

Town of Berwick Council Meeting

July 9, 2024

Town of Berwick Council Chambers

6:30 pm

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

2. Approval of the Agenda

3. Approval of the Minutes

- a. June 11, 2024 Council Minutes

4. Committee of the Whole

- a. RFD025-2024: Communications Plan
- b. 2024-25 Council Priorities

5. New Business

- a. RFD024-2024: Multi-Use Printer Tender Award
- b. RFD026-2024: Valley Waste TBR for Capital Items
- c. RFD027-2024: Municipal Innovation Program Resolution – Annapolis
Valley Regional Marketing Levy

6. Correspondence

7. Mayor's Report

8. In-Camera

- a. Personnel

9. Adjournment

REQUEST FOR DECISION
RFD025-2024
Communications Plan



To: Council
From: Office of CAO
Date: July 9, 2024
Subject: Approval of Communications Plan

References/Attachments

- Communications Plan

Recommendation

That Council approve the Town of Berwick Communications Plan as presented.

Background

The Town of Berwick has highlighted communications as a strategic priority over this council term. To engage this priority, a staff person was hired to focus on communication tasks and draft a plan for communications for the Town long-term. Over a period of six months, a plan was drafted with community consultation, along with staff and Council consideration.

The draft communications plan was presented to staff, and then to Council for feedback at the June Committee of the Whole meeting.

Financial Implications

Any financial implications have been included in the budget as presented and approved, there are no other anticipated expenditures.

Priority Alignment

Check Applicable	Strategic Priority Area	Comments
X	Economic	
X	Environmental	
X	Social	
X	Cultural	

REQUEST FOR DECISION
RFD025-2024
Communications Plan



Alternatives

Council may propose amendments to the communications plan as presented.

Community Engagement/Communication

An approved plan will be publicly available on the Town of Berwick website, will be integrated into Town of Berwick staff workplans and will be followed up on with future communications surveys.

CAO Comments

I support the recommendation of staff.

CAO Initials: JB

Target Decision Date: July 9, 2024



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

March 2024



As prepared by Taylor Boylan
Communications Coordinator

DRAFT

Communications Goal

“It is our goal for all residents to feel as though they are informed, engaged, and appreciated in all actions undertaken by the Town.”

Berwick Vision

"Berwick envisions itself as a vibrant and inclusive community where residents of all ages thrive. We aspire to be a place where innovation, sustainability, and a strong sense of belonging come together to create a high quality of life for everyone. Our vision is to foster a safe, welcoming, and prosperous town that honors its heritage while embracing the opportunities of the future."

Introduction

The Town of Berwick was incorporated as a municipality in 1923 and is known as Nova Scotia's Apple Capital because of its significant history in the apple industry. The Town operates its own electric utility and wastewater systems, and boasts a full complement of recreation facilities, restaurants, retail outlets and commercial businesses. The Town encompasses a population of 2455 residents, with diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

The Town of Berwick strives to be the primary source of information for its residents, providing timely and proactive communications that are clear and easy to understand. The Town of Berwick has several tools that can be used to provide communications to internal and external audiences, and while specific tools may change over time, the goal is to ensure that all audiences continuously receive information through the most appropriate means. An effective communications strategy, internally and externally, will engage residents and allow for increased community growth.

It is important that this strategy is reviewed and updated periodically to ensure that it reflects the needs of the community and remains a living document used daily by staff and Council.

The Town of Berwick's communication strategy is rooted in its commitment to transparency, inclusivity, and community engagement. By providing, and receiving information through various effective channels, the Town of Berwick will foster a strong sense of community that will encourage residents to participate in further growth and development.

It is the goal of the Town of Berwick's communication strategy for all residents to feel as though they are informed, engaged, and appreciated in all actions undertaken by the municipality.

Branding Information

The Town of Berwick logo was designed by Town of Berwick staff in 2015. As it was developed internally, brand standard information was not provided and over time, the logo has been used with different variations of the colour palette. In 2018, colours were identified by hexacode to standardize the use across all mediums.

The Town of Berwick logo is currently used for almost all official Town purposes, across all departments and including the Berwick Electric Commission. It is displayed on Town owned vehicles, on the Town Hall facility and included on all official Town correspondence.

Prior to the adoption of the new logo, the Town of Berwick's armorials (coat of arms) was used exclusively as the Town's logo. The shield has been phased out of Town communications but remains on the official Town of Berwick flag, and historical documents.

The Town of Berwick logo should appear on all external communications published by the Town, including on all social media posts. This branding allows residents to recognize official source communication and increases trust in the organization.

Suggested action(s):

- Public engagement on the current Town of Berwick flag to determine if a revision is necessary
- Review and/or develop standardized templates to ensure correct colour codes are being used.
- Save templates to the appropriate location in SharePoint for ease of use

Coloured logo

The coloured logo is the official Town of Berwick logo. The coloured logo is used in all general use; town documents, correspondence, email signatures.

White logo

The white logo is always used when using a coloured background that includes one or more of the logo colours, and on high contrast images or graphics.

“B” logo

The “B” logo is a casual version of the official Town of Berwick logo. The “B” is used for casual use, such as social media and on branded items, and is often used with slogans.

Colours

The hex codes noted on page six have been adopted as the official colours of the Town of Berwick.

Font

Verenda will be used for all official documents for the Town of Berwick.

Centennial logo

The Town of Berwick widely used a “celebrating 100 years” logo for the entirety of the year 2023. This logo will be phased out in 2024 but is recognized as an official Town logo.

Official logos and branding



#b32318



#8cc63e



Goals & Objectives

Goal 1

Improve staff and Council communication skills and tools

Objective 1.0

All information is communicated internally prior to being communicated to the public.

Objective 1.1

Use of strong internal communication tools that allow for streamlined external communications.

Objective 1.2

Staff feel as though they are informed, engaged, and appreciated within all aspects of the Town of Berwick.

Goal 2

Create strong communication tools for sending and receiving information externally

Objective 2.0

Information is provided to residents in a clear, timely manner across several means.

Objective 2.1

Information received is directed to the appropriate party, acknowledged and followed up on.

Objective 2.2

Residents know how, and where, to find the information that they are seeking.

DRAFT

Goal 3

Town of Berwick external communications are inherently accessible

Objective 3.0

Communication provided to residents is in clear, plain language.

DRAFT

Internal Communications

Background

The Town of Berwick Municipal Council consists of a Mayor, and six Councillors, who are elected “at-large” and represent all residents of the Town of Berwick. Town Council sets the strategy and direction for the Town of Berwick, and have one employee, the CAO, who oversees all Town staff and ensures the direction of Council is being followed.

The Town of Berwick employs a small but diverse workforce, across several locations. Town Administrative, Finance, Community Development and Planning staff work from the Town of Berwick Town Hall, constructed in 2017. Public Works staff work from a Public Works building on Main Street, alongside Berwick Electric Commission staff. Staff from Community Development extend to the Berwick Fitness Centre on Veteran’s Drive and programming space at Carol’s Place on Cottage Street.

In 2023, the Town of Berwick shifted to using Microsoft 365 programs internally in an effort to modernize and streamline processes for all staff, particularly for records management purposes. By early 2024, all staff and Council will be “online” on Microsoft 365.

Internal Communications Goals & Objective

Goal 1

Improve staff and Council communication skills and tools.

Good communication between staff and Council is key to the success of the municipality and the Town's strategic priorities. When information is clearly communicated, all parties will feel engaged and understand their role in the success of the municipality.

Objective 1.0

All information is communicated internally prior to being communicated to the public.

Prior to any information being shared with the public, it is shared with staff and Council of the Town of Berwick. This process will ensure that shared information is accurate and complete, and will identify potential issues and challenges early in the process. This will also help to build trust between the Town and its residents, and ultimately lead to more effective and efficient decision-making.

Suggested action(s):

- Staff share important information, and upcoming dates, to Council via department reports to the Committee of the Whole.
- Important dates should be shared with the Executive Assistant to put in Council's calendars.
- All important information and event information should be shared on the Teams Communication Channel to ensure staff can easily access the information, view common FAQ's and/or updated information.
- Town staff meet bi-weekly, following Council and Committee of the Whole meetings. Meetings are led by the CAO and include brief updates from all departments.
- Urgent and emergency updates are shared with the CAO to share with Council via email and/or phone.

