



Region of Queens Municipality Regular Council

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

9:00 a.m.

Minutes

Present: Mayor Scott Christian, Chair
Deputy Mayor Maddie Charlton
Councillor Roberta Roy
Councillor Courtney Wentzell
Councillor Vicki Amirault
Councillor Jack Fancy
Councillor Stewart Jenkins
Councillor Wanda Carver

Staff: Willa Thorpe, Chief Administrative Officer
Angela Green, Municipal Clerk

1.0 Call to Order

Mayor Christian called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and opened the meeting by acknowledging that we have the privilege to live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, and that we are all treaty people.

2.0 Approval of Agenda

Councillor Fancy added Item 13.2 – Report on South Shore Housing

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Carver:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the December 9, 2025 agenda as amended.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

3.0 Adoption of Minutes

3.1 December 9, 2025 – Regular Council Minutes

It was moved by Councillor Carver and seconded by Councillor Amirault:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on December 9, 2025 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

3.2 December 19, 2025 – Special Council Minutes

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Roy:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the minutes from the Special Council Meeting held on December 19, 2025 as presented.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

4.0 Public Comment

1. Velta Vikmanis, Liverpool

Velta Vikmanis, Executive Director of the Astor Theatre and a Liverpool resident, addressed Council regarding the importance of continued investment in the Astor Theatre in advance of Council's consideration of the Capital Investment budget. Ms. Vikmanis outlined her transition from Board member to Executive Director in 2025 following staffing changes and noted that many residents may be unaware of the breadth of programming and community use occurring within the historic facility.

Ms. Vikmanis highlighted the theatre's 2025 activities, including 33 live events, 43 film screenings, hosted individual artists and community groups, and recurring programming serving seniors, cultural groups, and educational initiatives. She emphasized the theatre's role as an inclusive community space, noting free events, cultural celebrations, and new monthly open mic nights designed to provide a safe platform for community participation and artistic expression.

The presentation identified key operational and infrastructure challenges, including reliance on grants and donations, limited climate control affecting summer use, and the need for accessibility improvements such as universal washrooms and elevator access to the second floor. Ms. Vikmanis noted that, as a not-for-profit organization, any revenue generated beyond costs is reinvested into the theatre and community programming and engagement.

Looking forward, Ms. Vikmanis expressed a commitment to expanding accessibility, exploring transportation partnerships, and strengthening collaboration with community groups. She invited Council members to visit the theatre and advised that the Astor intends to provide quarterly updates to Council. Ms. Vikmanis concluded by emphasizing the potential regional and broader tourism benefits of a strong partnership between the Astor Theatre, the Municipality, and the community.

2. Joel Zwicker, Liverpool

Joel Zwicker, a resident of Liverpool, thanked Director Grant, CAO Thorpe, and Deputy Mayor Charlton for their assistance with previous questions and concerns. Mr. Zwicker wanted to address Council to emphasize the urgent need for a sidewalk on College Street. He noted that recent apartment development in the Cobbs Ridge area has significantly increased the local population, resulting in higher pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Mr. Zwicker expressed concern that College Street has become unsafe for adults and children walking to town or school, particularly as winter conditions and snow accumulation further limit pedestrian space. He requested that construction of a sidewalk on College Street be prioritized within the Capital Investment Plan.

5.0 Delegations and Presentations

There were no Delegations or Presentations today.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Asset Inventory

At the Special Council Meeting held on December 19, 2025, Council requested an inventory of municipal equipment within the Department of Infrastructure. The inventory was subsequently prepared and presented by Director Grant, based on information summarized from the Municipality's asset management software.

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Carver:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality receives the report titled 'Asset Inventory' for information.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

6.2 Upgrading Transmission Main

At the Special Council Meeting held on December 19, 2025, Council requested additional information regarding the installation of the replacement transmission main, specifically seeking options to advance completion of the project earlier than scheduled in the Capital Investment Plan. Director Grant provided Council with additional information for consideration related to the time line and delivery of the water transmission project.

