

COMMUNITY DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

October 2, 2013

PRESENT: Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair  
Mr. Geoff Le Boutillier  
Mr. Bill Book  
Mr. Eric Burchill  
Dr. Dr. Watson-Creed  
Councillor Lorelei Nicoll  
Councillor Gloria McCluskey  
Councillor Jennifer Watts  
Councillor Waye Mason

REGRETS: Mr. Fred Morley, Vice Chair  
Ms. Joanne MacRae  
Mr. Peter Moorhouse

STAFF: Mr. Austin French , Manager, Planning  
Ms. Susan Corser, Project Co-ordinator  
Mr. Mike Labreque, Deputy CAO  
Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Strategic Transportation  
Planning  
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant  
Mr. Lachlan Barber, Legislative Support

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m. in Halifax Hall, on the main floor of City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 28, 2013, July 31, 2013, and August 7, 2013**

**MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Mr. Book, that the minutes of June 18, July 15 and August 7, 2013 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

The Chair thanked staff for their work. This sentiment was echoed by members of the committee.

The Chair noted the addition of an update from the writing committee on the letter concerning the revised draft of RP+5.

The Chair explained that the role of the writing committee is to articulate CDAC's position on the changes from Draft 2 to Draft 3.

Mr. Burchill shared that the writing committee has prepared a draft response reflective of comments from the table on Draft 2. The letter will be tabled at the next meeting for discussion. He indicated that the letter intends to express the breadth of views expressed in the input provided by the committee members.

The Chair reminded the committee that it has been given the task of providing a response and that this is to be contained in the letter.

Mr. Book asked if letter would be circulated when it is completed. The Chair confirmed that it would be circulated to the committee and to the relevant staff members.

**MOVED by Mr. Book and seconded by Mr. Le Boutillier. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

**4.1 Business Arising**

**5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS**

**5.1 Correspondence**

### **5.1.1 Letter dated September 18, 2013 from the Heritage Trust.**

A letter dated September 18, 2013 was submitted from Mr. Phil Pacey, Heritage Trust.

The Chair invited staff to respond to the letter from Heritage Trust.

Mr. French provided a summary of the points raised. The Chair asked for clarification on actions taken in response. Mr. French indicated that staff had added a clause in the Plan that addresses the oversight noted in letter.

The Chair noted that the letter also asks for an opportunity to speak to committee. Mr. French indicated that consultation had closed some time ago and recommended that the Heritage Trust be advised that an opportunity to provide further input will arise during public consultations.

Councillor Watts noted that some of the comments presented in the letter would come out in discussion.

### **5.2 Petitions – None**

### **5.3 Presentations – None**

## **6. REPORTS**

### **6.1 RP+5: Draft Revised Regional Municipal Planning Strategy**

The Chair thanked staff for their work and invited Mr. French to present on the changes in the revised Regional Municipal Planning Strategy.

Mr. French prefaced his presentation by noting that Council could consider discussion arising from the presentation when deciding on whether to go to public hearing.

Mr. French noted the recommendation in the report before the committee:

It is recommended that the Community Design Advisory Committee recommend that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council give first reading and schedule a public hearing to consider:

- Repealing the existing Regional Municipal Planning Strategy; and
- Adopting the proposed Regional Municipal Planning Strategy.

He noted that the existing MPS would be repealed because there are such significant changes in format in the revised version.

Mr. French noted that the staff report before the Committee focuses on key changes since the 2006 Regional Plan. It discusses the rationale for the proposed changes, the

scope of regional plan review, principles, advancement and implementation of various projects.

Mr. French reviewed the changes to Draft 3, highlighting the following points:

- Consideration has been given to a number of internal and external research studies. A study on the cost of services helped staff determine cost-effective growth areas. A comparative study of patterns of growth in Canadian municipalities by Prof. David Gordon at Queen's University revealed that HRM does fairly well on transportation options in the urban core but that it has a high share of car use in outer suburban areas.
- The targets have been rephrased. The target for rural areas was removed so as not to give the impression that the plan has failed if a smaller share of growth occurs in rural areas. The new wording has a stronger emphasis on **at least** 25% of new units in the Regional Centre. If a greater share of growth occurs in the centre, the intent of the plan is still achieved.
- The Regional Centre community design elements include an economic strategy for residential and commercial investment, a higher rate of residential units in the core, tax incentives for undergrounding, rezoning of Burnside extension to limit retail uses, protection of harbour lands, greenbelting, open space, culture and heritage, affordable housing, and complete streets.
- Mr. French indicated that staff feels that the plan has a strong focus on the Regional Centre and invited comments from the Committee in this area.
- Suburban community design elements include the clarification and strengthening of growth targets, the urban transit service boundary, complete streets, policy support for transit-oriented development. The words "limited in scale" are added for abutting designation amendments (G-15). Direction to future Secondary Planning efforts may include land use and design, transit, AT and parking, open space, culture and heritage (emphasis on cultural landscapes), healthy communities. Mr. French noted that food security is a new area in the plan.
- Rural community design elements include the same conservation design standards as Draft 2 but the language has been simplified and the tables have been revised to provide greater clarity. A policy has been added to limit retail development between growth areas. A new by-law protects trees in the riparian buffer zone. Growth centres in rural areas now have boundaries in which there are fewer restrictions on development than between growth centres.
- Performance measures which are tied to objectives, especially growth targets, will assist in the review of the plan.
- Alternatives provided in the staff report could be considered by Regional Council when dealing with the Plan.
- "Housekeeping" provisions are included in the plan to correct, update and clarify minor points. He noted that by-law amendments will be separate from this process.
- The Regional Planning process has included the consideration of requests to amend land use designations.

