

COMMUNITY DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
February 18, 2013

PRESENT: Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. Fred Morley, Vice Chair
Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed
Mr. Eric Burchill
Mr. Geoff LeBoutillier
Ms. Joanne Macrae
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Wayne Mason
Councillor Lorelei Nicoll
Councillor Gloria McCluskey

REGRETS: Mr. Peter Moorhouse
Mr. Bill Book

STAFF: Ms. Kasia Tota, Community Developer
Ms. Susan Corser, Project Co-ordinator
Mr. Richard Harvey, Acting Urban Design Project Manager
Ms. Leticia Smillie, Cultural Planner
Mr. Austin French, Manager, Planning
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Mr. Morley that the minutes of January 16, 2013 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

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

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Correspondence: None

5.2 Petitions: None

5.3 Presentations: None

Ms. Macrae entered the meeting at 9:23 a.m.

6. REPORTS:

6.1 Staff:

6.1.1 Policy Workshop – Presentation and Discussion on Major Policy Changes to Regional Plan

The Chair advised that the purpose of today's discussion was to review proposed policy changes to the Regional Plan, to ascertain any gaps and provide direction to staff; and to have a discussion on how the draft plan will be presented in the upcoming public consultations.

The Chair advised that the Committee received a lot of feedback on the issue of Greenbelting with many expressing disappointment at what is contained in the Plan. She added that she would like to hear the staff presentation on this item today, but not have the Committee discussion on the topic; and that between now and March 6 staff, along with some committee members, meet with HRM Alliance for dialogue on this matter.

Councillor Watts and Mr. LeBoutillier indicated their support the Chair's suggestion of a meeting between staff, some Committee members, and HRM Alliance on the issue of Greenbelting.

Mr. Austin French, Manager of Planning expressed concern of meeting separately with a stakeholder group on Greenbelting. He explained that they are working under very tight timelines, advising that at today's meeting staff were looking for direction from the Committee in order that the Plan can be written to meet the March 6 deadline. Mr. French also noted his concern of balancing community input and explained that staff are planning to hold six stakeholder workshops beginning in early April with the intention of getting input from all the stakeholder groups at that time. Mr. French added that his preference is to get the draft plan finished, and then hold the stakeholder sessions and get input from all groups at that time.

The Chair suggested that staff provide the presentation on Greenbelting, and following this the Committee would discuss the idea of meeting with the HRM Alliance on this issue.

Presentations on the proposed Policy Changes to the Regional Plan were provided by various staff as follows:

Greenbelting (John Charles, Planner and Peter Bigelow, Real Property Planning Manager):

The original scope of RP+5 did not include Greenbelting but public consultation identified it as an important issue for the current review.

The changes proposed include:

- Use Greenbelting as part of an open space planning framework
- Complete a Greenbelting and Public Spaces Priorities Plan
- Designate specific natural corridors following the completion of Greenbelting and Public Spaces Priorities Plan for the purpose of secondary planning and land management
- Acknowledge the social and urban forest function of HRM's road network
- Require all secondary planning to conduct an open space plan as a first step in community design, including identification of opportunities for natural corridor connectivity, location and function of public spaces
- Connect new developments, parks and open spaces to existing and proposed Greenways and Active Transportation network routes.

In response to questions, staff clarified the following points:

- Staff estimate 18 months to complete the Greenspace Plan; in the short term the Greenbelting corridors could be completed.
- There will be a name change from 'functional' plan to 'priorities' plan.
- The corridor containing the Mersey Lands – staff are working with the Province to change the designation to a Natural Open Space designation.

Ms. Macrae advised that it would be helpful for the Committee to have a map illustrating all approved building lots in the Urban Service Boundary. She added that she believes there are substantial differences between HRM Alliance's and staff's view of Greenbelting, and would support the Chair's proposal for a meeting.

The Chair asked for further comments on the proposal for meeting with HRM Alliance.

Mr. Morley suggested that there could be significant financial implications and it may be beyond the scope of a small group, adding that if there were important issues identified requiring further discussion, it would have to be a comprehensive discussion involving stakeholders and landholders around the table.

Councillor Watts suggested that it would be beneficial if staff could provide the Committee integrated mapping as well as the map requested by Ms. Macrae on approved building lots by March 6

Councillor Mason also indicated that it would be helpful if staff provided a list of definitions.

Councillor Watts advised that the framework for the functional plan is clear and there is consensus, but she felt the issue of growth containment is not decided and she would like staff and the HRM Alliance to discuss this.