Objective 1.1

Use of strong internal communication tools that allow for streamlined external communications.

Recognizing that different departments within the Town of Berwick organization require information shared in different ways, tools used for communications internally must be used effectively for the audience who will be receiving the message. It is also important to recognize that not all staff of the municipality will require receiving the same information, however all staff should be given enough information to interact with the public appropriately.

Suggested action(s):

- An all-staff Microsoft Teams channel is created, and staff share updates as they arise.
 - No conversation takes place on this channel other than updates
- Staff have internal conversations via Microsoft Teams chat
 - Email is not used internally, unless it includes an external party or member(s) of Council
 - Files are shared within Teams and/or Sharepoint rather than by email
- Monthly, an internal bulletin is distributed to staff via the Teams channel and also printed for display at Town Hall, Public Works and the Berwick Fitness Centre. This newsletter highlights important dates and information for staff.
- A chart is provided that identifies the preferred way to share important information in emergency situations vs. day to day situations.

Objective 1.2

Staff feel as though they are informed, engaged and appreciated within all aspects of the Town of Berwick.

When staff feel informed, engaged, and appreciated it will foster a sense of pride in their work within the municipality. Investing time in communications internally will create a positive work environment that will not only benefit employees, but also the broader community that they serve.

Suggested action(s):

- Staff are recognized regularly, via the all-staff Teams Channel monthly bulletin, for recent accomplishments or with good news stories. Develop a Standard Operating Procedure for recognition.
- Annual recognition at the Town of Berwick holiday party of long-term service awards, presented by the Mayor.
- As noted in the communications survey results, residents would like to know more about Town staff. To do this, short staff profiles will be shared on social media regularly, along with information about the work of the various departments of the Town of Berwick.
- Staff and Council wear Town of Berwick identification when working in public spaces, or during events. This will allow staff to foster a sense of pride in the "Town of Berwick" brand and also allow for easier identification for the public.

External Communications

Background

Social Media: The Town of Berwick was one of the first municipalities in Canada to launch social media channels and was an early adopter of using these means to communicate with residents. The Town joined Twitter in 2009, Facebook in 2011 and Instagram in 2014. These methods are often used as the primary source of communication with residents, especially Facebook. Each social media channel that the Town maintains has a significant number of followers relative to the Town's population, and followers tend to be active participants on the social media channels. When reviewing insights, most followers are local and have local interests.

Website: The Town of Berwick has a website, Berwick.ca, operated through the AMANS Municipal Website Venture. The website was launched in 2019. The website contains information on municipal matters.

Electronic Sign: In 2019, the Town purchased an electronic sign that was placed at the corner of Cottage Street and Commercial Street. Information is shared to the electronic sign weekly, on Mondays, and the sign transitions through several slides of Town of Berwick events, and some community requests.

Printed Communications:

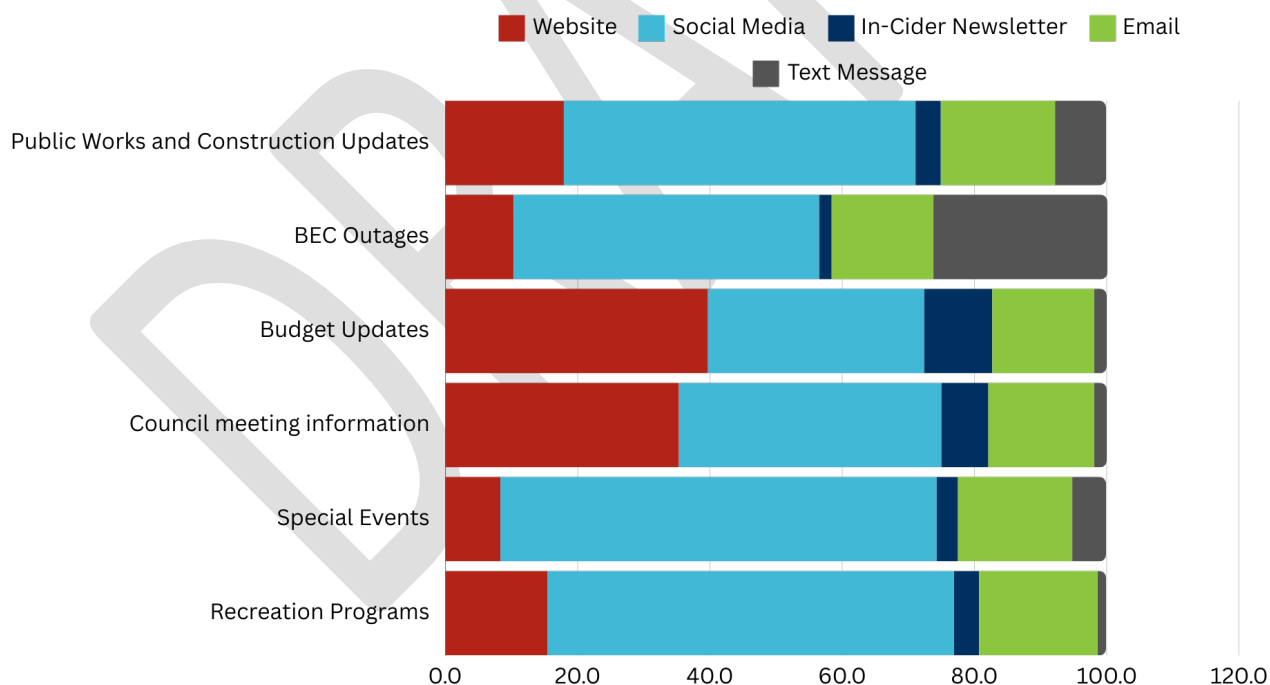
The Town of Berwick regularly communicates with residents through print communications, such as posters that are distributed through the community by a municipal employee. The Town mails bills to residents (utility and tax) and can include inserts on municipal updates within these bills. The Town has also created a quarterly newsletter, the In-Cider, that is distributed to residents via mail.

External Communications: Survey

Background

In late 2023, a Communications survey was presented to Town of Berwick residents asking for feedback about municipal communications. The survey results can be found in *Appendix B*. The results of the survey were used to shape the external communications piece of this strategy.

Most relevant, residents were asked how, given five options, they would most like to receive municipal communications on specific topics. Only one option was able to be selected, as the intention was to find the most preferred option for each type of update. When the survey was taken, there was no option for text message communications from the municipality.



External Communications: Goals & Objectives

Goal 2

Create strong communication tools for sending and receiving information externally.

Communication with residents plays a vital role in the daily operations of local government. To achieve effective communication, it is important to utilize multiple channels so that residents can access information in diverse ways, accommodating preferences and accessibility needs.

Building strong communication between government and residents fosters transparency, trust and collaboration, ultimately leading to a more vibrant and engaged community.

Objective 2.0

Information is provided to residents in a clear, timely manner across several means.

When information is shared with the public, it is shared with advance notice and through several means to reach as many residents as possible. Information is prepared in an eye-catching, but standardized form to continue recognition and trust in the Town of Berwick brand.

Suggested action(s):

- Recreation and Community Development dates for events and programming are chosen one calendar year in advance and shared with Council and partner organizations.
- Information is shared with residents across multiple mediums for all messaging, always including one “offline” medium.
- Information is shared with as much advance notice as possible, with four weeks’ notice being the standard outside of emergency and urgent needs (see *Appendix A* for definitions)

Suggested action(s) continued:

- A text message and email notification system are implemented and utilized regularly for interested residents.
- Develop an Standard Operating Procedure to identify when text notifications should be used and the approval process.
- Mail, or hand delivered notices, are used for all events that will have a direct impact on residents, such as rate changes, planned power outages or traffic interruptions.
- Develop Standard Operating Procedure for use of the electronic sign

Objective 2.1

Information received is directed to the appropriate party, acknowledged, and followed up on.

It is important that residents feel engaged and appreciated, and that their concerns are acknowledged and taken into consideration by staff and Council of the Town of Berwick. Fostering open dialogue, and actively listening to residents' feedback ensures decisions are made with the input and support of the people they impact the most.

