

**Amherst Town Council
General Operating Budget
Minutes**

Date: February 27, 2026
Time: 9:30 am
Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall

Members Present
Mayor Rob Small
Deputy Mayor Charlie Chambers
Councillor Hal Davidson
Councillor Nic Furlong
Councillor Terry McManaman
Councillor Dwayne Ripley
Councillor Kathy Wells

Staff Present
Jason MacDonald, Chief Administrative Officer
Kim Jones, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Aaron Bourgeois, Director, Operations
Andrew Fisher, Director, Planning & Economic Development
Dwayne Pike, Chief, Police Services
Greg Jones, Director, Fire Services
Kim Jones, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Krista Crossman, Director, Human Resources
Sarah Wilson, Director, Finance
Denise Smith, Finance Manager
Sharon Bristol, Director, Community Living
Sean Payne, Marketing & Communications Officer
Natalie LeBlanc, Municipal Clerk
Cindy Brown, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

Mayor Small called the meeting to order.

1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement

Mayor Small gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

2. Information Items

The CAO spoke to his memo and the 2026/27 Operating Budget, indicating that staff have taken into consideration our strategic plan and built funding into the applicable sections of both the operating and capital budgets. The following is a list of some of the ways we have addressed our strategic initiatives, with some figures being approximate:

- Business Park Expansion
 - \$2,500,000 for new business park infrastructure
- Housing
 - \$585,000 for Marshview Drive Phases 2 and 3
- Mobility
 - Approximately \$114,000 has been included in the capital budget for sidewalks.
 - Fixed Route Transit for Consideration (subject to other decisions)

- Marketing
 - An additional \$30,000 has been allocated for marketing initiatives.
- Vibrant Community
 - \$70,000 for new lights on Victoria Street
 - \$250,000 for new 'bandstand' in Victoria Park
 - \$50,000 for decorative lighting
 - \$15,000 CCUBIC audio improvements
 - \$15,000 Stadium audio improvements
 - \$1,500,000 for new stadium ice making plant
 - \$1,200,000 for new accessible playground
- Economic Development
 - \$12,000 Economic Development Student
 - \$12,000 Tourism Student (make permanent)
 - \$30,000 Business Park Highway signage
 - \$20,000 Highway Billboard Sign refresh
- Social Needs
 - Usual Community Support grants to organizations and tax reductions / exemptions.
 - \$50,000 for the continuation of the Community Navigator (health care recruitment)
 - \$50,000 for the armoury feasibility study (carry over)
 - \$18,000 for three students for the summer parks program (make permanent)
 - \$90,000 for paved walkways at Robbs Baseball Complex
 - \$50,000 for accessible washroom upgrades at Robbs Baseball Complex
 - \$25,000 for accessible washroom upgrade at Rotary Park
- Environment
 - \$70,000 to clean the interior of the water reservoirs
 - \$80,000 for aeration lines at the wastewater treatment facility
- Safety
 - \$160,000 included for police officer continuity (funded from operating reserve, if required)
 - \$175,000 contribution towards a live fire training facility (carry over)
 - \$249,000 for Police Equipment
 - \$258,000 for Fire Equipment
- Infrastructure
 - Approximately \$2,000,000 for various infrastructure repairs and equipment purchases.
- Strategic Community Infrastructure (subject to other decisions)
 - Staff will present a decision-making matrix to potentially fund, plan and construct:
 - i. \$8,100,000 soccer and track and field complex (\$3,100,000 TOA)
 - ii. \$45,000,000 stadium / community centre (\$15,000,000 TOA)
 - iii. \$6,000,000 gymnasium at the YMCA (\$1,000,000 TOA)

The Director of Finance gave a presentation on the overall general operating budget.

