



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Streetlight policy amendment

Date: October 23, 2025

Vision statement

Argyle is the community of choice to invest, live and play.

Mission statement

Argyle invests time & talent in growth opportunities in fishing, tourism, and renewable energy sectors.

Argyle provides affordable taxation while providing safe and healthy communities and strives to engage and inform our residents on decisions that affect them most.

Argyle provides high class, accessible recreational and cultural facilities and helps celebrate its unique heritage and culture and welcomes new residents to our region.

CAO's Recommendation:

That Council repeal the current Streetlight Policy and ask for directions whether the Council wishes to assume ownership and operation of all Streetlights within Argyle, adding a significant municipal service.

The repeal of the Streetlight policy in its current form is a suitable course of action as changes to the NS Power policies on Streetlights results in our policy being inaccurate. Please note that any repeal or amendment of policies require a 7-day notice to councillors.

Please note that the RFD presented on council represents the 7-day notice required to repeal.

Suggested motion:

That Council repeal the current Municipality of Argyle Streetlight Policy.

Optional second motion

That the CAO be tasked with preparing a report for Council's consideration regarding future options for a revised streetlight policy.

Should Council wish to proceed with the suggested motion, all existing streetlights would remain in place, and no changes would occur.

Background:

According to the current Municipality of Argyle Streetlight Policy, any new streetlight installation requires:

- A petition by the local Councillor.
- Confirmation that the location is serviceable by Nova Scotia Power (NSPI), has a pole, adequate electric capacity, is not on private property, and addresses safety concerns (e.g., crosswalks, high-traffic areas).
- Review and approval by the Department of Property Inspection & Public Works, the CAO, and the Director of Finance.

Recent Update from NSPI:

- NSPI recently changed its policy and will no longer install Streetlights on behalf of the Municipality unless the Municipality assumes ownership of *all* Streetlights currently managed by non-profit or community groups.
- Homeowners can still request a streetlight on their property at their own cost.

Current Situation:

- The Municipality presently owns approximately four streetlights.
- The number of lights managed by community or non-profit groups is unknown, making it difficult to determine potential costs, operational, and administrative impacts. We are aware of the West Pubnico Improvement Societies recent investment in lights for the sidewalk in West Pubnico.
- The existing Streetlight Policy contains outdated references to departments that have since been renamed or restructured, creating administrative confusion and limiting the policy's practical application.
- The area has very few resources available for streetlight installation or maintenance under current staffing situation.

Staff Recommendation:

Given NSP's updated policy and the complexity of assuming ownership of all existing streetlights, staff recommend repealing the Streetlight Policy. Homeowners can continue to request individual streetlights at their own expense, and the Municipality avoids the operational, administrative, and financial burden of managing all community-owned lights. Should Council wish to enter this new service, they should provide staff more direction in this area.

Pros and Cons of suggested action – repealing the current policy:

Pros

- Simplifies municipal responsibilities by removing Argyle from the process.
- Reduces administrative and operational workload.
- Addresses outdated language and departmental references, resolving inconsistencies.
- Avoids financial and operational risks of assuming ownership of non-profit streetlights.
- Homeowners can still request streetlights at their own expense.

Cons

- No municipal oversight on placement, safety, or lighting standards.
- Uneven service across communities; reliance on non-profits or individuals.
- May lead to public dissatisfaction or safety concerns in unlit areas.

What if Council wishes to provide a streetlight service in the future?

Staff are not yet in a position to assess asset ownership, billing, and maintenance responsibilities. We would require direction from Council to analyze this issue further. Issues that would be assessed include but are not limited to:

- Legal and insurance implications of taking over third-party infrastructure.
- Cost of new infrastructure, including limitations to locations.
- Dark sky designation considerations when potentially adding more light.
- Coordination with NS Power.
- Comparison with other municipalities, including the pros and cons of additional service.
- Tax implications for new service.
- Maintenance requirements for operational staff.

Risk factors to consider:

- Unknown number of existing lights owned by community groups.
- Potential long-term operational costs for maintenance, power, and replacements.
- Increase administrative workload for staff if ownership is centralized under the Municipality.
- Impacts to Dark Sky designation – planning and execution must support the night sky.

Benefits noted at this stage:

- Additional service to our residents, increased security and appropriate lighting.
- Centralized control over lighting standards, better coordination and allows for strategic lighting instead of a requested lighting.

MGA considerations:

Under the Municipal Government Act, municipalities have authority to provide and manage public lighting as a service; however, they must ensure that expenditure is reasonable and that service delivery aligns with approved municipal purposes.