Communication is most effective when all parties are sending and receiving information, and ensuring that information is directed appropriately allows for follow-up and residents to feel empowered.

Suggested action(s):

- A feedback form on the Town of Berwick website is advertised, and utilized, and responses are re-directed to the appropriate department within one business day of receipt.
- The Town of Berwick main switchboard is updated to include an option to stay on the line and be re-directed to an administrative staff.

- An internal form is created for feedback and resident concerns, similar to the feedback form on the website, that is used to track concerns that come from phone calls and to the front desk.

Suggested action(s) continued:

- Staff update voicemail messages and email automatic replies when out of the office for one business day or longer.
- Staff include business hours in their email signatures if they are different from regular business hours of 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.
- Resident concerns are acknowledged upon receipt, and followed-up on within three business days, regardless of resolution.
- A front-desk reception role is implemented in the organizational structure of the Town of Berwick that handles inquiries, complaints and resident concerns.
- Draft a Standard Operating Procedure for complaints and feedback with suggested target timelines for responding and follow-up.

Objective 2.2

Residents know how, and where, to find the information that they are seeking.

The Town of Berwick strives to be the first and best source of information about the municipality. It is the overall goal of the external communications strategy that residents can receive information, if they desire to do so, in the manner that is most suitable for their needs.

Suggested action(s):

- A Town of Berwick website plan is created and implemented, to ensure information on the website is clear and easy to find.
- Social media is updated regularly, primarily focusing on Town of Berwick specific information.

- The quarterly newsletter continues to be sent via mail to all residents and includes a section to “Contact Us”.
- A front-desk reception role is implemented in the organizational structure of the Town of Berwick that handles inquiries, complaints and resident concerns.

DRAFT

Accessibility in Communications

Background

The Town of Berwick adopted an Accessibility Plan in 2022, and a major piece of this plan was the importance of accessibility in communications.

The Accessibility Plan has been used to guide the work of Town of Berwick staff and was used as a reference when creating the communications plan. The majority of priorities and suggested action items are not duplicated within this plan, but actions that have not been considered are highlighted in the accessibility in communications objective.

Objective 3.0

Communication provided to residents is in clear, plain language.

The Town of Berwick has a diverse population, who speak a variety of languages and have varying levels of literacy. Ensuring that all written communications, including reports and other materials, are in plain language allows residents to better understand important information and actively engage with the Town. By using clear and simple language, we can bridge communication gaps and promote inclusivity as an organization.

Suggested action(s)

- All staff receive plain language training for communications.
- Review all reoccurring documents to ensure plain language.
- Descriptive text is used on all images posted electronically, on the website and social media.
- The Town adopt "Verdana" font for all communications distributed internally and externally.

Social Media: Guidelines

The Town of Berwick's social media channels are active and engaging, and allow residents and visitors to participate in conversations and broader community engagement. It is important to use social media channels regularly, but also responsibly. Guidelines have been set to ensure that staff are aware of the importance of their role in Town of Berwick social media, as well as promoting municipal transparency and accountability to the public.

Guidelines: Interactions

1. The Town of Berwick operates an official Town of Berwick Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and X account. The X account has been dormant since 2022.
2. Only persons authorized by the CAO will post on behalf of the Municipality on any social media platform. A maximum of four staff members will have administrative permissions on social media accounts, with the Mayor having editor status (if desired)
3. Comments will remain enabled on all social media posts, unless staff are unavailable to monitor a feed or when a post is shared for purely informational purposes. Comments will be monitored and filtered if they are not relevant to the topic of discussion, or use inappropriate, inflammatory, or objectionable language. Filters will be enabled on Facebook and Instagram (Meta) to automatically hide comments containing inappropriate language.
4. The Town of Berwick will respond to comments and messages, when possible, that are requesting information. Social media descriptions and automatic messaging will include that social media is not monitored regularly, and that phone or email is a preferred method of contact.
5. As comments and messages can be deleted at any time, they are considered transitory records and will not be kept as a permanent record by the Town of Berwick.

DRAFT

Guidelines: Content

1. Town of Berwick content will have priority on all Town of Berwick channels.
2. Unless an emergency, or urgent event, no more than three posts will be posted to the Town of Berwick social media channels in one day.
3. All posts will use a standardized, or recognizable, format apart from posters advertising events or solely for community engagement (i.e a call for committee members). Currently, the format is a 1080x1080px image using a red or green background, with text aligned left and a circle aligned right with a white graphic relating to the topic within the circle. The topic is included with bold font, with the byline in regular font. The white logo is aligned in the bottom right corner. This format is subject to change at any time at the discretion of staff.
4. The body of a post on social media will include all details required for the public's information and will duplicate any information given in the included image. ALT text will be included for accessibility purposes, and links will only be included on Facebook feed posts.
5. Community posts will be shared at the discretion of staff, and when scheduling permits on social media feeds.

Path to integration

Q2: Adapt

All staff and Council members have received the communications strategy and it begins to be implemented into daily workplans.

Q3: Launch

A dedicated staff takes the helm on external communications. All staff are proactive with information sharing, and responsive to resident's inquiries.

Q4: Evaluate

With Council changes, the strategy is re-evaluated and changes are made to align with the current Council's strategic priorities.

Q1: Monitor

A communications survey is done within the community to gauge feedback and compare results to the survey done prior to the implementation of the communications strategy.

Q2: Iterate

Council and staff follow the communications strategy to guide their daily work.

Appendix A

Definitions of types of messaging:

EMERGENCY EVENT

What is an emergency event?

- Time Sensitive
- Affects residents **now**
- Out of usual scope

Examples of emergency events

- Large scale weather event
- Evacuation order
- Emergency defined by EMO

How do we communicate this?

- Social media
- Website
- Voicemail
- Alert/Text Message

Emergency event occurs or is occurring in the Town of Berwick

Notification is given to CAO, Mayor and Council and regional authorities

Notification given to comms for distribution through TOB channels

Updates given to comms on regular basis for updates on TOB channels

Follow-up given when event concludes, all updates in document

URGENT EVENT

What is an urgent event?

- Time Sensitive
- Affects residents now, or in immediate future
- Unexpected/unplanned

Examples of urgent events

- Unplanned power outage
- Unplanned road closure
- Weather event defined by REMO

How do we communicate this?

- Social media
- Website
- Signage
- Alert/Text Message

Urgent event occurs or is occurring in the Town of Berwick

Notification given to comms for distribution through TOB channels

Updates given to comms on regular basis for updates on TOB channels

When event concludes, posts are marked with dates or removed

TOWN OF
berwick

ROUTINE EVENT

What is a routine event?

- Has time and date determined in advance
- Affects residents in the future

Examples of routine events

- Planned power outage
- Planned road closure
- Office closure, holiday information

How do we communicate this?

- Social media
- Website
- Mailout/phone calls
- Signage
- Alert/Text Message

Routine event will be occurring in the Town of Berwick

Notification is given to comms for distribution through TOB channels

Information distributed on TOB channels in advance, with dates and times

Information scheduled for distribution day-of if appropriate

When event concludes, posts are marked with dates or removed

COMMUNITY EVENT

What is a community event?

- A gathering intended for the general public/residents
- Has a set time and date

Examples of Community Event

- Council and committee meetings
- Registration night for programing
- Community concerts

How do we communicate this?

- Social media
- Website
- Mailout
- Posters
- Electronic sign

Community event will be occurring in the Town of Berwick

Notification given to comms for distribution through TOB channels

Information distributed on TOB channels in advance, with dates and times

When event concludes, posts are marked with dates or removed

External Communications

GENERAL INFO

What is general info?

- Information for residents
- May be time sensitive or have a date attached

Examples of General

- Budget information
- Council minutes
- Information post re: services

How do we communicate this?