The Chair questioned if there was consensus around the table of the idea of a meeting of staff, HRM Alliance, and some Committee members for consultation on the topic of Greenbelting prior to March 6. The majority of members were in favour.

Mr. French cautioned the Committee that staff was being directed to carry out work that was not in the workplan and, therefore, may cause delay in meeting the timelines previously proposed.

The Committee recessed at 11:00 a.m.

The Committee reconvened at 11:14 a.m.

Staff continued with the review of the Proposed Policy Changes to the Regional Plan:

Watercourse Buffers (John Charles, Planner):

Watercourse buffers are not protected from clear-cutting prior to the initiation of the development approval process. A recent change to the HRM Charter now gives HRM the ability to regulate the alteration of land levels and the removal of vegetation within a watercourse before any development takes place.

Proposed changes include:

- a new policy will establish protection against tree and vegetation removal within riparian buffers regardless of whether or not development is proposed;
- tree removal will require a municipal permit;
- the existing requirement for a minimum 20 metre wide riparian buffer along all watercourses throughout HRM will remain in place.

In response to a question, Mr. Charles noted that the only protection staff can provide now to watercourse buffers is during development but the proposed changes will offer protection before and after development too.

Growth Centres (Austin French, Manager, Planning):

Issues with regard to Growth Centres include:

- Prohibitive costs and municipal risks of financing piped services and transit to rural Growth Centres;
- loss of Suburban Centre at Morris Lake due to DND decisions to retain Shearwater runway;
- long lead times for Community Visioning and Plan Reviews, and a need to facilitate development proposals that mix complimentary uses in well-designed, pedestrian supportive buildings that define a vibrant public realm;
- lack of authority in HRM Charter to undertake architectural design control through site plan approval outside downtown.

Proposed changes include:

- Community design program to include changes to the number and classification of growth centres to reflect new information on the cost and potential for servicing.

In response to a concern by Councillor Watts with regard to the continual build-out of Bedford, Mr. French advised that data, i.e. the cost of servicing strategy had been previously provided to the Committee, and that he would provide it again.

Mr. French explained that having the new plan area will not increase the amount of units built across the spectrum, but will shift it.

Rural Subdivision Standards (Maureen Ryan, Senior Planner):

The aim is to protect larger landscape open spaces from encroachment of urban development

- Proposed change to the plan is to have new policies and regulations that will allow open space design subdivisions to be developed throughout the Rural Settlement Areas of the Municipality primarily as-of-right under the provisions of the Subdivision By-law. Three options are proposed for development

within the various areas of the Rural Settlement Designation, providing more flexibility in design while limiting the scale outside of growth centres.

Housing Affordability (Leticia Smillie, Cultural Planner):

Current planning policies provide limited direction for improving housing affordability yet this has been identified as a significant issue during public consultations. Affordable housing is integral to complete communities and sustainable growth through densification in serviced areas; HRM has 2nd highest percentage of citizens in core housing need.

Proposed policy change:

- will see HRM pursue a formal agreement with the Province outlining how HRM will support mixed market housing initiatives and how the Province will administer and support HRM's incentives (i.e. density bonusing);
- ensure that secondary planning strategies enable secondary suites to improve the stock of affordable units, generate income for homeowners, support gaining in place and the student population, and increase housing safety. Provisions will include design elements to enable this 'hidden density'
- Using municipal tools and community design principles to increase volume, quality, and housing options for communities.
- Implement through high level policy in regional plan and require secondary planning process to develop suite of options to increase housing affordability at the community level.
- Impact measured thorough analysis of development trends and housing costs relative to income.

Regional Road Works and Transit (Dave McCusker, Regional Transportation Manager):

There is a recurring theme that building new roadways and expanding existing ones are undesirable due to the impact on communities through which these roads run, the cost of building them, and the environmental impact of accommodating increase volume of automobiles.

Proposed policy change:

- This chapter in the Regional Plan will better explain the process of mapping mobility demands based on growth patterns and a reasonable target for increased transit usage and active transportation based on increased investment in those areas. The chapter will also include a new discussion on road capacity. New modeling has confirmed that changes to growth assumptions and transit and active transportation usage do not change the road capacity projects recommended in the original plan.

7. ADDED ITEMS: None

8. NEXT MEETING DATE:

Due to time constraints, the Chair suggested that the Committee schedule a meeting next week to complete the remaining proposed policy topics. The Committee agreed to meet **February 25, 2013**.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds
Legislative Assistant