

Based on the agenda, transcript, and discussion, here are draft minutes and an action item register.

Minutes are based on the Otter transcript and should be reviewed against the audio if available, as portions of the transcript were imperfectly transcribed.

Governance, Finance and Civic Engagement Committee

Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents' Association (NOTLRA)

Meeting Minutes

Date: June 12, 2026

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:24 p.m.

Location: Board Room, Kai Wiens Family Farm, Concession 2

1. Call to Order

Chair Stuart McCormack called the meeting to order at approximately 2:01 p.m.

Present:

- Stuart McCormack (Chair)
- Norm Arsenault
- Terry Davis
- Kai Wiens
- Patrick Gedge
- Betty Ann James

Arriving Later:

- Bob Bader
- Caroline Polgrabia

Absent:

- Alan Young
- Secretary (vacant)

A quorum was present.

2. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed.

Motion: To approve the agenda as circulated.

Carried.

3. Approval of Minutes – May 22, 2026

No substantive amendments were proposed.

Motion: To approve the May 22, 2026 minutes.

Carried.

4. Election Countdown & Key Dates

The Chair noted:

- 135 days until Election Day.
- 70 days until the close of nominations.

The committee discussed the importance of maintaining momentum on election-related initiatives.

5. Resident Survey Response Update

Norm Arsenault presented a preliminary summary of free-text survey responses.

Key themes identified:

1. Overdevelopment and hotel proliferation.
2. Tourism impacts and resident priorities.
3. Governance concerns and Strong Mayor Powers.
4. Infrastructure and quality-of-life issues.

Discussion included:

- Potential need for additional outreach to rural residents.
- Agricultural concerns such as roads, drainage, and culverts.
- Opportunities to engage agricultural organizations and farm-related social media groups.
- Whether future surveys should target specific geographic or demographic groups.
- The need for stronger engagement with community organizations and resident groups.

The committee discussed distributing survey findings to community associations after survey completion.

Motion (Norm Arsenault):

That, upon completion of the survey, the survey results be distributed to the leadership of community associations within Niagara-on-the-Lake for review and feedback from their memberships.

Carried unanimously.

6. Municipal Oversight Series / Finance Sub-Committee Work Plan

Stuart McCormack reported on discussions with Tony Varga regarding the establishment of a Finance Sub-Committee.

Members identified for participation include:

- Tony Varga
- Stuart McCormack
- Patrick Gedge
- Steve McGuinness (financial data support)
- Joe Diaz (data analysis support)
- Norm Arsenault (research support)

Three initial priority areas were identified:

Priority 1 – Infrastructure Reserves and Sustainability

Key question:

Are reserve balances appropriate relative to the Town's infrastructure obligations?

Deliverable:

- Reserve Sustainability and Infrastructure Funding Report

Priority 2 – Growth Funding and Development Charges

Key question:

Are existing taxpayers subsidizing growth?

Deliverable:

- Growth Funding and Development Charge Review

Priority 3 – Financial Transparency and Accountability

Key question:

Can residents reasonably understand the Town's finances without filing information requests?

Deliverable:

- Financial Transparency Review

The committee discussed municipal budgeting practices, grants, development charges, reserve levels, and provincial downloading of responsibilities onto municipalities.

Motion (Caroline Polgrabia):

That the Finance Sub-Committee expand its work plan to include consideration of municipal revenue generation practices and opportunities to improve understanding of the revenue side of municipal budgeting.

Carried unanimously.

7. Lame Duck Council Research Paper

The committee reviewed the research paper regarding "Lame Duck" council provisions.

Discussion highlighted:

- Limited practical restrictions on municipal councils.
- Potential public misunderstanding of the term "Lame Duck."
- The importance of monitoring major planning and development decisions during the election period.

No motion was required.

8. Strong Mayor Powers Visual / Cartoon

The committee reviewed a draft educational graphic explaining Strong Mayor Powers.

Discussion focused on:

- Avoiding the appearance of depicting any specific individual.
- Making the illustration more neutral.
- Improving public understanding of Strong Mayor Powers.

Motion (Bob Bader):

That the Strong Mayor Powers illustration be revised to anonymize the mayoral figure, including replacing the face with a question mark or equivalent neutral treatment, and that the revised version proceed for further consideration.

Carried.

9. Candidate Engagement Plan

Betty Ann James and Norm Arsenault reported that four candidate engagement evenings are tentatively planned for:

- September 9
- September 16
- September 23
- September 30

Venue discussions with the District School Board are underway.

Stuart McCormack advised that retired journalist David Israelson had been approached regarding moderation of candidate events.

10. Candidate Scorecard Consolidation

Norm Arsenault and Stuart McCormack reported that additional work remains to be completed.

The item was deferred to the next meeting.

11. Promotional Materials

The committee reviewed a draft “Residents First” button concept.

Discussion included:

- Broader messaging for all communities within NOTL.
- Future themes involving agriculture, heritage, governance, and Glendale.
- Whether a series of buttons may be preferable to a single design.

Motion:

That the initial “Residents First” button concept be approved in principle and that additional concepts be developed for future consideration.

Carried.

12. Other Business

Four Mile Creek Public Information Session

Members noted an upcoming Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority public information session regarding Four Mile Creek.

Election Website

Discussion occurred regarding visibility of the election website and ensuring compliance with election advertising rules.

Community Centre Restrictions

Members discussed Town restrictions regarding election-related use of Town facilities and differing practices among municipalities.

Committee Coordination

Caroline Polgrabia raised the need for improved information sharing between committees.

Members noted that committee minutes are posted to the committee section of the website and are available to committee members and directors.

13. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Carried.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:24 p.m.

Action Item Register

Governance, Finance & Civic Engagement Committee

June 12, 2026

#	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1	Complete survey and prepare full analysis, including geographic breakdown where feasible.	Norm Arsenault	Next meeting

#	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
2	Distribute completed survey results to community association leaders and request feedback.	Norm Arsenault / Stuart McCormack	Following survey close
3	Explore agricultural community engagement through social media and farm-related networks.	Kai Wiens & Betty Ann James	Next meeting
4	Refer Four Mile Creek / NPCA review issue to Planning, Development & Land Use Committee.	Stuart McCormack	Before next committee meeting
5	Establish Finance Sub-Committee membership and commence data inventory exercise.	Stuart McCormack & Tony Varga	Ongoing
6	Prepare municipal finance data inventory and source catalogue.	Finance Sub-Committee	Next meeting
7	Add municipal revenue-generation and budgeting review component to Finance Sub-Committee work plan.	Finance Sub-Committee	Ongoing
8	Revise Strong Mayor Powers graphic to anonymize mayoral figure and circulate revised version.	Stuart McCormack	Next meeting
9	Confirm school board venue availability for September candidate events.	Norm Arsenault	As soon as possible
10	Continue development of candidate engagement scorecard and consolidated format.	Stuart McCormack & Norm Arsenault	Next meeting
11	Finalize artwork and pricing details for initial “Residents First” button.	Stuart McCormack & Betty Ann James	Next meeting
12	Develop additional promotional concepts addressing agriculture, heritage, governance and Glendale themes.	All members	Next meeting
13	Circulate minutes and action item register.	Stuart McCormack	Following meeting

#	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1 4	Explore opportunities for improved information sharing among NOTLRA committees.	Board / Committee Chairs	Ongoing