- Social media
- Website
- Posters
- Electronic sign
- Mailouts

General information needs to be communicated to Berwick residents

Information given to comms for distribution through TOB channels

Information and related files are put into a shareable format to be approved

Information distributed on TOB channels

Information and related files are compiled and saved in common locations for future access

Timing

Emergency: Immediate

Urgent: Immediate

Routine: As much notice as possible

Community: 4 weeks (4 months for community organizations)

General Info: As much notice as possible, 4 weeks ideal

Appendix B

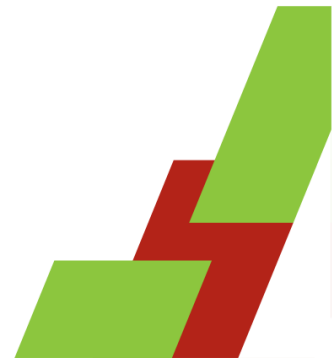
DRAFT



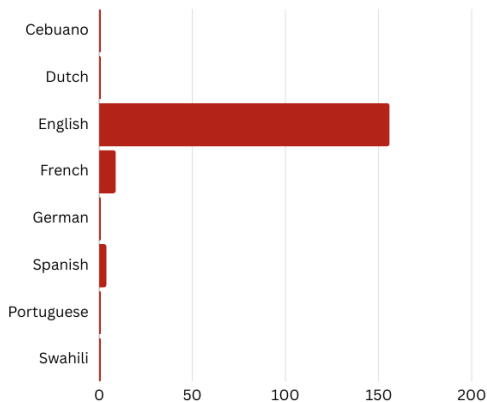
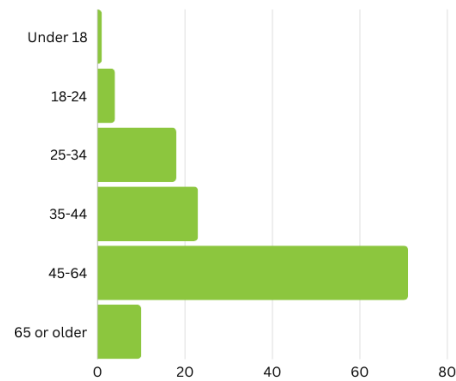
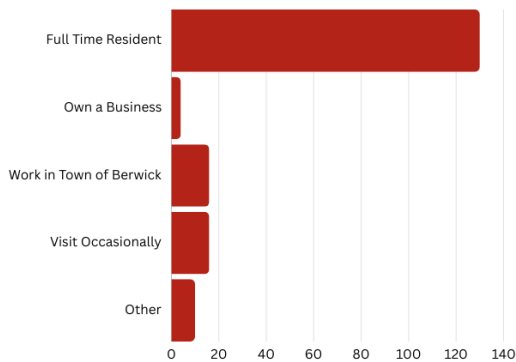
Survey Information

The survey was distributed electronically on the Town of Berwick website and Town of Berwick social media channels. Paper copies, and information on the survey, were provided to several community organizations including the Berwick and District Library and SchoolsPlus.

Over 200 responses were recorded, with the majority taking the survey electronically.



Who responded?



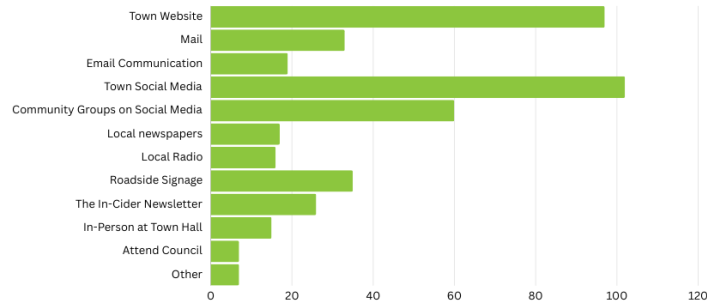
The majority of respondents self-identified as **full-time residents** of the Town of Berwick, between the ages of **45 and 64**, who speak **English** as a primary language. This aligns with 2016 Census data of population medians.

92% of respondents have a home computer, while 90% have a smartphone.

Only 4% of respondents answered that they do not use social media.

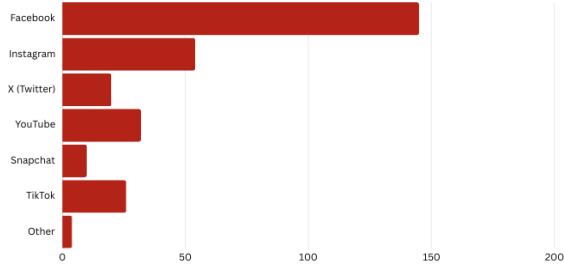
This data was anticipated, as the majority of respondents filled the survey out electronically. Had a larger number of respondents used a paper copy of the survey, it is likely the data would have shown that a larger percentage of the Town's population do not have a home computer or smartphone.

How do residents currently get information about the Town of Berwick?



83% of respondents follow the Town of Berwick on their social media accounts.

The majority of respondents use Facebook regularly.



83% of respondents rated the Town of Berwick’s current social media presence between a 3 and a 5, on a scale of 1 to 5. The average rating given was a 3.44.

The Town of Berwick Facebook page currently has 6.8 thousand followers, and the Instagram has 1.7 thousand followers. The Town is not currently active on any other social media channels, but does maintain YouTube and X accounts.

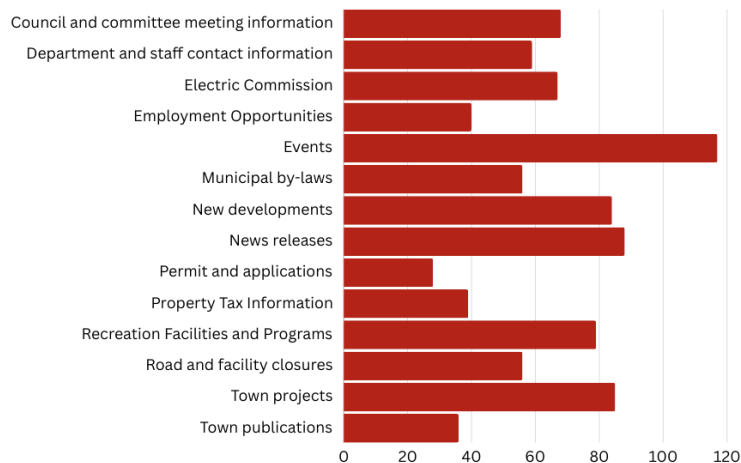
What are residents looking for?

Residents were asked to identify what they were looking for when visiting our social media or website, and what information they would like to see more of. The most common answers are listed below:

Power outages
 Town decisions
 Council meeting information
 Links
 Important dates
 Service interruptions
 Renewable energy projects
 Events
 Diversity

Website

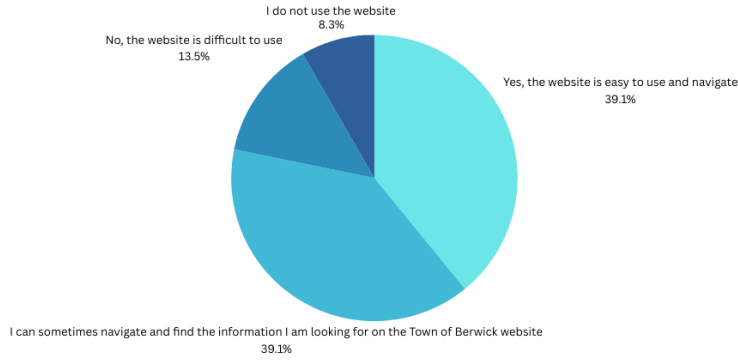
What information would you generally look for on the Town of Berwick website?





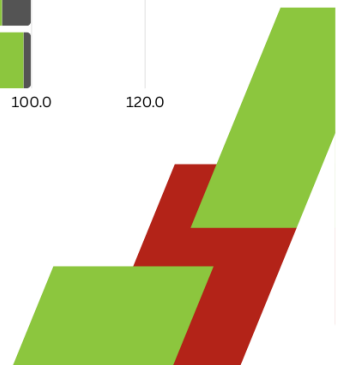
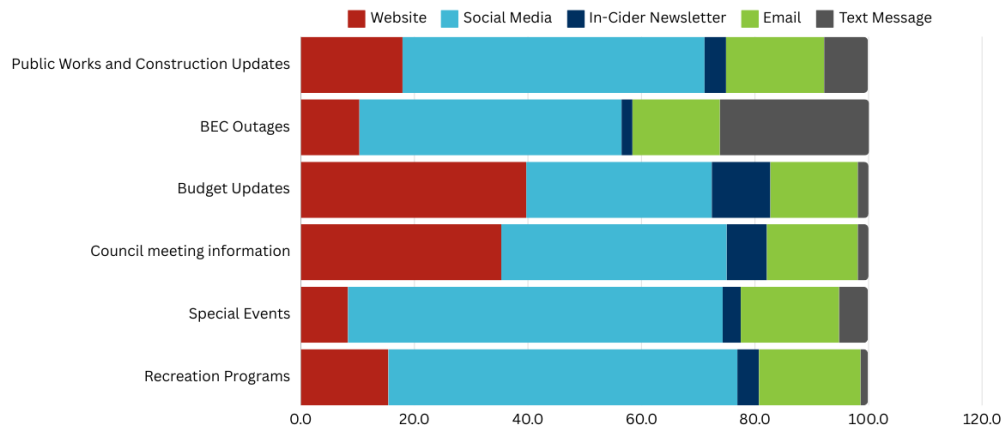
Website

In your opinion, are you able to easily navigate and find the information you are looking for when using the Town of Berwick website?