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Wentzell:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality direct staff to procure third-party services to undertake a project analysis for the transmission main project, including consideration of cost, timeline, and other impacts on the transmission main project.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

6.3 Watermain Age

At the Special Council Meeting held on December 19, 2025, Council requested that staff return with additional information detailing the age of the municipal water distribution system. Director Grant subsequently provided Council with information regarding the age of municipal watermains.

It was moved by Councillor Wentzell and seconded by Deputy Mayor Charlton:

THAT Council of the Region of Queens Municipality receive the report titled 'Watermain Age' for information.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

6.4 Reserve Report

At the Special Council Meeting held on December 19, 2025, Council requested a report detailing the Municipality's reserve accounts. Director Veinotte provided Council with an in-depth Reserve Activity Forecast to provide clarity regarding reserve balances and activity.

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Deputy Mayor Charlton:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality receives the report titled 'Reserve Report' for information.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

The meeting recessed at 10:31 a.m. and resumed at 10:46 a.m.

6.5 Capital Investment Plan 2026-2031

The draft Capital Investment Plan was reviewed at the Special Council Meeting held on December 19, 2025. Following that meeting, the Nova Scotia Regulatory and Appeals Board issued its decision respecting Water Utility rates. In order to comply with the Board's decision, adjustments to the Capital Investment Plan were required and have been incorporated into the revised draft 2026–2031 Five-Year Capital Investment Plan.

Director Veinotte gave a summary of the revised Capital Investment Plan and provided clarity to Council regarding any revisions.

Councillor Jenkins expressed that he would like to have a line added to the plan for rural fire suppression, specifically for dry hydrant installation and maintenance. He felt that there should be \$200,000 allocated to this line for the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Fancy:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality approve the 2026-2031 Capital Investment Plan, with the addition of a rural fire suppression line item in the amount of \$200,000 to be funded from the Municipal surplus and included in the 2026-2027 year of the CIP, and explicit mention that elements of the MPSE that pertain to replacement of the existing infrastructure will be updated based on the analysis that is going to be conducted.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

The meeting recessed at 12:09 p.m. and resumed at 12:18 p.m.

7.0 Staff Reports

7.1 Mastercard Increase

Director Veinotte explained that Region of Queens Municipality utilizes a corporate credit card with a credit limit of \$40,000 to facilitate operational purchases where vendors do not accept purchase orders, for online transactions, or for urgent payment requirements. The credit limit was established at \$40,000 when the Municipality began banking with BMO in 2022, with the intention that the limit would be reviewed if it became insufficient.

If approved by Council, the proposed increase would raise the credit limit to \$100,000. The Municipality does not currently have a formal Corporate Credit Card Policy in place; development of this policy has been

identified as a priority item on the Audit and Internal Control Committee's work plan.

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Wentzell:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality approves Temporary Borrowing Resolution for an increase to the Mastercard limit from \$40,000 to \$100,000.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.2 Accommodation Levy

Mr. Lane gave background information regarding an Accommodation Levy, as defined in the 2022 amendments to the Municipal Government Act, was presented to Council at the regular meeting held on January 23, 2024. At that meeting, Council passed a motion directing staff to develop a survey related to an accommodation levy and to provide further information regarding implementation and associated staffing costs.

Since that time, the regulatory environment surrounding accommodation registration and oversight has continued to evolve, as have the potential systems available for levy collection. As a result, it has been challenging to bring forward conclusive recommendations to Council regarding implementation timelines and staffing impacts.

Many municipalities throughout Nova Scotia have implemented a similar accommodation levy, and from a visitor perspective, a levy of up to three percent in the Region of Queens Municipality would be consistent with practices elsewhere in the province. Recent regulatory changes affecting short-term rental operators, particularly within the sharing economy, have increased administrative requirements, and it is understood that some operators have concerns regarding additional administrative burden.

Staff advised that a provincially enabled third-party collection and remittance model would significantly reduce administrative friction for both operators and the Municipality. Implementing a locally managed,

manual collection process at this time could require future rework once a streamlined system becomes available. However, should Council wish to proceed with implementing an accommodation levy in the interim, staff recommended this approach as a means to generate revenue and build familiarity with levy administration until a more efficient collection process is established.