- 2.1 **Tax Rate History**
- 2.2 **Assessment Comparison**
- 2.3 **Revenue Generated by \$0.01 on the Tax Rate**
- 2.4 **Debenture Schedule**
- 2.5 **Debt Service Ratio**
- 2.6 **Operating Reserve Balances**
- 2.7 **Capital Reserve Balances**

3. **General Rate - Overall**

- 3.1 **General Rate - Overall Summary**

- 3.2 **General Rate - Overall Revenues Detail**
- 3.3 **General Rate - Overall Expenditure Detail**

4. **Executive Office**

- 4.1 **Executive Office Summary Including Revenue Detail**
- 4.2 **Executive Office Expenditure Detail**

5. **Finance**

- 5.1 **Finance Summary Including Revenue Detail**
- 5.2 **Finance Expenditure Detail**
- 5.3 **RFD - Deed Transfer Tax**
Moved By Councillor Wells
Seconded By Councillor Davidson
That Council approve increasing the Deed Transfer Tax rate from 1.25% to 1.5%
in 2026/27 effective July 1, 2026, as previously recommended by staff.
Against (2): Councillor Furlong, and Councillor Ripley

MOTION CARRIED

6. **Human Resources**

- 6.1 **Human Resources Summary with Revenue Detail**
- 6.2 **Human Resources Expenditure Detail**

7. **Police**

- 7.1 **Police Summary Including Revenue Detail**
- 7.2 **Police Expenditure Detail**
- 7.3 **RFD - LA Animal Shelter - Funding Request**

**Moved By Councillor Ripley
Seconded By Councillor McManaman
That Council include an allowance for additional funding to the LA Animal Shelter from \$10,000 to \$25,000 annually in the 2026/27 operating budget as the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is currently being reviewed; a final decision to be made on the funding amount once the MOU review is complete.**

MOTION CARRIED

7.4 RFD - Police Staffing

Moved By Councillor Wells

Seconded By Councillor Davidson

That Council approve \$160,000 in the 2026/27 operational budget from the operating reserve to continue to provide funding to address staffing shortages in the Police Department.

MOTION CARRIED

8. Fire

8.1 Fire Summary Including Revenue Detail

8.2 Fire Expenditure Detail

9. Community Living

9.1 Community Living Summary Including Revenue Detail

9.2 Community Living Expenditure Detail

9.3 RFD - Summer Students

Moved By Councillor Ripley

Seconded By Deputy Mayor Chambers

That Council approve the addition of the following summer students in the 2026/27 operating budget, which were previously funded from the Operating Reserve in 2025/26:

- 1. Three programming summer student positions for a total of 8 weeks, 35 hours per week at a total cost of \$18,020 (\$6,006 each).**
- 2. One tourism summer student position for a total of 16 weeks, 35 hours per week at a total cost of \$12,710.**

MOTION CARRIED

9.4 RFD - Marketing Budget

Moved By Councillor Davidson

Seconded By Councillor Wells

That Council approve the addition of \$30,000 to the 2026/27 operating budget for Marketing and Communications.

MOTION CARRIED

9.5 Navigator Summary Including Revenue Detail

The CAO was directed to contact the Municipality of the County of Cumberland to confirm their portion of funding for the Community Navigator position.

9.6 OHPR Navigator Summary Including Revenue Detail

10. Planning

10.1 Planning Summary Including Revenue Detail

10.2 Planning Expenditure Detail

10.3 RFD - Economic Development Summer Student

Moved By Councillor Davidson

Seconded By Deputy Mayor Chambers

That Council approve a new economic development term/casual position in the 2026/27 operating budget for a total cost of \$16,500.

MOTION CARRIED

11. Strategic

11.1 Strategic Summary Including Detail

12. Environmental Stewardship

12.1 Environmental Stewardship Summary Including Detail

13. Recreation Facilities

13.1 Recreation Facilities Summary Including Revenue Detail

13.2 Recreation Facilities Expenditure Detail

14. Operations

14.1 Operations Summary Including Revenue Detail

14.2 Operations Expenditure Detail

14.3 RFD - Road Salting - Level of Service

Moved By Councillor Furlong

Seconded By Councillor Ripley

That Council increase the proposed 2026/27 operating budget for snow and ice management by \$75,000 to expand salting operations to include the salting of all streets not on the designated salt route, after all other snow and ice operations are complete.

