

2017 Your Government, Your Ideas Engagement Report

Introduction

Staff organized six Your Government, Your Ideas meetings to be held across the Municipality in October and November of 2017.

This report provides a summary of the community engagement process and results.

Engagement approach

The engagement strategy was designed to involve the public in the municipal decision-making process. The Municipality sought resident input to inform Council's strategic priority setting. The Municipality held six evening meetings at various fire halls and recreation centres in the community. At each of the meetings, attendees heard a short presentation from the Mayor followed by a Q&A session with the Mayor and the District's Councillor. After a short break, attendees split into small groups to discuss what they felt the Municipality's strategic priorities should be.

Advertising and media

The Municipality distributed a media release, placed advertisements in local newspapers and radio, gave posters to Councillors for distribution, added content to the modl.ca website, paid for Facebook advertising, and placed a notice in the most recent issue of Municipal Matters.

Engagement results

Seventy members of the public attended the events. Big Tancook (21), Barss Corner (7), Dayspring (14), Oakhill (8), Italy Cross (8) and Wileville (12). A further 17 people completed an online survey asked them to identify their preference for the Municipality's strategic priorities or suggest their own.

A number of key themes were identified through the table discussions, online survey, and Q&A sessions. Specific table notes, comment form feedback and survey results are included in the appendix.

Internet

Without a doubt, improving access to high speed Internet is of critical importance to residents. We heard loud and clear that residents want better access that will open doors for them to improve their connection to their community, to start or grow businesses, and to drive economic development, population growth and tourism. Poor access to Internet was cited as a common reason that people are not buying rural homes.

Roads

While it was generally understood that many of the roads residents have concerns with fall under provincial jurisdiction, residents feel strongly about the condition of the roads in their communities. They feel that general maintenance and repairs are being neglected, and they want the Municipality to be more aggressive in advocating for road improvements with TIR. Some residents would like to see the Municipality investing in things like paving shoulders in certain areas or brush cutting, even if the Municipality must bear the full cost. There was an identified desire for improved communication on how roads are managed.

There was excellent discussion around a number of other specific topics of importance to the Municipality.

Administration Building. Many residents had heard about the options available, and had read the report or planned to read the report. The general consensus was that it is time to invest in a new building. Residents want to see the project carefully managed to avoid cost overruns, and the building should be located in the Municipality, not the Town of Bridgewater.

Subdivision By-Law Review. Residents informed about the Subdivision By-Law Review feel that the Municipality should ensure that standards are developed or enforced to avoid problems with private roads in the future.

Municipal Joint Services Board. Residents were generally supportive of the MJSB, and wanted more clarity around the potential for new services to be brought on board, and if that would affect the building need for the Municipality. Some suggestions were made around making tipping fees more affordable for residents.

Lyme Disease. The growing prevalence of Lyme Disease was a concern for residents, and they were pleased that the Municipality has shown leadership on this issue.

Fire Services. We received positive feedback from members of the fire service for the work our Fire Services Coordinator has done in building a strong relationship between the Municipality and the fire service. We received feedback that some members of the fire service still sees areas where we do more to make their operations run more smoothly.

Appendix A: Table Notes

Tancook – Table 1

Main priorities:

1. Internet. Availability/cost due to capped. Eastlink unlimited, Explore – capped.
2. Roads. Gravel, cribwork, ditching are needed. Has gravel but doesn't use it.

Other topics that were discussed:

- Garbage should be every week in summer
- Soil erosion lack of stone, difficult to get here.
- Dust in the roads discourages tourism

Tancook – Table 2

1. Internet

2. Lyme disease

2. Roads. Being washed out, guardrail cribbing washed out. Road coming up to rec centre not official even though there's a school. Dust suppression.

Other topics that were discussed:

- Trash/unsightly properties, not followed up
- Tourism – encourage people, bicycles, guided tours, geocaches, sea glass, plaques
- Dust in the roads discourages tourism
- Replacement of power poles and lines worn, deteriorating, NS Power charges if you report but they don't feel it's a problem.

Tancook – Table 3

Main priorities:

1. Internet.

2. Roads. Bush cutting not done for 10 years. Ditching and water management (roads) concerns. No schedule record kept – double standard for certain roads on the island. School road – is this a provincial road.

Other topics that were discussed:

- There are several unsightly properties on the island that are a mess and local individuals want files handled the same way as on the mainland, same timelines. Perception of special allowances made for property owners if they have an “in” at the municipal office.
- Soil erosion lack of stone, difficult to get here
- Dust in the roads discourages tourism
- Snow plowing concerns
- Roof shingles removed off the garage that stores the police vehicle last year were thrown behind the building on the ground are still there a year later.

Barss Corner – Table 1

Main priorities:

1. Internet. Support the internet project. ExploreNet are testing experimental technology. Concerns that big telecom down want to overspend on capital. High speed concern is a big concern. Estimate % that can be connected now (excused Eastlink rural). Conservative estimate for DSL?

Other topics that were discussed:

- Bridgewater transit pilot. Would like to start planning partnerships to provide transit link between New Germany, Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg. What would the fare be? It works in Kings.
- If you take stuff to the dump you should not be charged. Deters residents if they're charged when they take it here. What would the cost of waiving tipping fees for residents be?

Barss Corner – Table 2

Main priorities:

1. Roads. Highways have potholes. Brush on the side of roads is out of control. Shoulder on New Germany is needed. Even if the province isn't undertaking a paving project, we should spend municipal dollars on these shoulders by the school. It's a major safety concern. Unsafe in emergency situations.

Other topics that were discussed:

- Fire service is called too often when not needed
- Spring and fall garbage clean up – timed too close together could be because of road weight restrictions
- Cookville trails, look for alternate routes. Work with trail association for a connection to Bridgewater.

Dayspring – Table 1

Main priorities:

1. Roads

Roads, infrastructure, accessibility – many problems around roads. Keep supporting us in getting the province to fix roads. Build them right in the first place. Have standards for bushes, surfaces

2. Tourism

Derelict boats are an eyesore. Look at tourism in Mahone Bay and Lunenburg, we could do better. Identify and support assets we have. Paving partnerships are excellent for bike tours, facilitating active transportation. Provincial campgrounds need to be cleaned up, MODL should advocate to province to invest in them.

Other topics that were discussed:

- Supportive of the MJSB
- LCLC needs improved management, don't plow empty lots
- Keep advocating against taking old schools. Can they become senior facilities?
- Straight pipes – enough with the pollution
- Don't invest in private businesses
- Subdivisions – put electrical underground when building new subdivisions
- Co-locate VIC to new building

Dayspring – Table 2

Main priorities:

1. Internet

2. New Admin Building. Table consensus was that we should build a new building. Control the budget – can't be over budget. Don't build in Blockhouse. Should be built at Exit 12. Should only be one floor.

3. Disposal of schools. Building materials are not of good quality. Centre School – is it for sale? Could they be used for seniors housing?

Other topics that were discussed:

- Policy change on subdivision, should still include land if assessed and deemed to have public value
- Should be able to require the road to be built to municipal road standards

- Must plan now for future generations
- Watch for landowners stopping access – Chester/MODL. If people are cut off from the waterway it will divide community and cost significant \$
- Concerns re: MJSB management of waste site
- TIR billed for highway tipping fees (is on the MJSB board)
- Cannabis legislation – taxes for Municipality. Shops in MODL? Medicinal versus non-medicinal
- Roads - need to do something. They benefit everyone
- Parks are good, Great asset in Sherbrooke Lake
- River ridge Commons – what’s happening with this project?
- Oakhill Sawmill, is something going to happen there? Prime location
- Which roads are J class? Which ones will be upgraded, what is the process, TIR maintenance level is it suitable? Who do you deal with at TIR?
- Any other paved roads MODL has input on?
- All roads should have paved shoulders
- Grimm Road is in hard shape
- Crouse’s Settlement is now in good shape – keep maintenance up
- Straight pipes in Garden Lots – problem with Lunenburg Harbour
- Straight pipes project – we should not pay for other’s septic systems

Dayspring – Table 3

Main priorities:

1. Road safety/maintenance

Wide shoulders in other places, not here (Mullock Road to Bridgewater). East LaHave to Riverport. Not fit to pull over. Safety issue. Speeding 120 km/hour, waiting for a crash/ Roadside brush not maintained. Currently a 3-year plan for brush cutting. Grimm Road not fit to drive. Deep craters, class C, recycled asphalt.

2. Building Permits

Chester – building permits are a flat rate. MODL by construction cost. Nothing structural, maintenance. Paint if it cost over the minimum need a building permit. Highway permit. Engineer measures footings, looks good, here’s a bill for \$1,500, materials, rigmarole.

3. LCLC

Concerns around the management, and marketing capability and the fact It’s located beside a crematorium. Needs more entertainment.

Other topics that were discussed:

- Internet/cell service, booster didn’t help. Need to be more in your face re: Internet.
- Promote off highway vehicle trails as attractions, economic benefit. Obstacle of Bridgewater/Centennial Trail/
- Events draw people to area.
- Straight Pipe Project – private systems – will you subsidize mine? No level of government should subsidize someone else’s problem. Dig sod off loam to see if subdivided properly can handle septic.

Oakhill – Table 1

Residents commented that the mayor's presentation covered a lot and addressed their most important priority: Internet.

They noted that it is important for the municipality to continue to work to improve access to reliable high-speed internet.

The second most important concern was related to doctor shortages, it is important for citizens to be able to access health care services, and this includes both primary care as well as mental health.

Other topics that were discussed:

- Litter cleanup on roads beaches
 - Note that it is discouraging and disgusting for volunteers who do clean up.
 - Note that signs are good but don't really dissuade litterers.
- Noted that they appreciated the good work done to repair the Naugler Road and Pine Grove Road
 - Noted that there are some drainage issues close to the intersection of those two roads.
 - Noted that they would like to see a streetlight at the intersection as well.
- Discussed the admin building report
 - Felt that improvements were needed to the building.
 - Noted that it would be a waste of taxpayer dollars to try and renovate, build it new would be more efficient.
 - Noted that efficiency and green tech should be considered (within reason).
- Discussed public transit, liked the concept of rural transit service, understood that urban frequency not possible, but an established reliable schedule would provide new transportation options
- Concern that derelict vessels still not addressed, and new federal legislation is needed to remove these

Oakhill – Table 2

Transit – 12 years of committee information is there. Public transit would allow people to move around. Can't access services that taxes pay for. Point to point service should be considered. Could have a pick-up spot at the Building Supplies store in New Germany with bike racks for teens. Would encourage active transportation.

MODL is stagnant as a community. Look at what they're doing in other municipalities like in the Valley to drive excitement, more energy, share stories of successful communities.

Italy Cross – Table 1

- Stick to budget for municipal building at \$250 square foot.
- Keep doing LaHave straight pipe project. Get word out regarding funding assistance.
- Help fire departments out more. Roads needing more work.
- Chris Kennedy doing great job – position addition was money well spent.
- Glad hasn't raised taxes.

- Only a few benefitting from Internet initiatives; prefers to see money getting spent towards LaHave Wastewater Management District.
- Old buildings, schools – get rid of them as soon as possible.
- Like what’s happening regarding high speed internet. Watch over consultants (reliability), panel to watch over.
- NSCC committee, building more sustainable rural NS. Starting new economy. Lunenburg County a leader in innovation.
- Mash up Labs – Council to invite them to chat. Insight towards teaching people to build better companies.
- Fire departments – make priority (provide funding and loans). Municipality should co-sign for equipment.
- Would be upset if living on river and had to put in septic – high cost. Put tax dollars towards this and make a priority.
- Retirement living – focus on making a business towards this and medical system.

Wileville - Table 1

Development of plan and financial strategy for Internet. Start rolling it out. People are getting discouraged. Budget more funding.

Capital deficit at LCLC. Fundraising money will not come in and nothing will happen if the money is going to pay back the municipal deficit. That deficit needs to be addressed – can’t keep it on the books forever. Can’t raise money for another project. No one will donate money and fund a deficit.

Wileville - Table 2

- Internet – improving quality high speed Internet. Relationship with Internet providers – Bell is a bad corporate citizen. Big business doesn’t care about rural Nova Scotia.
- Senior Centre for the county and what needs to be included.
- 5-year capital plan and operating plan.
- Quality of the LaHave River and why it will take 6 years, need to be more aggressive. Should there be temporary holding tanks until the systems are complete?
- Are there plans to attract new people to the rea.
- Busing service – Transit

Wileville – Table 3

- Roads – many unsafe shoulders. All roads discussed were provincial responsibility. Why are tax dollars going towards paving former subdivision roads? Those roads should be built properly by the developers in the first place. Maybe developers should have to invest money for ongoing road maintenance. Should be different standards for small family subdivisions and larger developments.
- Internet – would support a tax rate amount for prioritizing Internet. Building a fund to support improvements in Internet. Can we look at satellite providers? Internet is more important than roads. Economic Development’s focus should be primarily Internet.
- Municipal Administration Building – Don’t split service model. Old schools are too far away for most people, splitting the service model would be ineffective. You need the appropriate infrastructure to do the work you need and nothing more. Plan for 20 years of service.

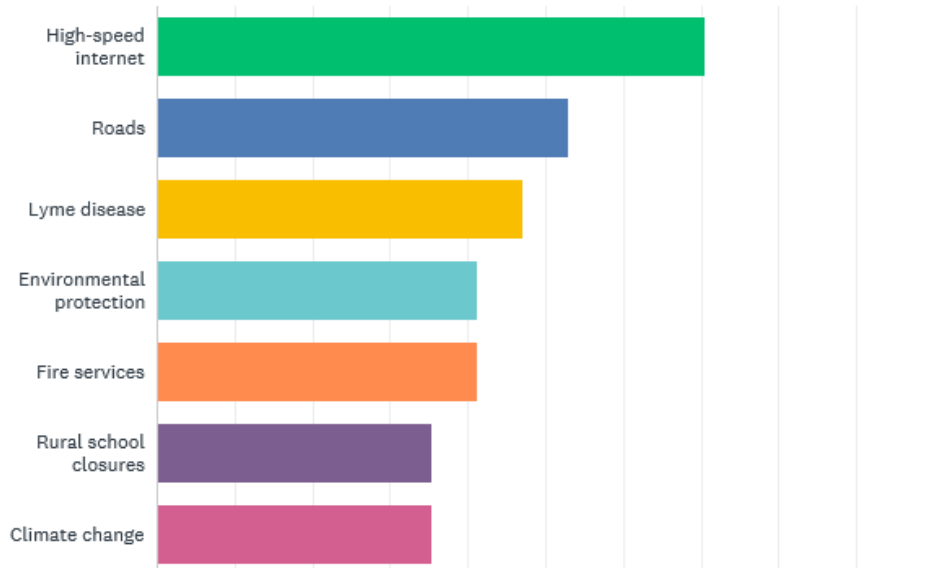
- Wiles Lake needs attention from the Department of Natural Resources.

Appendix B: Internet Survey

Completed by 17 residents.

Please select your top 6 priorities for the Municipality.

Answered: 17 Skipped: 0



High-speed internet	70.59%
Roads	52.94%
Lyme disease	47.06%
Environmental protection	41.18%
Fire services	41.18%
Rural school closures	35.29%
Climate change	35.29%
Transparency and accountability	29.41%
Economic growth and investment attraction	23.53%
Recreation	23.53%
Waste and recycling	23.53%
Taxation	23.53%
Water and wastewater management	23.53%
Other (see below)	23.53%
Active transportation	17.65%
Community events	17.65%
Fiscal responsibility	11.76%
Arts and culture	11.76%

Government	5.88%
Communication	5.88%
Affordable housing	5.88%
Tourism attraction	0%

Other:

Sidewalks/bike lanes

- Establish province-wide shared municipal operating principles and educate all municipal staff and make following one set of rules mandatory. Immediately eliminate individual and inflicting interpretation of legislation and regulations among all municipal staff. Municipsl staff should know what they are talking about and support the rules they are paid to uphold. I have found the exact opposite to be the case.
- Land Development
- Support for Tax paying brick and mortor small business here and not in support for special events for outside business.

If you had to choose, what would be your number one priority for the Municipality?

- High-Speed Internet
- Environmental protection. No development on or near wetlands. No sewage into waterways. Forest preservation.
- Educate your own staff and get them working together.
- fiscal responsibility
- High speed internet....PLEASE!
- Environment protection
- Internet
- Attracting and retaining young families
- Road maintenance
- More frequent trash, recycling and compost collection.
- Taxation
- High speed internet
- Environmental protection
- Big Chains pay more property taxes and less for small business.
- High-speed internet service
- Internet/Cell Phone Service
- Internet

Appendix C: Feedback Forms

Do you have any additional comment about the Municipality's strategic priorities that you'd like to note here?

- Very interested in the agriculture and tourism piece. Glad to see MODL finding these important al over the municipality. Tancook would be a great place to encourage young people getting involved in agriculture and tourism.
- Give more people in the rural area of MODL more to a) be excited by & b) more to feel ‘engaged’, interested and happy to live in the rural area.
- Connect more with the various communities and show an interest (e.g. the Councillors are rarely seen, etc.)
- Event was advertised on social media/radio. Some people will just never come out and give input.
- Possible tax break for businesses who allow volunteer firefighters to respond to emergencies during working hours.
- Good to see staff so involved.
- Increase the speed of the LaHave River clean up (straight pipes).
- Promote Internet but consider those few who refuse to use email, etc., and how they can deal with a computer based system.
- I would like to see a strategic plan to help relocate people to population centres (seniors and families) so they can access services & lifestyle items they need to thrive and participate (i.e. housing affordability).
- Thank you.

What did you like most about this event?

- You had it!
- Community involvement
- Great info well organized
- The information, presentation and discussion
- It was great to see small government being so responsive
- Very well organized, right length
- Openness
- Format
- I support a new municipal building – purpose built
- Positive event. Thank you.
- Concise and to the point
- Lots of public input
- Group discussions
- Glad you are addressing the issue of internet service and Lyme Disease
- The chance to address problems in our community.
- The group discussion in a good strategy.
- Group discussions
- Opportunity to discuss issues affecting our community.
- Hope the Municipality can get our roads fixed.
- It was great. Enjoy break out session. Very much enjoyed hearing what MODL is doing as a whole.
- Working in a group
- Different ideas
- They listened to our concerns.
- Very informative

- Good civil discussion
- Plenty of time to discuss topics
- Everyone had a chance to speak
- Better attendance, but not your issue, you did your best

How could we have improved this event?

- Cut off people that get off track.
- Nothing it was great.
- More people to come & be engaged/excited
- More people out
- 7pm start – 6:30 is too early for many
- We need more people coming
- Monthly meetings