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Amirault:

THAT the Council for Region of Queens Municipality direct staff to draft a bylaw to implement an accommodation levy on all short-term fixed-roof rental accommodation room nights in the county.

MOTION CARRIED with seven (7) in favour, and one (1) against.

7.3 Town Bridge Sidewalk Design

Ms. Johnston explained to Council that following the structural analysis of the Town Bridge, the realignment of the active transportation network within the existing framework does not appear feasible. Staff recommend Council receive the report titled Town Bridge Sidewalk Design.

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Carver:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality receive the report titled Town Bridge Sidewalk Design, and to allow the Mayor to continue conversations with the MLA while our Infrastructure staff request a meeting with Nova Scotia Public Works in the immediate future regarding a path forward for the Town Bridge.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.4 THAACC Architectural Review

Ms. Johnston reported that DSRA Architecture has completed their Concept Design Report at the Town Hall Arts and Cultural Center for Council, recommending multiple upgrades to the facility to improve operations and guests' comfort. Staff recommend Council direct staff to include phased report recommendations from the DSRA Architecture Concept Design Report into the 2026 Capital Investment Plan.

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Fancy:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality direct staff to include phased report recommendations from the DSRA Architecture Concept Design Report into the 2026 - 2031 Capital Investment Plan.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

7.5 Council Implementation Report

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Wentzell:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality receive the report titled 'Council Implementation Report' for information.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

8.0 Bylaws and Policies

8.1 Second Reading – Bylaw 28: Designation of Road Trails on Municipal Roadways

As outlined in the Road Trails Act s.5(2), the designation of road trails, proposed routes, and any future designation must be done through bylaw and bylaw amendment. Staff recommend that Council give second reading of Bylaw No. 28 – Designation of Road Trails on Municipal Roadways.

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Roy:

THAT the Council of Region of Queens Municipality allow Bylaw No. 28, Designation of Road Trails on Municipal Roadways, be read a second time and that the bylaw be adopted.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

9.0 Correspondence for Action

9.1 Queens Health Board – Water Assistance Program

Council received correspondence from the Queens Community Health Board requesting Council's consideration of refinements to the Utility Assistance Rebate under Administrative Policy No. 57. The Health Board noted the approval of multi-year water rate increases by the Nova Scotia Regulatory and Appeals Board and raised concerns regarding affordability impacts on financially vulnerable households.

The correspondence outlined that the current rebate structure provides a uniform annual rebate regardless of household size or composition and suggested that this may not adequately reflect differing affordability pressures. The Health Board did not recommend changes to income eligibility thresholds under Administrative Policy No. 9 but requested that Council consider directing staff to review whether assistance under Policy

No. 57 could be structured in a household-responsive manner, informed by recognized benchmarks such as Statistics Canada's Low-Income Measure (After Tax).

The Health Board further recommended reviewing the adequacy of the rebate amount over time as rates and cost-of-living pressures increase, and ensuring that any potential changes are accessible, clearly communicated, and aligned as closely as possible with approved rate increases.

It was moved by Councillor Wentzell and seconded by Councillor Amirault:

THAT Council for the Region of Queens Municipality direct staff to consider the use of the Statistics Canada Low Income Measure in development of the program and come back with implications and analysis on what it would look like if it were included as some element of the program.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

9.2 Queens Health Board – Minimum Residential Area Concern

Council received correspondence from the Queens Community Health Board requesting Council's consideration of how very small residential units, specifically hotel-style suites, are being approved and used within the Municipality and whether current planning policies adequately address their suitability for long-term residential occupancy.

The correspondence acknowledged recent Council approved planning changes intended to increase housing supply in downtown Liverpool but raised concerns that hotel room scale units, designed primarily for short-term accommodation, may be approved and subsequently used as long-term housing, including by families. The Health Board noted that while existing planning documents define tourist accommodation and short-term rentals, they do not clearly address long-term occupancy,

monitoring, or enforcement when such units are used on a continuous basis.

The Health Board requested that Council direct staff to prepare a report examining how hotel-style suites are defined, approved, monitored, and enforced under the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw; how other municipalities address the long-term use of very small units; and how such units are counted toward the Municipality's housing targets. The correspondence emphasized the importance of ensuring that housing growth supports healthy and dignified living conditions and aligns with community well-being and housing needs.