Receiving information

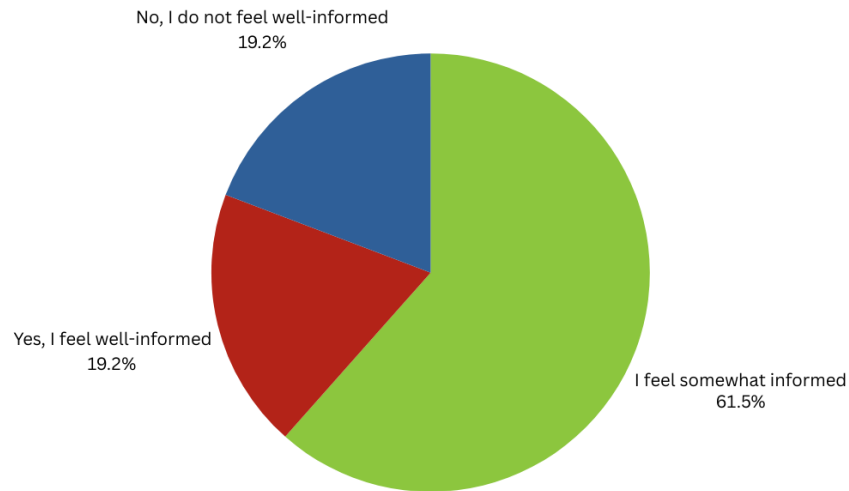
Respondents were asked to specify their preferred communication for several types of information updates. Unlike earlier questions in the survey, only one option was able to be selected for each type of information update. Many respondents noted in the survey that they would like to have had the option to choose multiple options; however the intention was for the most preferred option to be selected.



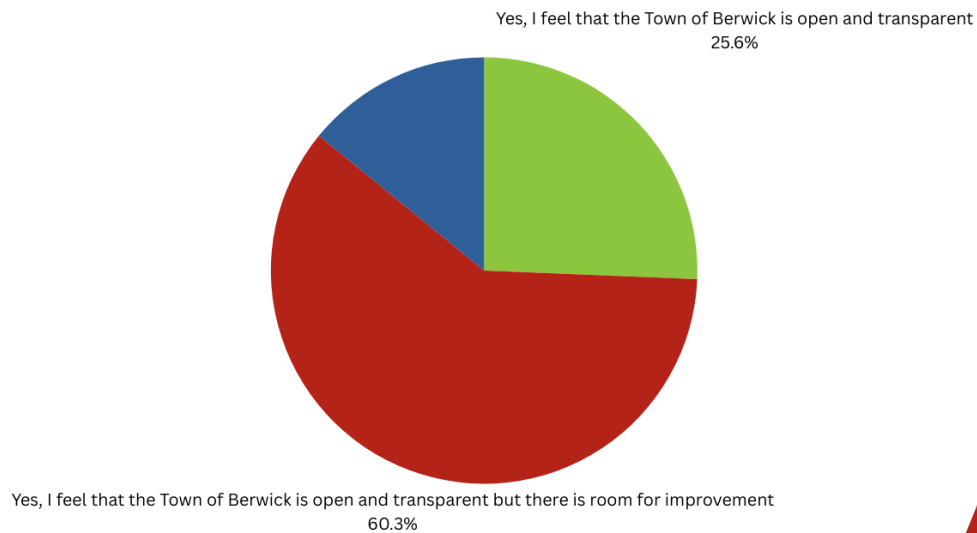


How residents feel

Do you feel well-informed about what's happening in the Town of Berwick?

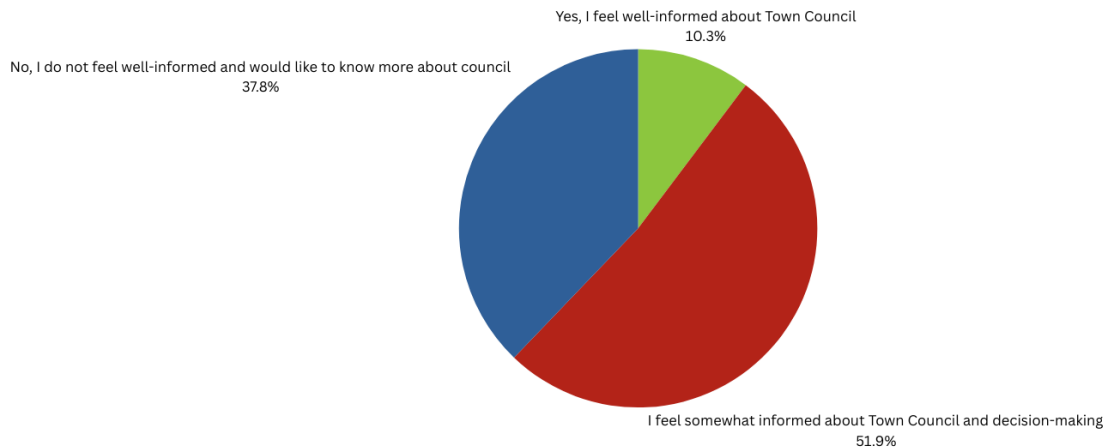


Do you feel the Town of Berwick is open and transparent in sharing news and information with the public?



How residents feel

Do you feel well-informed about Town Council meetings and the decisions of Council?



How can we improve?

Respondents were asked, "how do you think the Town could improve our efforts to communicate with the community?" and given a text box allowing up to 500 words.

The most frequent answers included "**more regular updates on Town projects and Council decisions**" and "**more information on scheduled/planned power outages**".

Many respondents noted that the Town does well with updating social media, but it can be difficult to find information in other forms; such as on the **website** or by **calling** Town Hall. There were multiple comments requesting **more advanced notice** for programming, events and Council and Committee meetings.

Respondents would like to see the option available for **email and text message notification** of upcoming power outages and newsletters to be distributed by mail and email.



Feedback

“You do really well and we love Berwick our friendly little town. Don't change that feel too much...it is treasured.”

“I think the town does a great job of keeping the community informed and up to date”

“I like the In-Cider newsletter”

“Thankful to live in a cute, forward thinking, safe town!”

“I admire this effort, with the questionnaire. It's a start!”

“Your town staff are wonderful. Overall you do a great job.”

“I love your social media presence but I do worry about the negativity directed at the town through it sometimes. I'm a firm believer that if someone has a real concern they should be contacting town in person not on social media behind a screen.”

“I feel some town hall meetings are not well advertised”

“I have been disappointed in the Town Website. It looks great but does not maintain current information on happenings and events”

“Website is very difficult to navigate and not often up to date”

“The town needs to work harder to get word out about power outages and other important things going on”

“I believe that even when information is provided it is not detailed enough. For example when we hear pickleball is a certain time. We do not know if it is drop in, or need to register, or if equipment is available etc.”





Feedback

"I feel like I have no idea what council members are doing or what council is doing. It would be nice to be able to watch the meetings live on Facebook without having to go through sending an email to the town to request access. Kentville is very transparent so I am not sure what the issue is."

"I do like being able to quickly go to Facebook and find info on what's happening."

"One way is when a person contacts the town about an issue, the town needs to be more forward and contact that person about what they are inquiring about and listen more to what that person has to say."

