

# ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES REPORT

RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF WEST RIVER



May 13th, 2021

# **RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF WEST RIVER**

## **REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION**

### *Mayor and Members of Council:*

*The Electoral Boundaries Commission is pleased to present this Report on recommended ward boundaries and names for your consideration. We have applied your Terms of Reference and complied with the requirements of the Municipal Government Act.*

*The Commission has met several times to ensure our accuracy given the information provided by Elections PEI and have made our recommendations accordingly.*

*The Commission is grateful for this opportunity to assist the Council on this historical project to define the first ward boundaries and names for the Rural Municipality of West River.*

### Our Report:

The Rural Municipality of West River came into existence as of the 1<sup>st</sup> day of September 2020 by virtue of an Order in Council adopted by the Province of Prince Edward Island.

The former Rural Municipalities of Afton, Bonshaw, Meadow Bank, New Haven-Riverdale and West River were restructured to form the new municipality.

An Interim Council was appointed of a mayor and ten (10) councillors that were charged with the responsibility of governing the Rural Municipality of West River. Among its many duties, the Interim Council was tasked with determining the future size of the council and appointing an Electoral Boundaries Commission to recommend whether there should be an open ward or a population proportionate ward system.

The Interim Council determined that the appropriate size of the council would be a mayor and six (6) councillors that would take effect with the November 2022 municipal election and that the municipality would be divided into six (6) wards

Section 39(4) and (6) of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) sets out the obligations of an Electoral Boundaries Commission. Section 39(6) charges the Commission to “make a report to council setting out its recommendations, subject to Section 39(4) as to the area, boundaries and names of the wards” and Section 39(6.1) stipulates the review must be completed “within three (3) months of (the Commission’s) appointment.

Section 39(4) stipulates that the number of electors in each ward cannot be more than ten (10) percent above or below the average number of electors in all of the proposed wards.

Section 39(7) states that council may, with respect to the report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission to:

- (a) Accept the recommendations;
- (b) Accept the recommendations in part;
- (c) Accept the recommendations with modifications; or
- (d) Reject the recommendations

Electoral ward boundaries for every municipality with wards are to be reviewed after every three scheduled municipal elections following the passing of the MGA Section 39(6). The next scheduled municipal election in the Province occurs in 2022 and the next review in accordance with the MGA will be in 2026. At that time (2026), Council will again be required to appoint an Electoral Boundaries Commission whose task will be to review both boundaries and names.

### **THE ELECTORAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION**

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, an Electoral Boundaries Commission was created by the Interim Council and appointed N. Roy Main as Chair, Willem Van der Leeuw (who was elected as Vice Chair by the Commission), Bev McIsaac and Eugene Murphy as members.

The Commission was provided with the following Terms of Reference from the Council:

*The Commission shall:*

- *Make a report to Council setting out its recommendations as to the area, boundaries, and names of the six single wards of the Municipality.*
- *Provide the opportunity for public input, which may include public meetings, at such times and places as it considers appropriate to enable representations to be made by any person as to the area and boundaries of any ward.*
- *Give reasonable public notice of the time, place, and purpose of any such public meetings or means of public input.*
- *Regulate its own proceedings and the conduct of its business.*

The Commission directed its attention to the creation of six (6) wards with one (1) councillor to be elected from each. As a newly incorporated municipality, this is the first time that wards have been created for West River.

### **ELECTOR NUMBERS**

The Commission relied upon Elections PEI to provide the most recent elector counts for the new municipality. The total number of electors was determined to be **2,462** which results in an average of **410** electors per ward. Based upon the provisions of Section 39(4) of the Act (the 10% rule), wards could therefore range between 369 to 451 electors.

While the elector information received from Elections PEI are their latest numbers, the Commission notes that the actual number of electors may change due to such variables as

individuals moving into and/or out of the ward, new voters coming of age, deaths and the enumeration process itself prior to the next election.

### **WARD BOUNDARIES**

West River is a large geographical area, and its population is spread relatively evenly. There are pockets of urbanization but overall the municipality is a good mix of urban and rural; residential and agricultural and the distribution is relatively consistent.

In determining ward boundaries, the Commission took several factors into account over and above the need to maintain the average of **410 electors per ward**.

Those factors included:

- the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
- community of interest,
- confirmation data from the most recent provincial elections,
- polling divisions from the most recent provincial elections,
- geographical features,
- population growth and patterns,
- provincial electoral and polling division boundaries,
- other factors it regards as relevant

In addition to the latest official elector numbers and the latest list of addresses with the number of electors at each address as provided by Elections PEI, the Commission obtained an up-to-date property map illustrating all properties from the Provincial taxation department.