It was moved by Councillor Amirault and seconded by Councillor Carver:

THAT Council for the Region of Queens Municipality refer this correspondence to the Planning Advisory Committee for consideration as they review the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

10.0 Correspondence for Information

10.1 Update from Birds Canada on 2025 Piping Plover Season

Council received correspondence from Birds Canada providing an overview of Piping Plover monitoring and stewardship results for the 2025 season and thanking the Municipality and community for their support of conservation efforts.

The correspondence reported a successful Piping Plover season in Nova Scotia, with 70 breeding pairs monitored across 31 beaches and an average of two fledglings per monitored pair, exceeding provincial recovery and productivity targets. Within the Region of Queens Municipality, four beaches supported nesting plovers, with a total of seven breeding pairs, representing approximately 10% of the provincial total.

Birds Canada noted strong nesting success at monitored beaches in Queens and reported that no motorized vehicle activity was detected, though off-leash dogs were observed at several locations. The correspondence emphasized the importance of continued beach stewardship, volunteer support, and responsible beach use to support future conservation efforts. Council was encouraged to share the provided summary graphics with the community.

10.2 Resident Response to Recycling and Solid Waste Changes

Council received correspondence from a resident expressing concerns regarding recent changes to the garbage collection and recycling program. The correspondence requested that Council re-review the program, noting that while a grace period is in place until July, the changes are creating hardship for some residents.

The resident raised concerns about the removal of certain materials from curbside collection, including Styrofoam, aerosol cans, and some plastic bags, which now require transport to recycling depots outside the community. It was noted that this presents challenges for residents with limited transportation options, fixed incomes, mobility issues, or limited storage space, particularly seniors.

Additional concerns were raised regarding the adequacy of the privacy bag allowance for residents requiring incontinence products, potential impacts on dignity, and the risk of increased illegal dumping as a result of reduced curbside service. The correspondence emphasized that residents view the program changes as a municipal decision and requested that Council reconsider the approach and explore possible compromises to better accommodate affected residents.

It was moved by Councillor Carver and seconded by Councillor Jenkins:

THAT Council for the Region of Queens Municipality receive the correspondence for information.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

11.0 Report From In Camera

There was no report from In Camera.

12.0 Mayor's Report

The Mayor extended New Year's greetings to residents, staff, and Council and expressed optimism for 2026. With Council's strategic priorities for the next three years now determined and to be shared later this month, and staff actively working on implementation planning, the Municipality is well positioned to make meaningful progress in the year ahead.

The Mayor acknowledged that, despite this optimism, there is frustration and confusion within the community, particularly related to recent changes in waste collection and ongoing surface issues on the Town Bridge.

With respect to the Town Bridge, the Mayor advised that she has discussed the recurring severe potholes with Minister Kim Masland. The bridge is provincially owned, and repairs are undertaken through a cost-sharing agreement with the Province. Residents were assured that work to repair the current potholes would begin within the coming week. The Municipality will continue working with provincial counterparts to address the underlying subsurface issues causing repeated deterioration. The Mayor also noted awareness of lifting on the Potomac (second) Bridge in Milton, which is also a provincial responsibility. Residents were reminded that concerns regarding provincial infrastructure can be reported to the Nova Scotia Department of Public Works 24/7 Operations Contact Centre at 1-844-696-7737 or by email at dpw-occ@novascotia.ca.

Regarding waste collection, the Mayor explained that changes are occurring as a result of provincial legislation requiring the transition of recyclable materials to an external stewardship organization, Circular Materials. The Mayor acknowledged the confusion and frustration caused by unclear messaging and advised that staff recently met with representatives of Circular Materials to raise these concerns, including