Against (3): Mayor Small, Councillor Davidson, and Councillor Wells

MOTION CARRIED

15. Policies

15.1 RFD - User Fee Policy

Moved By Councillor Davidson

Seconded By Deputy Mayor Chambers

That Council forward the proposed amendments to the User Fee Policy #03470-03 to the next Council meeting for approval, including a further amendment to change the line in the Off Season Stadium Rentals table for Extra Employees from \$25.00 per person per hour to Employee Actual Cost per employee.

MOTION CARRIED

Moved By Councillor Davidson

Seconded By Councillor Ripley

That staff be directed to consult with the Cumberland County Minor Hockey Association, the Amherst Skating Club and the Municipality of the County of Cumberland about free ice time, how the funds provided for this program can be better allocated to support those in need, and to bring a recommendation back to Council by the June Committee of the Whole at the latest.

MOTION CARRIED

15.2 User Fee Policy

16. Solid Waste

16.1 Solid Waste Summary Including Revenue Detail

16.2 Solid Waste Expenditure Detail

16.3 RFD - Uniform Charge Solid Waste Decrease

Moved By Councillor Wells

Seconded By Councillor Davidson

That Council decrease the Uniform Charge Solid Waste from \$278/year to \$250/year.

MOTION CARRIED

17. Sewage

17.1 Sewage Summary Including Revenue Detail

17.2 Sewage Expenditure Detail

17.3 RFD - Sanitary Sewer Rates Increase

Moved By Councillor Wells

Seconded By Councillor McManaman

That Council increase the sewer rates as follows:

	<u>Current</u>	<u>New</u>
	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Annual</u>
	<u>Base</u>	<u>Base</u>
<u>Size of Meter</u>	<u>Charge</u>	<u>Charge</u>
5/8"	\$ 82.80	\$ 103.50
3/4"	\$ 124.20	\$ 155.25
1"	\$ 201.25	\$ 251.56
1.5"	\$ 395.60	\$ 494.50
2"	\$ 626.75	\$ 783.44
3'	\$1,247.75	\$1,559.69
4"	\$2,300.00	\$2,875.00

	<u>Current</u>	<u>New</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>New</u>
	<u>Annual Flat</u>	<u>Annual Flat</u>	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Annual</u>
	<u>Charge</u>	<u>Charge</u>	<u>Uniform</u>	<u>Uniform</u>
	<u>Charge</u>	<u>Charge</u>	<u>Charge</u>	<u>Charge</u>
Flat Charges	\$ 189.23	\$ 210.05	Uniform Charge \$ 82.80	\$ 103.50

MOTION CARRIED

18. Water Utility

18.1 Water Utility Summary Including Revenue Detail

18.2 Water Utility Expenditure Detail

19. Mandatory Provincial Contribution Area Rate

19.1 Mandatory Provincial Contribution Area Rate Summary Including Revenue Detail

19.2 Mandatory Provincial Contribution Area Rate Calculation

20. Community Support Area Rate

20.1 Community Support Area Rate Summary Including Revenue Detail

20.2 Community Support Area Rate Calculation

**20.3 Memo - Tax Reduction Policy
Moved By Councillor Davidson
Seconded By Councillor Wells**

To forward to a future Council meeting, an amendment to the Tax Reduction Policy to increase the income level from \$30,000 to \$32,000.

Against (1): Councillor Furlong

MOTION CARRIED

Mayor Small requested that for budget discussions next year, staff do a report as to what it would look like to increase the income level by CPI each year.

20.3.1 Tax Reduction Policy

20.4 Community Support Grants Policy

21. **Closed Session**
Moved By Councillor Furlong
Seconded By Councillor Davidson
To go into closed session.

MOTION CARRIED

Moved By Councillor Furlong
Seconded By Deputy Mayor Chambers
That the general operating budget as presented, including the motions above for any changes, be forwarded to a future Council meeting for approval.
Against (1): Councillor Davidson

MOTION CARRIED

Natalie LeBlanc
Municipal Clerk

Rob Small
Mayor