Various ward boundary iterations were generated by the Commission showing boundaries that satisfied the number of electors in compliance with the Section 39(4) of the MGA. The Commission unanimously agreed to ward boundaries with the following elector numbers in each ward:

Ward 1 – 391 electors

Ward 2 – 376 electors

Ward 3 – 405 electors

Ward 4 – 431 electors

Ward 5 – 447 electors

Ward 6 – 412 electors

### **WARD NAMES**

The Commission reviewed the options of assigning numbers (i.e. ward 1, ward 2, ward 3 through ward 6), assigning an English name (e.g. the Hill) and assigning both a number and a name (e.g. Ward 1 – Ringwood).

The Commission concluded that both numbers and names be given to each ward. In doing so, the Commission is of the opinion that ward names should avoid any reference to past names. The Commission firmly believes this will aid in the unification of the new municipality.

The Commission also concluded that Mi’kmaq names should also be used in addition to the number and the English name. The Mi’kmaq Confederacy of PEI and their administrative arm with authority to represent the PEI Mi’kmaq, L’Nuey was contacted for both interpretation where possible and suggestions for each ward. L’Nuey was extremely appreciative that the Commission would give this consideration and then extremely helpful in suggesting names. Staff at L’Nuey provided names for consideration and the Assembly of Councils provided their acceptance for use of names that have relevance in the area (see attachment from Jenene Wooldridge, Executive director of L’Nuey). The names are not direct interpretations of the English names selected by the Commission.

L’Nuey staff have provided the meaning of the Mi’kmaq names and also the phonetics to assist with pronunciation.

The Mi’kmaq names, meaning and pronunciation are as follows:

<b>Maqtewe'k Jipu'jij</b> (mahk-day-wayg jih-boo-jee)	<b>“black brook”</b>
<b>Kwitney Walney</b> (kwid-nay wall-nay)	<b>“canoe cove”</b>
<b>Ji'ka'we'katik</b> (jih-gah-way=gah-dick)	<b>“the place where bass are plentiful”</b>
<b>Pita'q Jipu'jij</b> (bih-dahg jih-boo-jeej)	<b>“long small river”</b>
<b>Maqtewe'k Kwesawei</b> (mahk-day-wayg gways-ah-way)	<b>“black point”</b>
<b>Unikansuk</b> (uhnigg-ahn-zug)	<b>“portage trail”</b>

The Commission recommends that a number and both English and Mi’kmaq names be used for each ward as follows:

	<u>English Name</u>	<u>Mi’kmaq Name</u>
Ward 1	Ringwood	Maqtewe'k Jipu'jij
Ward 2	Straitview	Kwitney Walney
Ward 3	Eliot River	Ji'ka'we'katik
Ward 4	Southside	Pita'q Jipu'jij
Ward 5	Strathgartney	Maqtewe'k Kwesawei
Ward 6	The Hill	Unikansuk

*For ease of identification, the Commission acknowledges that reference to the ward number only at the discretion of the Council is an acceptable practice with the exception of election purposes.*

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

A public hearing was held on April 29<sup>th</sup> at the Afton Community Centre where the Commission presented its considerations to date on how the Ward boundaries should be drawn and what Ward names were being put forward to the Council.

The meeting was advertised in The Guardian, on the West River website, the West River Communities Facebook site and by public notices displayed around the municipality. Two press releases were also submitted to The Guardian and CBC advertising the meeting.

Nineteen (19) individuals attended the meeting in addition to the Commission members.

Concern was raised with the short response time of May 3<sup>rd</sup> and that was changed to May 6<sup>th</sup> with the opportunity to respond to Council by May 13<sup>th</sup>. There was concern expressed for the potential loss of community identity and were advised that this process had no effect on these names. Several spoke favourably to the inclusion of Mi'kmaq names in addition to the ward number and English name. The origin of the English names was questioned. Names were selected by either historical reference or for geographical reasons.

The Commission's recommendations were available for viewing on the Municipality's website and a hard copy of those recommendations were made available at the Municipal Office following the meeting. Three additional opportunities to comment were provided: an email address was established ([electoralcommissionwr@gmail.com](mailto:electoralcommissionwr@gmail.com)), a telephone number was listed and a direct mail marked "confidential" delivered to the Municipal Office. Only one comment was received and that, an email, was forwarded to Council under separate cover.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Commission recommends that:**

- **the boundaries of the wards be as set out in Appendix 1 and s shown by each ward on Appendices 2 through 7 to this Report**
- **the wards be numbered 1 through 6 and each assigned both an English name and a Mi'kmaq name as stipulated in this Report**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Commission wishes to express its appreciation to **Paul Alan**, Manager of Elections and Operations, Elections PEI, **Tammy MacDonald**, Historian and Archivist, L'Nuey, **Terry Scott**, GIS Systems Administrator, Ministry of Finance and **Andrew Ing**, Geomatics Supervisor, Fish and Wildlife for their invaluable assistance and information provided that allowed the Commission to fulfill its mandate.

Respectfully submitted,

---

N. Roy Main, Chair

---

Willem Van der Leeuw, Vice Chair

---

Bev McIsaac

---

Eugene Murphy

Dated this 13<sup>th</sup> day of May 2021