



**Village of Belledune
Committee of Whole Council Meeting
February 2, 2026**

Time: 7:00 PM
Place: Belledune Council Chambers
Mayor, Paul Arseneault
Councillor, Lilliane Carmichael
Present: Councillor, Cynthia Robinson
Councillor, Marilyn Guitard-McDonnell
Councillor, Ron Bourque
Councillor, Dawn Hickey
Absent:
Late:
Staff Present: Chief Administrative Officer, Landon Lee
Clerk Treasurer, Angela Buckle
Staff Absent:
Staff Late:

Call to Order & Welcome

- Acknowledgement of "Treaties of Peace and Friendship"
- Reaffirm Oath of Office

Adopt Agenda

M 2026/02/02-14

Lilliane Carmichael moved that the Agenda be Adopted as Amended with changes, seconded by Marilyn Guitard-McDonnell. MOTION CARRIED.

Statements of Conflict of Interest

Presentations / Petitions / Delegations

- Beverly Noel to Address Council

Beverly Noel addressed Council to ask the following questions:

1 - What Council plans on doing in regards to sanctions against the mayor?

Councillor, Robinson replied that as for the sanctions for Code of Conduct violations, his remuneration was deducted. He was asked multiple times to make his apology to Brenda and he refused to do so. Training was set up for him and he refused to take it. Council chose not to hold him accountable and make sure that the sanctions were abided by.

Councillor, Bourque replied no comment.

Councillor, Hickey replied that she wasn't here at that time. Speaking for herself, she feels that if we are supposed to do something that we should follow through.

Councillor, Carmichael replied that the sanctions were put out there and they thought that they would get done, but they never got done and other things happened and she guesses that it fell through the cracks.

Deputy Mayor, Guitard-McDonnell replied that it is unfortunate that they were not fulfilled. Her understanding is that they did their part with regards to the monetary part of the sanctions. She thinks that as an adult one would do what is expected of them and follow through and that didn't happen unfortunately and it's on Council for not following through.

Beverly brought up that when this lawsuit goes to court, punitive damages will be applied and the taxpayers of Belledune will have to pick up whatever monetary value Brenda Cormier gets out of it. Also, if someone was ordered to apologize to Brenda and they didn't follow through then that is something else that she will be able to submit when this hits court and how the councillors tried to have these sanctions taken care of.

Councillor, Hickey replied that if an apology is asked of someone you can't force a person to apologize. Beverly asked if he agreed to these sanctions and Councillor, Robinson replied that the sanctions were agreed to by Council and were imposed upon him and he chose to ignore them and our procedural by-law doesn't allow us to do much beyond that. She went on to say that Council can only enforce the sanctions to a degree.

Mayor, Arseneau replied that he has been waiting for three years to speak to the issue of the hiring of Montana and the sanctions imposed by the Council of the day. He went on to say that over the next few months he will be making it his goal to make certain that the truth surrounding the hiring of Montana and the sanctions imposed by Council and all the related circumstance that occurred before, during, and after these motions were approved is made public as is possible. As it pertains to the hiring of Montana, at the public meeting of January 23, 2023 a motion was approved by Council, the title of that motion is M 2023/01/23-18. There was another motion made at the May 2, 2023 public meeting titled M 2023/05/02-94. Mayor, Arseneault said that he is challenging both the legality and legitimacy of M 2023/01/23-18 and should that challenge meet a successful conclusion, it should impact M 2023/05/02-94.

2 - Why Councillor, Bourque resigned before his time was up as Deputy Mayor?

Councillor, Bourque replied that there was a relevant reason why he resigned, which he kept to himself, and there is a statement back from when he resigned. He is going to keep those reasons to himself.

3 - Why is the meeting closed before the question period and why it isn't live streamed?

Mayor, Arseneau replied that this is because the proceedings of Council by-law states as much. As for why it isn't live streamed, the municipality must take meeting minutes from call to order through to adjournment and the Q&A is after adjournment so meeting minutes and live streaming ends. The Q&A component is there as a courtesy to the public to allow for Council to answer general comments, it is not part of the meeting where minutes are taken.

Business

Council

Mayor, Arseneault

- Management Letter of Recommendations from Allen, Paquet, & Arseneau LLP for the 2021 Audit

Mayor, Arseneau stated that for nearly three years he has been waiting to address written and verbal comments made about himself and former interim CAO Chris Kingston.

Mayor, Arseneault referred to the Management Letter of Recommendations from Allen, Paquet & Arseneau LLP for the 2021 Audit. He referred to page 2 of this document that is dated April 25, 2022 and said that the following is noted "approval of expense reports as stated in prior year we noted that the records we tested expense reports were not reviewed by anyone prior to being submitted for payment. The same was noticed during the current year testing. With no approval process in place, there is a risk that incorrect information is used to prepare payments to employees, resulting in an overpayment or underpayment on the Village's behalf. We recommend that all timesheets and expense reports prepared by staff be required to be approved by a superior in their department prior to being issued. The reviewing of expense reports is crucial, with no approval process in place there is a risk that incorrect information is used to prepare payments to employees resulting in an over or under payment on the Village's behalf." Mayor, Arseneau questioned how many expense reports are processed in a year and how much over or under payment is that risking and does this constitute good and sound accounting practices?

Mayor, Arseneault went on to say that then there was the procurement policy. "As a result of our procedural interviews with management, we tested the Village's compliance with it's procurement policy. The Village's policy outlines several expense levels and the steps needed to be followed within each level in order to have an expense approval. Our testing reviews that the policy was not being followed in mostly all instances and that sufficient documentation was not always maintained. For example, when an expenditure level requiring three quotations to be obtained, we were not able to ascertain whether this procedure was followed or not because no documentation could be found. We recommend that the Village's procurement policy be reviewed by those authorized to approve expenses

and for each level that the policy is followed for all future expenses and documentation be kept in order to prove compliance with the Village's current policy." Mayor, Arseneault then explained what a procurement policy is and that it is legislated. He then asked how it happens that the procurement policy is not being followed by the people that are supposed to be following it, and what cost did that have to the Village of Belledune.

Mayor, Arseneault went on to say that the letter said in conclusion, the books and records are in excellent condition and it is evident that they are being maintained on a timely basis.

Approximately two weeks later, Council hired Chris Kingston as the interim CAO and he and Mayor, Arseneault were confused by the contents of this document. On one hand the document stated that as far as approval of expense reports were not reviewed by anyone prior to being submitted for payment and that the procurement policy was not being followed in almost all instances and yet in the next paragraph it states that the books and records are in excellent condition and that they are being maintained in a timely basis. This seemed like a mixed message to the Mayor and CAO, so they wanted to get a better idea of what this all meant and they booked a meeting with the people who would know.

Mayor, Arseneault said that he will leave it there for now and will pick it up in the next meeting.

Councillor, Robinson referred to page one of the document that stated that no significant deficiencies in internal controls were identified. Secondly, regarding approval of expense reports, Councillor Robinson explained that the auditor offers to interview all of Council and staff asking if there are any opportunities for anything to go sideways in accounting procedures, if anyone has any issues or concerns they can raise them there. Councillor, Robinson recalls that it was Clerk Treasurer Cormier who brought the expense sheet issue to the auditor, those would go to the CAO and then get passed on to her, so that was an internal control that she was looking for and not trying to sidestep. Councillor, Robinson went on to say that the procurement policy is an odd one to bring up because policies and the procurement of goods and services are approved by Council, so if there aren't three quotes being obtained, which should be by the CAO and not the Clerk Treasurer, she pays out the invoices once they are submitted and approved by Council. Councillor, Robinson, stated that she does not recall questions being raised during the financial statement section of every Regular meeting, so she isn't sure where Mayor, Arseneault was going with that. The only overpayment that Councillor, Robinson was able to recall on any timesheets was corrected by Brenda where someone was paid twice, and that was after she came back from a leave of absence. Councillor, Robinson went on to say that these were CAO responsibilities and the accounting issue was brought to the attention of the auditor by the then Clerk Treasurer.

- Amending of the Regulation of the Proceeding of Council By-Law

Mayor, Arseneault stated that over the last few months, and in particular the last few weeks, he has had numerous citizens approach him and say that they are shocked and saddened that our Council has allowed our meetings to become what they have now become. For two months the amendment of a by-law of proceedings to stop this from happening has been in front of Council. Emails about possible amendments were sent out in early December and in two months there has not been one impactful discussion by Council.

Councillor, Hickey acknowledged that she has always respected Mayor, Arseneault, but that it has not just been the last two meetings. She believes that this should have been stopped a long time ago, and she is in agreement with Mayor, Arseneault that it needs to stop. She believes that these are Village meetings for issues that concern the Village, and if anyone has one on one issues they should not be addressed at Village meetings.

Councillor, Carmichael said that sometimes people vent and some people are able to get up and leave, and maybe they all should have got up and left, but they stayed and that's how it is.

Councillor, Robinson made a statement regarding the procedural by-law, saying that this has been an ongoing issue since their first month in Council. She stated that the issues that Mayor, Arseneault is referring to are after the closed session that he would like to not allow people to stand before Council after a meeting and ask questions. The reason that this has come to light is because Beverly is live streaming it. The general public doesn't know what anyone is saying after the meeting is closed. She stated that Mayor, Arseneault has already read from the by-law that the question period is not part of the Regular meeting and is not broadcast, so that has nothing to do with the meeting itself. Councillor, Robinson went on to say that the Procedural By-Law, as part of the mediation process from the Government, hired and paid a consultant to revamp the Procedural By-Law and it didn't get done. Councillor, Robinson asked Council three times to pressure Government and it never happened. Council has been talking about amending the Procedural By-Law since they started and this is nothing new. With three or four months left in their term they are going to have a by-law that is all reactionary because they don't like what is happening. She feels that the by-law needs to be methodically gone through and she doesn't believe that this Council is the Council to do that.

Mayor, Arseneault stated that he doesn't believe that anything Councillor, Robinson said is relevant to this issue. He went on to say that Council has an obligation, and even if they get it done now so that the next Council can start fresh and get it right, he thinks that they will appreciate that.

Councillor, Bourque

Councillor, Carmichael

- Summary of CRSC Meeting

Councillor, Carmichael summarized the CRSC meeting that she attended on January 21st. Things that were discussed included a communication presentation of their new website, and she would like to put that link on to our Messenger; there was a presentation on the finances from November; there was a discussion regarding solid waste roof replacement recycling building; there was an overview on action plan and tourism portfolio; there was an overview of planning department activities from 2024 - 2025; there was an update on the design of the municipal and rural plan for Belle-Baie, Belledune, and Chaleur region; there was tourism data 2025; and a few other things. Overall a good meeting.

- Summary of Renaissance Nursing Home Meeting

Councillor, Carmichael is on the Finance Committee for the Renaissance Nursing Home and they discussed the budget and Admin is asking to purchase an ice machine, that will have to be brought to the regular meeting.

Councillor, Guitard-McDonnell

- Update on what is happening in February in Belledune

There are a few events that she would like the community to engage in.

The first one is the Valentine's breakfast, it is a community fund raiser for a local couple. The breakfast will take place at the Belledune Rec Centre on February 14th, 9:00am - noon.

The second event is on February 15th to celebrate Family Day. There will be a pancake brunch at the Belledune Rec Centre from 11:00am - 1:00pm and there is no charge for this event.

Finally, there will be a pickleball tournament on February 28th, this will also be a fundraiser for the couple, and if you're interested in joining a team you can contact Mayor, Arseneault.

Councillor, Hickey

Councillor, Robinson

Administration

CAO, Landon Lee

Clerk/Treasurer, Angela Buckle

Closed Session

Adjournment

M 2026/02/02-15

Lilliane Carmichael moved that the meeting adjourned at 7:47pm, seconded by Marilyn Guitard-McDonnell. MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor

Clerk Treasurer