"I'm finding no one returns call inquiries"

"This is a lovely town but communication is poor"

"Lack of ability to become involved in community events as contact information is not available or messages or emails are not responded to."

"I think the general information for the community is great. When you need to contact someone directly for more information or to deal with a specific matter my experience is it takes a few days to get in contact with someone by phone or email. It would be helpful to be able to reach people at the town hall quicker."



DRAFT

DRAFT

2024/25 Council Priorities



To: Town Council
From: Jen Boyd, CAO
Date: ~~June 25, 2024~~ **July 9, 2024**
Subject: 2024/25 Council Priorities

References/Attachments

- 2024/25 Council Priorities

Legislation

N/A

Background

As discussed at the June Committee of the Whole meeting, the priority setting workshop did not go deep into each item that was identified under one of the three categories identified below. The workshop was intended for Council to identify their 2024/25 priorities to inform the 2024/25 operating and capital budgets.

Recognizing the limitations of the workshop and given there will be an election in the fall, staff are seeking clarification on whether the items identified are prioritized correctly, is anything something missing, or has the priority been defined properly. Without an existing strategic plan, staff want to be able to prioritize work and provide meaningful updates to Council until a strategic planning exercise with the next Council.

In December 2023, Council participated in a priority setting session to identify their top priorities for 2024/25. Identified priorities were sorted into three categories:

1. **MUST DO/IN PROGRESS:** These are priorities that are required by legislation and/or are already in progress.
2. **IMPORTANT TO DO:** These are priorities that Council has identified as important to the organization but would not compete for priority with the MUST DO priorities.
3. **NICE TO HAVE:** These are items that would be completed if time permitted and don't compete with the other priorities.

As noted in the department reports, staff will be reporting on Council's Priorities monthly to improve communication back to Council. To ensure staff are properly resourcing and reporting on the priorities, staff are seeking clarification on four priorities noted in the session.

1. Attracting Small Business: The chart indicates marketing plan – Valley REN.
2. Human Resources Review/Staffing

2024/25 Council Priorities



- 3. Policing Review
- 4. Recreation: The chart indicated Increased Programming and Programming for All Ages.

Council may decide that additional information is required for clarification on the items. Council may also want to provide clarification on the other priorities if the description does not properly summarize the priority.

Financial Implications

Council’s Priorities have been budgeted for in the 2024/25 Operating and Capital budgets. Depending on Council’s clarification regarding the above mentioned priorities, staff may need to adjust operating priorities.

Priority Alignment

Check Applicable	Strategic Priority Area	Comments
x	Economic	
x	Environmental	
x	Social	
x	Cultural	

Community Engagement/Communication

The department monthly reports will highlight Council’s priorities to ensure Council is up to date on their progress, and any potential issues/delays.

CAO Initials: JB

2024/25 Council Priorities

MUST DO/IN PROGRESS

- 2024 Municipal Election Prep
 - Regulatory/support
 - Engagement/education
- BEC Succession Plan
- Communications
- Committee Review
 - Terms of Reference and membership
 - Police Advisory
 - Planning Advisory
 - Accessibility
- MPS Review
- Wastewater Upgrades

IMPORTANT TO HAVE (fostering an environment....)

- Attracting Small Businesses
 - Marketing Plan - Valley REN
- Climate Change Policy/Strategy
 - Greenhouse Gas Plan
 - Green Assets
 - Energy
- Develop Paving Policy
- Finalize Asset Management
- Human Resources Review/Staffing
- Policing Review
- Sidewalks
 - Maple Avenue
- Recreation Infrastructure
 - Rainforth Park Plan & Playground
 - Centennial Park Plan
- Recreation
 - Increased Program
 - All ages

NICE TO HAVE

- Flag Revision
- Tree Replacement Policy

Energy - Working with AREA

- Batteries
- Renewable
- 100% Renewable

MUST DO/IN PROGRESS

2024 Election: Municipal elections are held every four years. The next election will be in October 2024 and municipalities are responsible for administering the election. Staff will also provide engagement opportunities for potential candidates.

BEC Succession Plan: Complete the Municipal Electric Utility (MEU) Optimization Study with the Town of Mahone Bay Electric Utility and the Riverport Electric and Light Commission to identify efficiencies and shared resources for MEU longevity.

Communications: Complete Communications Plan and begin implementation.

Committees of Council Review: Review or establish the Terms of Reference for all Town of Berwick Committees of Council and identify committee structures and required resources.

Municipal Planning Strategy: Complete review, approval and implementation of the Town's Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw.

Wastewater Treatment Upgrades: Tender upgrades to the wastewater treatment system for new blowers and new aeration system in lagoon two and prepare Request for Proposals to pilot and select a filtration system that will ensure compliance to meet Nova Scotia Environment (NSA) discharge limits.

IMPORTANT TO HAVE

Attracting Small Business: The chart indicates marketing plan – Valley REN. *Staff are seeking clarity on this priority to ensure it is properly resourced and reported on.*

Climate Change Policy/Strategy: **Ensure there is a climate lens placed on decisions, directions and other policies of Council.** Develop an Action Plan for the Town of Berwick highlighting current initiatives and areas for action and expansion using recent reports concerning greenhouse gases, green assets and energy.

Develop Paving Policy: Develop a policy with criteria to guide decision making for larger paving projects

Finalize Asset Management: Identify the program/system(s) required to properly manage and use the asset management data gathered through the AIM Network project in 2023.

Human Resources Review/Staffing: *Staff are seeking clarity on this priority to ensure it is properly resourced and reported on.*

Policing Review: Document what has been done to this point and keeping Council up to date on what is happening around the province. Health and Safety our citizens and how we protect/deliver. *Staff are seeking clarity on this priority to ensure it is properly resourced and reported on.*

Sidewalks: Combination of in house improvements and new construction based on condition assessments. A priority for new construction for 2024/25 is completing Maple Avenue sidewalk from Union Street to South Street.

Recreation Infrastructure: Complete Centennial Park Plan and identify and implement Phase 1. Complete consultation for Rainforth Park playground.

Recreation: The chart indicated Increased Programming and Programming for All Ages. *Staff are seeking clarity on this priority to ensure it is properly resourced and reported on.*

***Storm Water Management:** Review and update the 2004 Storm Water Management Study and develop an implementation plan based on the recommendations.

Energy – Working With AREA

Work with AREA on renewable energy projects and local battery storage to achieve 100% renewable energy for Berwick Electric.

REQUEST FOR DECISION

RFD024-2024: Multi-Use Printer Tender Award



To: Council
From: Director of Finance
Date: July 9, 2024
Subject: Multi-Use Printer Tender Award

References/Attachments

- BER2024-007 Multi-Use Printer Request for Proposals

Recommendation

That Council approve the thirty-six (36) month lease of one Kyocera Taskalfa 6054ci multi-use printer from Workplace Essentials with a monthly lease price of \$404.13 plus hst, and monthly rates of \$0.0089 per black and white and \$0.0488 per color.

Background

The Town of Berwick (TOB) issued Tender BER2024-007 on May 10th, 2024, seeking the lease or purchase and maintenance of one new multi-purpose printer. The existing multi-use printer has been experiencing a significant volume of breakdowns and service issues. The technicians have advised the machine is at end of life and falling into disrepair. As the Town has one main printer which is utilized for the printing of bills, newsletters, and general operations, as well as scanning, copying and faxing, this machine is critical to the operations of the Town.

Seven (7) tender responses were received, and scoring may be found in Appendix A. Upon review of a lease vs purchase option, staff are recommending moving forward with the lease option for the Kyocera Taskalfa 6054ci. This machine exceeds all of our base criteria, providing excellent functionality. Workplace Essentials is also the clear front runner in the service and maintenance category, with local technicians and excellent response times.

While the monthly lease payment will be an operating expense, the cost is very reasonable and ensures we will have a reliable and operable machine to support town operations. To purchase the machine outright, would be an impact to our capital budget, potentially drawing down reserves to fund the purchase, or funding by way of debt, which would then incur interest and the added impact to the operating budget. As an outright purchase, the machine is depreciated over five (5) years and historically the output digresses through years four through five, which negatively impacts our services. There is also the option of extending the lease for an additional twelve months, upon conclusion of the thirty-six-month term.

