

NSFM's Regional Meeting Minutes - Draft

Valley Region

Monday, April 29, 2019

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

County of Kings Municipal Building, 87 Cornwallis Street, Kentville

In Attendance:

Town of Annapolis Royal: Mayor Bill MacDonald, Deputy Mayor Pat Power

Town of Berwick: Mayor Don Clarke, Councillor Ty Walsh

Town of Kentville: Councillor John Andrews, Councillor Eric Bolland, Councillor Cathy Maxwell, Councillor Lynn Pulsifer, Deputy Mayor Cate Savage, Mayor Sandra Snow

Town of Middleton: Mayor Sylvester Atkinson

Town of Windsor: Mayor Anna Allen

Town of Wolfville: Mayor Jeff Cantwell, Councillor Wendy Donovan, Councillor Wendy Elliot, Deputy Mayor Carl Oldham

Municipality of the County of Annapolis: Warden Timothy Habinski, Councillor John MacDonald, Councillor Alex Morrison

Municipality of the County of Kings: Mayor Peter Muttart, Councillor Brian Hirtle, Councillor Megan Hodges, Deputy CAO Rob Frost

1. Welcome from Host Unit

Mayor Peter Muttart welcomed everyone to the meeting and to the County of Kings.

2. Greetings from NSFM

NSFM President, Councillor Waye Mason, provided greetings on behalf of NSFM.

3. Priorities & Resolutions Process

Chief Executive Officer, Juanita Spencer, gave an overview of NSFM's revised resolutions process, which was introduced a few years ago. She noted that the process will continue to evolve as

NSFM looks for opportunities to improve it. She also noted that NSFM is taking on a more active, advocacy approach to addressing important municipal issues.

NSFM staff provided the following updates on the five resolutions submitted to the Province in 2018:

1. **CAP:** Since the November Conference, NSFM, AMA, PVSC and members have formed a steering committee to strategically work towards a solution. Meetings have been held with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and his staff on several occasions, stakeholders, and preparations are in place to meet with the three provincial political caucuses.
2. **EPR:** After the November Conference the Province asked NSFM staff to consult Nova Scotian businesses on our EPR proposal. The consultation is now complete, and the production of the final proposal is anticipated in a few months' time.
3. **Municipal Funding:** The Province recently announced a new name for the Equalization Grant – Municipal Financial Capacity Grant. NSFM has made a submission in support of the change to legislation at Law Amendments. NSFM took the opportunity of coverage in the media to note that while this change in name provides clarity, our request for an increase in funding to the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant (of \$20M over three years) remains unaddressed.
4. **Municipal Modernization:** At the November Conference our members voted to request that the Province help facilitate municipal cooperation. \$578,000 has since been set aside in the 2019 provincial budget for a Municipal Innovation Program to support municipalities. While this is not an immense amount of money, we are taking this as a signal that the Province has heard us and understand that this is an issue for municipalities. There are no details on how this funding is to be used, but we are waiting on a meeting with DMA to see what they are thinking. The funds may be used to support pilot programs, or to document the Windsor/West Hants consolidation.
5. **Roads:** At the November conference it was hoped that a new funding agreement for roads would be in place by June 2019. A joint municipal-provincial roads committee is now underway. The committee has nearly finalized its work plan, and although a new funding agreement is part of that work plan, it is not anticipated that an agreement will be complete by this June. More updates will be provided on this as they become available.

NSFM staff also provided an update on the following Statements of Concern:

- Municipal Responsibilities
- Policing
- Surplus Schools
- Sustainability and Infrastructure Funding

4. NSFM Updates

The agenda package included updates on NSFM initiatives, including the Gas Tax Fund and asset management planning in Nova Scotia.

5. Round Table Discussion & Regional Issues

President Mason led a roundtable discussion on regional issues. Members in the room seemed to agree that the best course of action would be to keep working at the same five resolutions chosen in 2018 until they have been resolved. Comments from this discussion included:

- It is important for municipalities to see results on these important issues, so they can inform their residents.
- Although doctor recruitment is an important issue for our communities and municipalities can play a role in recruiting and retaining doctors, it is not up to them to spend tax-payers' money on health infrastructure – that is the responsibility of the Province.
- The conversation about CAP should not be about removing it but reforming it; it needs to be phased out and there needs to be mechanisms in place to protect low-income homeowners, achieve revenue neutrality and prevent spikes in assessments.
- Climate change is an important issue for municipalities and they need support in addressing it.
- Any support NSFM can provide with communications would be very helpful.

President Mason also spoke about NSFM's 1-year presidency term. The option of extending it to 2 years has been discussed in the past. However, at the time, there were concerns expressed that a 2-year term was not a viable option for 2 main reasons: 1) as the position is demanding, those acting as NSFM's president who also have other full-time commitments/jobs might need to take a significant amount of time off in order to fulfill the role of president, and 2) it would require a minimum commitment of 6 years on the NSFM's Board of Directors (2 years as caucus representative/chair, 2 years as VP and 2 years as president). President Mason suggested the option of changing one of the two member-at-large positions on FCM's Board of Directors to a NSFM VP position (currently there are four Nova Scotia representatives on FCM's Board: 2 members-at-large, 1 representative from Halifax and NSFM's president). Having the VP act as a table officer at FCM before taking over as NSFM's president would give them more time to learn about the workings of FCM's Board. This idea would have to be ratified by NSFM's members at its fall conference, as it would require a change in our bylaws. If successfully passed, it would then require a change in FCM's bylaws.

A concern was raised that removing one of the member-at-large positions to create a NSFM VP position on FCM's Board takes away somewhat from the democratic process. Instead, it was

suggested that NSFMs' presidency term start in June (to coincide with FCM's Board of Directors' process) instead of November.

President Mason noted that NSFMs staff will explore both options (including costing for each) to inform further discussion.

6. Evaluation and Adjournment

Following completion of evaluation forms, the meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm.