

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STANDING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

December 12, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Lorelei Nicoll, Chair
Councillor Waye Mason, Vice Chair
Councillor Gloria McCluskey
Councillor Tim Outhit
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Deputy Mayor Darren Fisher

STAFF: Ms. Karen Brown, Senior Solicitor
Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 14, 2013

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that the minutes of November 14, 2013 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 9.1 Councillor Watts – Request for Supplementary Staff Report RE: Affordable Housing

Councillor Outhit advised that he was aware of some internal work done by staff on rail transportation and suggested that a presentation be provided to this committee and to the Transportation Standing Committee, as it overlaps the areas of economic development and transportation.

The Chair advised that this would be brought forward to the next agenda review meeting.

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

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES/ DEFERRED ITEMS: None

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

5.1 Correspondence: None

5.2 Petitions: None

5.3 Presentations: None

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

6.1 Motion Forwarded from Regional Council

6.1.1 Establishing Benchmarks – Rural HRM (motion by Councillor Dalrymple from November 26, 2013 Regional Council)

The following motion was referred by Regional Council to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, at Council's meeting of November 26, 2013.

That Council request a staff report regarding establishing benchmarks and researching service levels, competitiveness and taxation in the Agricultural and Rural Shore areas of HRM in comparison to other rural and coastal agricultural counties in Nova Scotia.

MOVED by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Mason that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee request a staff report regarding establishing benchmarks and researching service levels, competitiveness and taxation in the Agricultural and Rural Shore areas of HRM in comparison to other rural and coastal agricultural counties in Nova Scotia.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7. REPORTS

7.1 5 Year, \$50 Million Capital Improvement Campaign

A staff report dated December 12, 2013 was submitted.

Councillor Mason indicated that he would move the staff recommendation in order to put the motion on the floor; and that following questions of clarification he was prepared to move a motion of referral.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded Councillor McCluskey that the Community Planning and Economic Development Committee recommend to Regional Council:

- 1. To endorse public realm improvement project list for eligibility under the 5 Year, \$50 Million Capital Improvement Campaign, as described in the Project identification and evaluation section of this report;**
- 2. Commit to a \$50 million program, contingent upon other levels of government funding with one third municipal contribution of \$17 million spread evenly over the five years, beginning with \$3.4 million in fiscal year 2014/15;**
- 3. To authorize staff to enter into negotiations with the federal and provincial governments on partnership agreements and funding of the public realm improvements identified in the report; and**
- 4. To endorse the creation of a strategic urban reserve to fund the on-going maintenance and renewal of the projects proposed in the 5-year public realm improvement campaign and similar future projects**

Staff responded to questions, clarifying the following points:

- The staff recommendation put forward the idea of establishing a reserve fund— with such an investment in the downtown it is important to maintain the assets so

they will not fall into disrepair. This work is not ordinary operating and maintenance; it also provides the ability to do smaller beautification projects.

- Staff were recommending that 5% of net proceeds from sale of land in the Urban Core (excluding signature properties) be deposited in the reserve fund as a means to maintain the assets.
- There are approximately 30 to 40 properties coming up for sale over the next while
- Wifi in the urban core will be provided wherever it is feasible.

Councillor Outhit advised that he supports the urban core, and that the Municipality has done a lot for the downtown in the past five years. He noted that payment of the operating cost of the Nova Centre is significant. He advised, however, that he was worried the Municipality was still not dealing with the fundamental problems of what it will take to rejuvenate the downtown. He added that common concerns expressed by the public are: pricing is too high on operating costs, parking is expensive, traffic is bad, it is too difficult to get to the downtown to work; and there is the perception that the downtown is not safe. Councillor Outhit suggested that the solution to making the downtown vibrant is to get the public shopping downtown and living in the downtown, and he expressed concern that the Municipality would be putting up cosmetic changes without something substantial as a foundation. He questioned if, before proceeding with the recommendations in the report, that staff would be quantifying those things.

Councillor Watts advised that, in her view the Municipality has been making good progress of improving the urban core and the staff report is timely because, as Council will be dealing with the Regional Plan review soon, the report is a key component. She added that there are beautiful spaces in the downtown but there isn't the infrastructure that plays to these spaces. She also pointed out that elements like the Oval have fundamentally changed the perception of people in Halifax in regard to what their city offers. She added that the new library will another example of this change in perception. Councillor Watts noted that affordable housing is a key to this perception change, as well.

Councillor Watts referred to Attachment 2 of the report (Descriptive of Urban Core Public Realm Improvement Projects) and suggested adding Gottingen Street to the list as it is a rejuvenated business community. Also, Agricola Street may be viewed as an emerging business community.

Deputy Mayor Fisher concurred with the previous comments and advised that he felt that Recommendation 3 was the most important on the list and that the Municipality needed to move forward in this regard. He suggested that the Committee should deal with only recommendation 3 at this time, and hold off on dealing recommendations 1, 2, and 4, until the Municipality determines whether there will be funding from the other levels of government.

In response, the Deputy CAO pointed out that recommendation 2 which is a commitment to a \$50 million program is contingent upon other levels of government

funding. He indicated that this would provide staff with a position to show other levels of government that the Municipality has already committed to the funds.

In response to a question, Ms. Jane Fraser, Director, Planning and Infrastructure advised that the list of projects in Attachment 2 are projects that staff feel are ready to go and would have immediate benefit.

Councillor McCluskey advised that she would not support the recommendation as she felt downtown Dartmouth was not being fairly recognized in the plan.

Councillor Outhit expressed additional concern of the possibility of the Province taking the \$2 million it was allocating for transit, and put it toward this instead. Councillor Outhit also noted his concern about the number of times the Municipality is going to other levels of government for funding, suggesting that it needs to be strategic and see what our priorities really are.

Councillor Mason advised that a lot of money was coming to the Municipality from the downtown in the form of commercial taxes fees, fines, etc. and that it was important to invest a percentage of that funding into the area that generates the money, i.e. maintaining and investing in the downtown.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Watts that the report be referred back to staff for revision and presentation to the January meeting of CPED to:

- a** **Revise recommendation 2 to include completion of the Gottingen Street Capital District Streetscaping Project as well as the University Avenue Active Transportation Project in the matrix.**

- b** **Revise recommendation 4 so that the Strategic Reserve's mandate includes and defines enhanced maintenance and renewal of projects proposed in the report as well as urban core beautification, pole free area, public art and infrastructure and similar projects.**

- C** **Revise recommendation 4 so the Strategic Reserve presents details and anticipated amounts to the net proceeds model, and also presents an alternate model for consideration that provides stable and predictable funding, such as a percentage of commercial tax collected in the Urban Core and/or other stable non-tax revenue such as revenue from encroachment, metre parking, parking tickets and off street parking.**

Councillor Mason advised that he felt the report was almost where it should be, but he was nervous of a funding model, and that he needed to see projections.

The Deputy CAO questioned the intention of recommendation C and to what level of steady funding he was asking for. He advised that this was not consistent of the original direction.

Councillor Mason advised that the Council report didn't speak to the net percent of sale of land. He added that he wanted more information of what that looks like in terms of dollars.

In response to the motion to refer, Ms. Fraser questioned if the recommendation could be broken out because staff could report back on A and B in January, but recommendation C would be a significant body of work for staff.

Councillor Watts suggested that if there is no ground lost with the Provincial or Federal Governments between now and the Committee's next meeting, then she would support the total referral and C would not come back in January.

Ms. Jennifer Church responded that things would be fine up until the spring, when at that time the program will be developed. She added that between now and January's meeting, staff can come back with a response to recommendations A and B.

In response to a request for clarification on the motion, Councillor Mason advise that the motion is referring the report back to staff, with direction, and then to come back to the Committee.