**REQUEST FOR DECISION
RFD024-2024: Multi-Use Printer
Tender Award**



Financial Implications

This item was not included in the 2024/25 operating budget, therefore a monthly impact of \$422 (\$5,066 annual) will be incurred. The monthly fee per usage remains on par with the current budget amount, therefore no impact to the budget.

Priority Alignment

Check Applicable	Strategic Priority Area	Comments
X	Economic	
	Environmental	
	Social	
	Cultural	

Alternatives

N/A

Community Engagement/Communication

N/A

CAO Comments

I support the recommendation of staff.

CAO Initials: JB

Target Decision Date: July 9, 2024

RFP BER2024-007 MULTITUSE PRINTER

	Criteria	Summary	Possible Points	Atlantic Business Interiors	Office Xpress	Ricoh	Workplace Essentials (1)	Workplace Essentials (2)	Xtra Doc Solutions	Yukon
(a)	Quality and Technical Features	Consider: • Capability requirements from Bid Form. • Additional features provided <input type="checkbox"/>	40	35	35	35	35	40	35	35
(b)	Qualifications and Experience	• Experience and approach to managing: A: Local References	30	6	5	10	10	10	6	6
		B: Technicians in Service Area		5	4	9	10	10	6	8
		C: Average Response time		6	6	6	10	10	6	1
(c)	Cost	Project costs broken out by Total Purchase Price, Costing Details, Maintenance Details	20	8	16	15	15	17	10	10
	Compliance with RFP	Bid form completed in full and all requirements of RFP met	10	10	5	10	10	10	10	10
	Score		100	60	66	75	80	87	63	60

REQUEST FOR DECISION

RFD026-2024

Valley Waste 2023-24 Capital Budget Items
Temporary Borrowing Resolution, Municipal
Partner Guarantee Resolution



To: Town Council
From: Director of Finance
Date: July 9, 2024
Subject: Valley Waste 2023-24 Capital Budget Items TBR, Municipal Partner Guarantee Resolution

References/Attachments

- Valley Regional Solid Waste Resource Management Authority (VWRM) Temporary Borrowing Resolution, including Schedule B noting the capital budget items funded by way of debt.
- Standard loan guarantee resolution provided by VWRM.

Legislation

- Pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act* Section 88
- VWRM IMSA

Recommendation

That Council approve the Town of Berwick's loan guarantee as requested by the VWRM, in the amount of \$59,858 or 3.45% of the VWRM's Temporary Borrowing Resolution (in the total amount of \$1,735,000) per attached loan guarantee schedule.

Background

The Town of Berwick is a Party to the VWRM Intermunicipal Services Agreement (IMSA). Under the IMSA, parties are required to guarantee their share of any long-term borrowings of VWRM.

Financial Implications

There are no immediate budget impacts, though the required debt repayment for the capital items will be included in the annual budget of VWRM, which may have an impact on Berwick's future party contribution amount.

REQUEST FOR DECISION

RFD026-2024

Valley Waste 2023-24 Capital Budget Items
Temporary Borrowing Resolution, Municipal
Partner Guarantee Resolution



Priority Alignment

Check Applicable	Strategic Priority Area	Comments
X	Economic	
	Environmental	
	Social	
	Cultural	

Alternatives

N/A

Community Engagement/Communication

N/A

CAO Comments

I support the recommendation.

CAO Initials: JB

Target Decision Date: July 9, 2024

VALLEY REGION SOLID WASTE-RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

TEMPORARY BORROWING RESOLUTION

Amount: \$ 1,735,000 Capital Projects: Detailed in Schedule "B"

WHEREAS the Valley Region Solid Waste-Resource Management Authority (hereinafter referred to as the Authority) was incorporated on October 1, 2001 pursuant to Section 60 of the Municipal Government Act;

WHEREAS the Town of Berwick, the Town of Kentville, the Town of Middleton, the Town of Wolfville, the Town of Annapolis Royal, and the Municipality of the County of Kings entered into an inter-municipal services agreement pursuant to Section 60 of the Municipal Government Act;

WHEREAS the Authority pursuant to the inter-municipal agreement states that the body corporate shall be vested with the power to borrow money for the purpose of capital projects, the specific amounts and descriptions of which are contained in Schedule "B";

WHEREAS any borrowing and/or entering into debt obligations of the municipal body corporate must be approved by the municipal units and the Municipal Guarantee percentages and amounts for each of the six municipal parties are attached at Schedule "A"; and,

WHEREAS pursuant to Section 88 of the Municipal Government Act no money shall be borrowed by a municipality, village, committee by an inter-municipal agreement or service commission pursuant to this Act or another Act of the Legislature until the proposed borrowing has been approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has the approved the proposed guarantees;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED

THAT under the authority of the intermunicipal services agreement entered into under Section 60 of the *Municipal Government Act*, and subject to the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Authority borrow a sum or sums not to exceed
One Million Seven Hundred Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars
(\$ 1,735,000) for the purpose set out above;

THAT the sum be borrowed by the issue and sale of debentures of the Authority of an amount as the Authority deems necessary;

THAT pursuant to Section 92 of the Municipal Government Act, the issue of debentures be postponed and that a sum or sums not to exceed
One Million Seven Hundred Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars
(\$ 1,735,000) in total be borrowed from time to time from any chartered bank or trust company doing business in Nova Scotia;

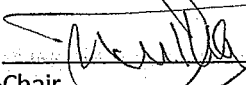
THAT the sum be borrowed for a period not exceeding Twelve (12) Months from the date of the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing of this resolution;

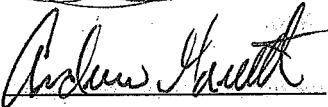
THAT the interest payable on the borrowing be paid at a rate to be agreed upon; and,

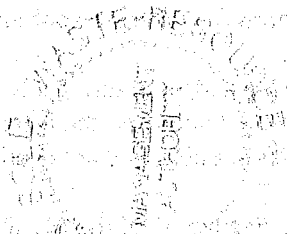
THAT the amount borrowed be repaid from the proceeds of the debentures when sold.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution read and duly passed at a meeting of the Valley Region Solid Waste-Resource Management Authority held on the 19th day of June, 2024.

GIVEN under the hands of the Chair and the Secretary and under the seal of the Authority this 19th day of June, 2024.


Chair


Secretary



**VALLEY REGION SOLID WASTE-RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
MUNICIPAL PARTNER GUARANTEE RESOLUTION
COUNCIL OF**

Guarantee Share Amount: \$ _____ Purpose: _____

WHEREAS the Valley Region Solid Waste-Resource Management Authority (hereinafter referred to as the Authority) was incorporated on October 1, 2001 pursuant to Section 60 of the Municipal Government Act;

WHEREAS the Authority has determined to borrow the aggregate principal amount of _____ Dollars (\$ _____) for purpose of _____;

WHEREAS the Authority has requested the Council of the _____, a municipality that executed the instrument of incorporation of the Authority, to guarantee said borrowing; and,

WHEREAS pursuant to Section 88 of the Municipal Government Act, no guarantee of a borrowing by a municipality shall have effect unless the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has approved of the proposed borrowing or debenture and of the proposed guarantee;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED

THAT the Council of the _____ does hereby approve the borrowing of the aggregate principal amount of _____ Dollars (\$ _____) for the purpose set out above;

THAT subject to the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing of the borrowing by the Authority and the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs Housing of the guarantee, the Council unconditionally guarantee repayment of _____ Dollars (\$ _____) for the purpose set out above; and

THAT upon the issue of the debentures, the Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality do sign the guarantee attached to each of the debentures and affix thereto the corporate seal of the Municipality.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution read and duly passed at a meeting of the Council of the _____ held on the _____ day of _____, 2024.

GIVEN under the hands of the Clerk and under the seal of the Municipality this _____ day of _____, 2024.

