Regrets:

Councillor Wanda Carver, District 7

Staff:

Dan McDougall, Interim CAO

Heather Cook, Acting Clerk

Kate Wong, Administrative Assistant

Joanne Veinotte, Director of Finance

Adam Grant, Director of Infrastructure

Steve Whynacht, Manager of Information Technology

1.0 Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

Mayor Christian called the meeting to order at 6:00pm and gave a land acknowledgement to recognize that the meeting is taking place in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

2.0 Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Councillor Jenkins, seconded by Councillor Amirault:

THAT the Region of Queens Municipality approve the April 24th, 2025 agenda as presented.

Motion Carried.

3.0 Declaration of Conflict of Interests

There were no declarations of conflict of interests.

4.0 Budget Discussion

4.1 Overview

Director Veinotte discussed the sections of operating budget, with areas being reviewed being: Transportation/Roads and Streets, Wastewater, Solid Waste, Water Utility and Capital Investment plan.

Region of Queens Municipality's operating budget is made up of 16 sections –

Taxation, property tax including area rates deed transfer tax and tax recoveries

Grants in Lieu, includes revenue from properties owned by other government agencies

Services provided to Other Governments, includes contracted Solid Water partners

Sales of Service, includes non-contracted Solid Waste Facility users and Hillview Acres

Other Revenue from own sources, includes building permits, fines, rental income, interest on investments, Queens Place Emra Centre

Unconditional Transfers from Other Governments, which includes Municipal Capacity Grant.

Conditional Transfers from Other Governments or Agencies, include grant funding for approved projects.

Transfers from Own Sources includes funding from Reserves or Surplus to support projects on the operating budget.

Expenditures –

General Government Services includes compensation for Mayor, Council, and administrative staff, tax billing costs, legal, audit fees, IT, conferences, community investment fund grants, other community funding support .

Protective Services, including RCMP, inspection, bylaw, firefighting, EMO

Transportation Services includes common services Infrastructure, roads and streets, street lighting, airport.

Environmental services, including wastewater management, collection and treatment, garbage collection and disposal, landfill, recycling.

Environmental Development Services include land use and planning, community development, tourism, Liverpool Business Development Centre.

Recreation and Cultural Services includes parks, pools, Queens Place Emera Centre, playgrounds, museums, library.

Transfers to own reserves, which includes funding from tax rate to purposed reserves.

Conditional transfers to other governments or agencies, which includes South Shore Regional Centre for Education.

4.2 Transportation/Roads and Streets

Section 11. Budget \$3,653,411

Councillor Wentzell inquired whether street lighting is charged as an annual fee, and it was explained that it is billed monthly. It was noted that the streetlights are rented from Nova Scotia Power.

Director Grant explained that there are no substantive changes to the services being offered.

Director Grant provided an update on a fuel management system, which has been installed at both dispensing stations.

An analysis is underway for the corresponding area rate for road maintenance, comparing funds collected to budgeted expenses.

Finance staff have conducted an analysis comparing the funds collected to the budgeted expenses for District 13 area rates. Over the past few years, the Region of Queens Municipality (RQM) has collected funds based on the budget; however, the budgeted amount has not been fully spent. This year, it is anticipated that District 13 will have overpaid by more than \$250,000. As a result, this overpayment of \$250,000 will be added to the surplus. Finance staff have proposed using this surplus for the 2025/2026 fiscal year to ensure that there will be no increase in District 13's paving roads and streets rate. At the end of the year, if there is any overage, it will be placed in this reserve.

4.3 **Environmental Health Services**

4.3.1 **Wastewater**

Budget: \$1,177,044

Environmental Health Services

4.3.2 **Solid Waste**

Budget: \$6,345,474

4.4 **Water Utility**

Revenue has been budgets at current rates: \$839,970

Rate study is in progress. Utility continues to run a significant deficit.

Director Grant noted that we are currently losing approximately 60% of our treated water due to leaks, and with the ongoing impact of climate change, we are exploring options to expand our water utility and services. In response, we have developed an aggressive plan that aims to build upon the progress made in the coming year. While there is no single solution that can resolve the issue overnight, addressing a series of smaller problems will lead to significant improvements over time.

Capital Investment Plan

The five-year Capital Investment Plan has been approved by Council each year; however, inclusion in the plan does not guarantee that a project will move forward as proposed. Items in the plan are subject to change, and funding may come from sources such as the Equipment Reserve and Landfill Reserve. Long-term borrowing has not yet occurred for any projects, as borrowing cannot take place until a project is fully completed. Additionally, staff are not authorized to spend funds unless Council has given explicit approval. Typically, purchases are made first, followed by an application for a debenture.

When the capital plan is approved, it involves several separate motions, with Council required to approve each item individually. Before any borrowing is finalized, the Director must return to Council to confirm both whether the project should proceed and how it should be funded.

The proposed capital improvements include several projects. Not all of these will return to Council with individual staff reports; however, staff will continue to provide guidance throughout the process. There will be ongoing opportunities to modify or adjust the plan as new information becomes available.

It was noted by Interim CAO Dan MacDougal that in his opinion the Mount Pleasant Service Extension Design Project should be returned to Council for review before it is released for contractor bidding.

Questions were raised about the sidewalk reserve, including whether a formal improvement plan exists and how often upgrades are scheduled. No funds have been used from the reserve in the past six years. Staff confirmed that the use of these funds is at Council's discretion and that projects can be broken down further if needed. Additional cost clarity was requested, particularly regarding recent sidewalk replacement expenses. Mayor Christian noted that the next Special Council meeting for Budget Deliberations is scheduled for Monday April 28th at 6:00 pm.

5.0 Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:21pm. **Moved by Deputy Mayor Charlton, seconded by Councillor Roy.**

Mayor Scott Christian, Chair

Heather Cook, Acting Municipal Clerk

Kate Wong, Recording Secretary

Date Approved: May 13, 2025