

Madame Warden, Councillors, thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. I am here to ask for Council's help in saving the Shubenacadie Tin Smith Shop Museum, which is listed with the Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stocks as 3030590 East Hants Museum Society. It was struck off that registry in August of last year and was not reinstated until October.

When I moved to this area almost ten years ago, one of the things that struck me about Shubenacadie was the role played by the museum. At that time, it was open from May to October, raised funds for the Hay Day/Canada Day fireworks and other community events, took part in the annual parade, and hosted events over the summer. It was staffed mostly by volunteers then, as now, and there were summer students hired on through government grants. It seemed then to be the heart and soul of the community.

When its then-director, [REDACTED] died, there was concern about the future of the museum, and volunteers stepped up to try to fill the gap. One of these was my wife, who holds accreditation in heritage studies. In her time on the board, she oversaw the purchase of software to catalogue the museum's collection, a frequent schedule of social media posts relating to the museum's holdings and community history, and an outreach to other independent museums in the province in order to build a mutually-supportive network. She also compiled a list of grants and other funding to enable the board to more easily sustain the museum. The museum continued to thrive.

The position of Board Chair was taken over by [REDACTED], who seemed to have a different vision for the museum – one that focussed on the craft shop. She was not elected to her position at that time, but there seemed to be some deference to her due to her family connection. At this time, the board membership became closed to new applicants.

The museum now operates only from almost the end of June to almost the end of August, and is open a variable number of days per week based on volunteer availability. There has, to my knowledge, been no continuation of measures to preserve the items in the collection. There is a broken window on the upper level that the Board has refused to allow to be fixed when offers have been made, and the cannon in the yard is left uncovered into the winter. This community asset is being neglected, and without a change in the way things are done, it will be lost. Moreover, the museum's promotion is being neglected in favour of the craft shop, in which several Board members have a financial interest.

Of the 104 social media posts last year, 53 were for promotion of the craft shop, and only 38 were for the promotion of the museum. One third of the summer students were tasked with operating the craft shop, which had previously been operated by the people selling their wares in it. The craft shop is not part of the museum operations, and is not supposed to drain museum resources in any way.

The bylaws of the Society state that the Board shall have a minimum of seven directors, and that any meeting must have a quorum of one half of the Board plus one. The Board currently has 6 Directors, and has for some time. As the minimum size of the board has not been met for some time, it has not been possible for them to have had a quorum for conducting their business.

I attended what was described as the AGM on 27 June last year, and of the five other people there, only two were members of the Board. The Secretary, [REDACTED] was not in attendance, and no one kept minutes in her place. Three of us were there to offer to join the board, and we were told we should prove ourselves first by volunteering. When pressed on how to join, [REDACTED] said that she didn't know what was needed to do so. She claimed not to have a copy of the By-laws, so I read out from my copy. Since then, there has seemed to

be an unwillingness to admit new members to the Board, despite the difficulties that they have admitted to having with staffing, funding, and general operation, and despite the fact that they have fewer Board members than required by their bylaws.

If you would look at the bylaws of the Museum Society, you will see that there are 18 paragraphs. Over the last six years, the board has violated paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, and 16. Some of these violations are ongoing. If the situation remains as it is, there is a very good likelihood that its collections will deteriorate beyond saving, and the museum itself may be lost as a community asset.

According to the by-laws of the Society (paragraph 3), the board membership consists of people appointed to it by serving Directors, plus, automatically, by “those members of the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee willing to serve as Directors”. As the current board members have been unwilling to admit the addition of new Directors, and as the Museum’s prominence, opening season, and contribution to the life of the community have been allowed to decline, and as the current Board has turned down repeated offers of assistance by various community members with no explanation or justification, I am asking this Council to intervene by reinstating the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee for the purpose of restoring the board to a functional number, thereby bringing the Society into adherence with its own bylaws and enable the restoration of the museum.

I welcome any questions you may have.