Clerk

VALLEY REGION SOLID WASTE-RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

TEMPORARY BORROWING RESOLUTION

Amount: \$ 1,735,000

Capital Projects: Detailed in Schedule "B"

SCHEDULE "A"

MUNICIPAL GUARANTEES

MUNICIPAL PARTNER	GUARANTEE PERCENTAGE	GUARANTEE AMOUNT
Municipality of the County of Kings	74.03	1284421
Town of Kentville	10.26	178011
Town of Wolfville	8.76	151986
Town of Berwick	3.45	59858
Town of Middleton	2.44	42334
Town of Annapolis Royal	1.06	18390
Total Capital Requirements for Borrowing Resolution	100	1,735,000

VALLEY REGION SOLID WASTE-RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

TEMPORARY BORROWING RESOLUTION

Amount: \$ 1,735,000

Capital Projects: Detailed in Schedule "B"

**SCHEDULE "B"
CAPITAL PROJECTS**

		Estimates \$
Heading: Rolling Stock		
Item	Wheel Loader	375,000
Item		
Item		
Item		
Heading Sub Total:		375,000
Heading: Efficiency Upgrade		
Item	Cardboard Baler	110,000
Item	Morbark Shredder	600,000
Item	Excavator	300,000
Item		
Heading Sub Total:		1,010,000
Heading: Building and Infrastructure		
Item	HHW Stewardship Centre	350,000
Item		
Item		
Item		
Heading Sub Total:		350,000
Heading:		
Item		
Item		
Item		
Item		
Heading Sub Total:		0
Heading:		
Item		
Item		
Item		
Item		
Heading Sub Total:		0
Heading:		
Item		
Item		
Item		
Item		
Heading Sub Total:		0
TOTAL REQUEST CONTAINED WITHIN THIS RESOLUTION		1,735,000

REQUEST FOR DECISION

RFD027-2024: Municipal Innovation Program Resolution



To: Council
From: CAO
Date: July 9, 2024
Subject: Municipal Innovation Program Resolution – Annapolis Valley Regional Marketing Levy

References/Attachments

- Municipal Innovation Program

Recommendation

That Council support an application to the Municipal Innovation Program in partnership with the Valley Regional Enterprise Network to develop a framework for a regional marketing levy in the Annapolis Valley.

Background

On May 23, 2024, the Valley Regional Enterprise Network (REN) hosted an information session for municipal elected officials and staff to discuss the potential for a regional marketing levy as part of a sustainable funding model to support the creation of a Destination Management Organization (DMO) for the Annapolis Valley.

While an initial information session was incorporated as a recommendation from the region's tourism strategy plan, it was apparent following this session that additional facilitated sessions with municipalities and industry were essential to develop an effective framework for municipalities to gain consensus on and adopt a regional marketing levy that will support a DMO.

Lacking the capacity to facilitate additional sessions and develop a framework specifically for municipalities as part of the implementation of the tourism strategy plan, the Town of Berwick in partnership with the Valley REN are putting forward a collaborative regional project for consideration under the Municipal Innovation Program (MIP).

If approved, a contract resource will be engaged for six to seven months to complete the facilitated sessions, led the municipal-led working group, and create the framework. The project will achieve the creation of a framework for the Annapolis Valley municipalities for the implementation of a regional marketing levy in the region. The framework will be developed through facilitated consultation with tourism operators, municipalities and First Nations. The framework will provide the municipalities with recommended next steps, including but not limited to:

1. A Memorandum of Understanding for municipal working group regarding decision-making, and conflict resolution;

REQUEST FOR DECISION
RFD027-2024: Municipal Innovation
Program Resolution



2. Intermunicipal Services Agreement for collection, distribution and general use of the marketing levy funds;
3. Timeline/phases for effective date and roll out of the marketing levy;
4. Software for remittance and reduction of administrative burden on municipalities;
5. Communication Plan for next steps with tourism operators, municipalities and First Nations Furthermore, with the a municipal election happening in October, a well-established engagement plan to consult and educate new and returning elected officials is key to the success of establishing a regional marketing levy within the same time frame as the STAR Transitional Implementation Working Committee to establish a DMO; approximately two years.

A Municipality-led Working Committee consisting of municipal representatives will act as regional connectors and champions for the regional marketing levy framework. Key municipal staff, including CAOs, Deputy CAOs, EDOs, and others, will be invited to participate in the facilitated sessions to create a regional framework. The aim of these sessions is to engage in collaborative discussions and gain consensus on a preferred regional approach, while recognizing that the administrative burden for marketing levies is placed primarily on municipalities.

It is a requirement for the application to provide a Council resolution supporting the project.

Financial Implications

There is no financial implication to the Town of Berwick. The Valley REN will be contributing the 25% funding required through their tourism funding. Staff time will be required, though without the contract resource, the amount of staff time would be greatly increased.

The overall project cost is approximately \$75,000, including contract resource, travel, means and accommodations, facility rentals and administrative oversight.

Priority Alignment

Check Applicable	Strategic Priority Area	Comments
X	Economic	
X	Environmental	
X	Social	

REQUEST FOR DECISION
RFD027-2024: Municipal Innovation
Program Resolution



x	Cultural	
---	----------	--

Alternatives

Council may choose to not to support the joint application. If this is decided, the application will not move forward.

Community Engagement/Communication

Would occur throughout the project.

CAO Comments

Although Berwick does not currently have any accommodations within our boundaries, the overall initiative to develop a Destination Marketing Organization for the Valley Region could support the establishment of future accommodations in Berwick and support other economic spin-offs. A consistent approach for implementing a marketing levy in the region is important for its success. As the lead CAO working with Valley REN, I have been working with the CEO to initiate this application.

CAO Initials: JB

Target Decision Date: July 9, 2024

Dear municipal and village leaders:

Our province is on a journey to become more inclusive and equitable. The *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* ([the Act](#)) recognized that systemic hate, inequity, and racism can be caused by government and public bodies through policies, practices, and procedures that appear neutral but have the effect of disadvantaging underrepresented and underserved groups. The Act further provided authority to prescribe public sector bodies through regulations to require them to develop plans to address systemic hate, inequity, and racism.

Recognizing the vital role that municipalities and villages play in shaping the daily lives of Nova Scotians, regulations were recently approved that prescribe municipalities and villages as public bodies under the Act. **Under the Regulations, municipalities and villages will be required to have plans to address systemic hate, inequity, and racism by April 1, 2025.**

To help municipalities and villages understand and meet this requirement, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism (OEA) has developed guidance and resources. This includes:

- [Equity and Anti-Racism Plans Guidance for Municipalities and Villages](#)
- [Equity and Anti-Racism Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Equity and Anti-Racism Primer](#)

OEA is partnering with the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia (AMANS) who will provide dedicated support to municipalities and villages over the next four years. This means that staff and resources will be available from AMANS to assist with the development and implementation of your equity and anti-racism plans. In the coming months, several training and information sessions will be scheduled for staff who are supporting the development of your plans.

OEA and the Accessibility Directorate are working collaboratively to support municipalities and villages to meet requirements under both the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and the *Accessibility Act*. Recognizing that municipalities and villages are also required to update their accessibility plans by April 1, 2025, municipalities and villages can develop a single equity, anti-racism and accessibility plan. Like accessibility plans, municipalities and villages can collaborate and develop joint plans that cover more than one geographic area. Unlike requirements under the *Accessibility Act*, you are not required to establish a committee to develop your equity and anti-racism plan.

As you embark on this journey, we urge you to consider the diverse needs of all members of your community, including Mi'kmaw and persons of Indigenous descent, African Nova Scotians and Persons of African descent, persons of colour, 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomers (immigrants & refugees), faith-based communities, persons with disabilities, persons who are neurodivergent, and seniors. Equity and anti-racism plans must be informed by community engagement and aim to address systemic barriers that contribute to inequitable outcomes.

In summary:

- Municipalities and villages are required to develop plans to address systemic hate, inequity and racism by April 1, 2025;
- Meeting this requirement and the requirement for an updated accessibility plan can be met through a combined “equity, anti-racism and accessibility plan”;
- OEA and partner AMANS will provide dedicated resources and ongoing support as you work to meet this legal requirement; and
- Joint equity, anti-racism and accessibility plans can be developed by multiple municipalities and/or public bodies to meet requirements.

In closing, I want to recognize that municipalities and villages play vital roles in our province. With your tailored equity, anti-racism and accessibility plans, we can break down barriers and create a more inclusive and vibrant society for all Nova Scotians. Together, we can work towards a future where every individual feels valued and