

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STANDING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

June 14 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Lorelei Nicoll, Chair
 Councillor Jerry Blumenthal
 Councillor Tim Outhit
 Councillor Darren Fisher
 Councillor Mary Wile

REGRETS: Councillor Steve Streach
 Councillor Sue Uteck, Vice Chair
 Councillor Peter Lund

STAFF: Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Fisher that the minutes of May 10, 2012 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Addition:

8.1 Councillor Nicoll - Request for Additional Meeting in August

MOVED by Councillor Fisher, seconded by Councillor Wile that the agenda, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/DEFERRED ITEMS: None

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

5.1 Correspondence: None

5.2 Petitions: None

5.3 Presentations:

5.3.1 Shannon MacDonald, Board Member, Greater Halifax Partnership – HRM's Economic Climate

The Chair welcomed Ms. Shannon MacDonald, Deloitte & Touche, and Board Member of Greater Halifax Partnership. The Chair advised that she recently attended a presentation given by Ms. MacDonald on the importance of GDP to cities and felt that it would be an appropriate presentation for this Committee.

Ms. MacDonald addressed the Committee and provided a presentation which highlighted the growing productivity gap Canada faces relative to the United States, and which may threaten Canada's long-term productivity and standard of living. Ms. MacDonald noted that the employment rate, hours worked, and productivity rate are three key aspects of GDP, and it is productivity where Canada is lagging behind compared to the U.S.

Ms. MacDonald identified six factors that needed to be addressed to close the productivity gap, as follows: Business leader risk aversion; inefficient and insufficient support for innovation; lack of risk capital for start-up companies, chronic under investment in machinery and equipment; sheltering of the Canadian economy; and increasing competition for human capital.

With regard to economic activity, Ms. MacDonald note that Halifax is on par with many similar sized cities and that it has good ingredients for economic development because, for example, it is not as costly to do business in Halifax, as compared to London Ontario. Also, Halifax does well on cost of living and quality of living indices. She advised that for successful productivity, government, academia, and businesses must work collaboratively together. She added that in Halifax and the Maritimes there is a tendency to allow government to lead and an anticipation that government will take the lead, when businesses need to be taking more of the lead roles.

Ms. MacDonald advised that Deloitte has put forward eight recommendations to improve Canada's productivity, as follows:

- Bolster the pool of risk capital for start-up businesses
- Create a national clustering strategy
- Invest in machinery and equipment
- Ease the flow of foreign direct investment
- Reduce trade barriers and pursue new markets
- Foster entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels of education
- Attract and fully utilize skilled immigrants
- Improve the effectiveness of research and development

Ms. MacDonald advised that specific things that municipalities can do to have a meaningful impact on productivity in the areas of infrastructure, financial and culture and community development include:

- Ensuring there is adequate local infrastructure and favourable policy in regard to aspects such as public transportation, zoning restrictions, and bylaws
- Providing land-lease incentives and property tax incentives
- Development a strong culture that motivates entrepreneurs to live, work and play in the region

A brief discussion ensued and Councillor Outhit expressed appreciation for the presentation. He pointed out that he's been aware there is very little research and development being done, and the area is poor at investing in technology and the presentation had underscored these issues. He added that it would be good to have more understanding of what the Municipality can do.

In response, Ms. MacDonald advised that there is a more detailed study which she could provide and she added that one of the areas we are lagging behind on is in research and development, particularly if there are no government incentives involved; as well, another area lagging is investment in equipment.

The Chair thanked Ms. MacDonald for her presentation.

6. MATTERS REFERRED FROM REGIONAL COUNCIL / OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES:

6.1 Regional Council:

6.1.1 Motion by Councillor Watts from the May 29, 2012 Regional Council Meeting RE: Comparative Analysis Resource Tool

The following motion was referred to this Committee from the May 29, 2012 meeting of Regional Council:

“MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Sloane that Halifax Regional Council request the Community Development and Economic Planning Standing Committee review the comparative analysis resource tool for municipal cultural investments and consider requesting a similar analysis for HRM so that Regional Council can assess its support for HRM’s cultural community in comparison with other major cities across Canada.”

The Chair indicated that she asked Ms. Denise Schofield to speak to this item, to provide clarification on how this relates to the review of the Cultural Plan which is being carried out as part of the Regional Plan Review process.

Ms. Denise Schofield, Manager, Regional Recreation and Culture, addressed the Committee and advised that the motion would tie-in to the work staff are doing on the cultural plan review and that the best fit for the motion would be to have it done in consort with the cultural plan review.

Ms. Schofield responded to questions.

The Committee was in general agreement to forward the matter to staff and a discussion ensued in regard to applicable wording for a motion.

The Chair suggested, **and it was agreed that**, due to time constraints, the Committee continue with the agenda, and that Ms. Schofield could take the time and compose suggested wording for a motion and the Committee would come back to the item later.

7. REPORTS:

7.1 Kearney Lake Connector Construction Agreement

A staff report dated April 14, 2012 was submitted.

Mr. Peter Duncan, Manager, Infrastructure Services provide an overview of the staff report.

Mr. Duncan responded to questions

Councillor Outhit made reference to a report the Committee dealt with recently in regard to the Sandy Lake Lands and wastewater oversizing and noted the concern it raised among the Committee and questioned if this matter would be a similar case.

In response, Mr. Duncan advised that the primary difference between Sandy Lake Lands and Bedford West is that Bedford West already has the Capital Cost Charge set up, and is a lower risk. He explained that the CCC policy recognizes that Council can asked for a contribution on the front end.

Moved by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Wile that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend Regional Council authorize the Mayor and Municipal Clerk to execute a construction agreement based on the Key Terms and Conditions outlined in Attachment '1' of the April 14, 2012 report, with West Bedford Holdings Limited and Cresco Holdings Limited for the construction of the Kearney Lake Connector. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Committee then returned to continue with item 6.1.1:

6.1.1 Motion by Councillor Watts from the May 29, 2012 Regional Council Meeting RE: Comparative Analysis Resource Tool (CONT.'D)

MOVED by Councillor Fisher, seconded by Councillor Wile that staff undertake a municipal comparative analysis of support for arts and cultural programs. The analysis is intended to be in parallel with the ongoing review of the cultural plan an economic development within HRM. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Councillor Nicoll - Request for Additional Meeting in August

The Chair noted that she was a member of the Community Design Advisory Committee, and at the last meeting staff presented a timeline of key dates in which they will be bringing forward reports in regard to the Centre Plan Phase 1 and Regional Plan. She explained that in order for staff to meet the established timelines for the Centre Plan Phase 1, an extra meeting of the CP & ED Standing Committee will be required in August, specifically August 16, 2012.

The Chair questioned if any members had difficulty in meeting on August 16, 2012; with no one raising any concern, she asked the Legislative Assistant to forward an e-mail to the Committee as a reminder of the additional meeting which will be held in August.

9. IN CAMERA: None

10. NEXT MEETING DATE: July 12, 2012

11. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds
Legislative Assistant