Councillor Watts proposed a friendly amendment that recommendation C be removed and that Councillor Mason meet with staff on this. Councillor Mason agreed to remove recommendation C from the motion. The motion to refer now reads:

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Watts that the report be referred back to staff for revision and presentation to the January meeting of CPED to:

- a** **Revise Recommendation 2 to include completion of the Gottingen Street Capital District streetscaping project as well as the University Avenue Active Transportation Project in the matrix.**

- b** **Revise Recommendation 4 so that the Strategic Reserve's mandate includes and defines enhanced maintenance and renewal of projects proposed in the report as well as urban core beautification, pole free area, public art and infrastructure and similar projects.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7.2 Economic Development Governance Structure

Councillor Nicoll stepped down from the Chair and Councillor Mason assumed the Chair.

A staff report dated November 14, 2013 was submitted.

MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that CP&ED refer the report back to staff (Government Relations and External Affairs) to provide a clear action plan of performance deliverables on a strong cohesive and comprehensive approach to economic development for HRM.

Councillor Nicoll indicated that she felt this report should be referred back to staff because there is currently no clear action plan. She advised that there was additional information that should be considered, and she referenced for example, work being done by the *Nova Scotia Commission on Building our Economy*, chaired by Ray Ivany.

Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer addressed the Committee and advised that he was confused by the motion, explaining that HRM has a defined Economic Strategy, and that staff continue to implement that Strategy. He questioned the Councillor if she wanted a new economic strategy.

Councillor Nicoll advised that before this matter goes to Regional Council, she would like staff to consider what more could be done. She added that the report says a lot of what HRM is doing, but she wanted to know what HRM is doing to improve things.

Councillor Watts indicated that the question being raised is the concreteness of the return on our Economic Strategy

The Committee and staff held a discussion with some Committee members expressing the view that they had a comfort level with the staff report and recommendations as presented; and there were other comments expressing the view that there was no urgency in approving the recommendations and that the Committee would be better served to have staff go back and consider other information and for the Committee to hear presentations from Greater Halifax Partnership and Destination Halifax. Subsequently, as suggested by the Chief Administrative Officer, there was consensus that, rather than refer the report back to staff for further information, to bring it forward to Regional Council at the same time the report from Greater Halifax Partnership on Economic Strategy comes forward.

MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Outhit that the staff report be referred to Regional Council at the same time the Greater Halifax Partnership Report on the Economic Strategy comes forward. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Nicoll returned to the Chair.

8. MOTIONS:

8.1 Councillor Mason

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Watts that Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee request a staff report to establish guidelines and standards for sidewalk construction, lighting and pole, street furniture and finishing in the HRM right-of-way on streets in the Downtown Planning (DH1) zone and the downtown Dartmouth BID area with the following considerations:

- 1. To determine where as a matter of policy the Red Book Capital District standard will be applied outside of major streetscape areas,**
- 2. To develop a standard for inclusion in the Red Book for the DH1 Precinct 3 – Spring Garden area that reflects but is less extensive than the elements and colour scheme introduced in the Spring Garden streetscaping,**
- 3. Recommend a mechanism to allow partnership with and investment by private and other stakeholders to implement these standards and to draft and Administrative Order that will outline this procedure.**

In speaking to his motion Councillor Mason advised that he was seeking to get clarity around the Red Book standards and to enable staff to provide clearer direction.

Councillor Watts noted that accessibility needs to be key and partnerships with other stakeholders, and asked that staff keep this in mind in preparing the report. She also asked that if there are to be any changes, that this matter be brought to the Accessibility Committee.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9. ADDED ITEMS:

9.1 Supplementary Staff Report to the Information Report on Affordable Housing, received at November's Meeting.

Councillor Watts advised that her request was a follow-up request to the information report the Committee received in November and that she was looking for further input from staff on current HRM initiatives in regard to affordable housing.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, following Regional Council's unanimous endorsement of HRM's participation in the newly established Housing and Homelessness Partnership, request a staff report with

input from all relevant departments, including Planning Services and Community Grants, on current HRM initiatives and programs that promote affordable housing, and other potential initiatives within HRM's mandate that could support affordable housing. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

10. IN CAMERA:

The Committee did not convene an in camera session.

10.1 Minutes – November 14, 2013

MOVED by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Fisher that the minutes of November 14, 2013 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE – January 9, 2014

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds
Legislative Assistant