issues related to the new depot-based recycling program. Circular Materials confirmed that the Queens Enviro Centre on Sandy Cove Road will begin accepting additional recyclable materials—such as chip bags, candy wrappers, plastic food pouches, Styrofoam, and household aerosol cans—by the end of the week, and that the mobile depot on Hibernia Road in Caledonia will also accept these materials when operational. Residents were encouraged to bring these items to an Enviro Depot when returning refundable beverage containers; however, if access to a depot is not possible, these materials may continue to be disposed of as garbage, consistent with past practice. All other waste collection services, including garbage, compost, and blue bag recycling, continue as usual through Green for Life Environmental. The Mayor noted that residents should have received both the 2026 Solid Waste and Organics Guide from the Municipality and a recyclable materials guide from Circular Materials, and that further information is available on the Waste Management section of the municipal website. The Mayor also advised that the Municipality is transitioning to the use of clear garbage bags, aligning with best practices across the province. This transition will be gradual, allowing residents to use existing black bags, with one black “privacy bag” permitted per collection. Staff will continue working with Circular Materials to improve public education and clarity around waste sorting.

Finally, Mayor Christian highlighted an event held on December 15, 2025, attended by MP Jessica Fancy, Minister Kim Masland, and representatives of the Queens Neighbourhood Co-operative Housing Project, celebrating progress toward the construction of 30 new affordable rental units on Lawrence Street. The Mayor noted that the Region of Queens Municipality is pleased to partner with the Co-operative and other orders of government to increase access to affordable housing in the community.

13.0 Council Reports

13.1 Certificate of Recognition

Mayor Christian presented Councillor Fancy with a Long Service Award from the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) in recognition of 10 years of service. The Mayor noted that the recognition had been

delayed and that Councillor Fancy is currently in his 14th year of service as Councillor for District 5.

13.2 Report on South Shore Housing

The Committee received information regarding current and emerging affordable housing initiatives on the South Shore. It was noted that some municipalities, including Bridgewater, have waived certain service fees to support affordable housing projects.

South Shore Open Doors is in the process of renovating two separate buildings for affordable housing purposes. One of the buildings will operate as a women's shelter providing 24-hour transitional housing. The properties will be mortgaged through Housing Trust for a period of up to 30 years, and tenants will contribute 30% of their income toward rent.

Members discussed additional examples of adaptive reuse, including the conversion of a portion of a church building in Lunenburg into affordable housing. The Committee also discussed micro-homes, noting concerns that such units may be too small to adequately serve families.

The Committee identified the need for a meeting with landlords to improve awareness of available grant programs that can be used to help subsidize rental costs.

In considering next steps, the Committee identified four key focus areas:

1. Assessment of existing housing availability, with an emphasis on renovation as a more practical option than new construction;
2. Provincial housing programs and supports;
3. Availability and coordination of local services; and
4. Application of a Housing First approach.

14.0 New Business

There was no New Business to discuss.

15.0 In Camera

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Charlton and seconded by Councillor Jenkins that the proceedings move to Closed Session at 2:39 p.m. to discuss the following:

- 15.1 Property Matter
- 15.2 Personnel
- 15.3 Personnel
- 15.4 Personnel
- 15.5 Personnel
- 15.6 Property Matter
- 15.7 Property Matter

It was moved by Councillor Carver and seconded by Deputy Mayor Charlton that the proceedings exit Closed Session at 4:17 p.m.

15.3 Appointment of Accessibility Committee Member

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Councillor Carver:

THAT Council for Region of Queens Municipality appoint Elise Johnston to the Accessibility Advisory Committee, for a term to expire on October 31, 2027.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously with Councillor Roy absent.

15.4 Appointment of Dismantling Discrimination and Hate Committee Member

It was moved by Councillor Amirault and seconded by Councillor Carver:

THAT Council for Region of Queens Municipality appoint Carley Mullally to the Dismantling Discrimination and Hate Committee, for a term to expire on October 31, 2027.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously with Councillor Roy absent.

15.5 Appointment of Citizens Advisory Committee on Council Remuneration Members

It was moved by Councillor Jenkins and seconded by Deputy Mayor Charlton:

THAT Council for Region of Queens Municipality the following members to the Citizens Advisory Committee on Council Remuneration:

- Christopher Clark
- Kerry Morash
- Stew Horton
- Velta Vikmanis
- Pamela Brennan

MOTION CARRIED unanimously with Councillor Roy absent.

16.0 Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

Mayor Scott Christian, Chair

Angela Green, Municipal Clerk

Date Approved: _____