- The Regional Planning process has included consideration of issues of land title in area various areas.
- Mr. French finished the presentation by providing an overview of points related to implementation, including secondary planning, major studies, priority plans, by-laws, protocols and guidelines.

The following discussion took place on the points outlined by Mr. French.

The Chair asked for clarification on the refined open space planning framework. Mr. French explained that the greenways were left out of open space classification plan, but that they would still be included elsewhere. This was intended to provide balance.

Dr. Watson-Creed asked why food security is not included in rural community characteristics. Mr. French said that it was not included because there is an assumption that in rural areas there exist more possibilities for land parcel production. Dr. Watson-Creed noted that there are different forms of food security challenges in rural areas than in urban areas. For instance, food source variety is limited in rural areas and food sources may not be attainable via transit. Councillor Watts indicated her support for Dr. Watson Creed's comment and noted also the absence of agricultural land protection.

Councillor Watts asked about the proposed increased protection for Lake Loon. Mr. French clarified that this lake would not be affected by the water supply setback.

Dr. Watson-Creed commented positively on the measures for annual indicators. Councillor Nicoll commented that some of the maps are challenging to read and interpret and that they could be improved to aid reader understanding.

Mr. French provided details on requests to have land use designation for particular parcels of land changed from Open Space and Natural Resource to Urban Reserve. He noted that these requests have not been recommended by staff. He noted, however, that one request could be dealt with under the policy G-15. He indicated that this would permit a designation change on the edge of the urban reserve. Members of the committee asked for clarification on the location, the proposed density and the existing designation of the land. Mr. French clarified that it is located in Green Acres off the Herring Cove Road, that the developer was seeking to build a multi-unit building and that the current designation is Open Space and Natural Resource.

Councillor Watts stated that this is an example of what shouldn't happen under policy G-15 and this shows that there is a problem with this policy. She asked how the added words "limited in scale" would be defined and what they mean. She indicated that this case makes it clear that this is the type of development that the G-15 edge policy could allow. Councillor Mason pointed out that the developer acquired the parcel of land knowing that it is designated open space. Mr. Le Boutillier commented that the city is giving up bargaining rights by allowing this kind of incursion into the open space. The

Chair pointed out that G-15 has been a point of contention throughout the review process.

Councillor Watts asked if a stipulation could be added to indicate that G-15 would not apply in certain places, such as Open Space and Natural Resources lands. Councillor Watts also asked if there are similar requests in other locations. Mr. French noted that staff would respond to this and other concerns raised by the committee. He noted that this is the only situation of this nature.

Councillor McCluskey asked if this had been communicated with the developer. Mr. French replied that no promises had been made and that the developer is aware of the process.

Councillor Mason reemphasized the point that “limited in scale” does not appear to have a clear meaning. He stated that it means something different for a single home owner seeking to extend his or her lot than for a multi-unit building which represents a significant rezoning. Councillor Mason expressed worry that this kind of allowance would set a precedent that is not the intent of the policy. Councillor Nicoll reiterated the points made by Councillor Mason and asked about cases where a serviceable boundary may cut through a property.

Mr. French indicated that the aim of G-15 was to provide flexibility.

The Chair asked if there is consensus among committee members that this point should be given attention by staff. Councillor Watts confirmed that tools are needed to clarify these situations.

Mr. French reported next on a request from the Urban Design Institute regarding the planning on urban reserve. This has not been recommended by staff. Councillor Watts commented that she agrees with staff’s position on this point, and that the purpose of the urban reserve is to wait until future need arises.

Councillor McCluskey asked why parts of the old city of Halifax and the old city of Dartmouth were not included in the Regional Centre. She pointed out that if these areas had been included in the Regional Centre, then the growth targets could have been met. Mr. French noted that the definition of the Regional Centre was made in 2006 and was not reconsidered as part of the R+5 review.

Councillor Nicoll commented that undergrounding is challenging due to differences of opinion and the difficulties posed by added costs associated with rocks in some areas. She also noted inconsistency in cases where underground links exist side by side with overhead. She mentioned problems that may arise and asked who would be responsible in such instances. Mr. French indicated that the plan assumes that NS Power is responsible for its own infrastructure. Mr. Book commented that underground services are better, but more work needs to be done to confirm that it is being done correctly. Councillor Mason suggested that the plan should say that the City will work

with Province and UARB on this issue. Mr. Book stated that he presented a motion with this recommendation a few months.

Councillor Watts asked for clarification on the process for submitting comments. The Chair clarified that it would be challenging to incorporate comments on every issue at this point. Mr. Burchill confirmed that the letter takes a broader view. It considers whether the changes in the draft meet the spirit of the public input. He indicated that the committee doesn't wish to engage at the level of detail for specific points, but that it is rather related to the terms of reference and the purpose of the committee's work.

Council Watts commented on the language around economic growth in the plan. She asked if staff feel that there is strong enough language around development charges in the plan. Mr. French replied that the position of staff is that the plan is strong enough. It says that charges can be issued without driving out development. Councillor Watts suggested that this be highlighted in the staff report on this issue. The Chair reiterated this point and asked why the committee did not receive the report sooner. Mr. French replied that although the report was initiated much earlier, it was not ready until now.

Councillor Watts commented that there has been a good conversation about rural development, but more is needed on suburban development. She indicated that it would be helpful to have access to tangible facts in relation to some of the ideas presented in the plan, for instance the number of approved lots, how much is represented in a 15 year supply, the breakdown of units versus houses, the extent of growth (number of houses and units) in particular places. She referred to the charts on p. 43, 44. She asked if it would be possible to provide this information for people with questions about growth in these areas. She indicated that it would be helpful if this information could be presented visually on maps. Mr. French replied that it would be possible but that these would be estimates.

Councillor Watts made reference to the Road Network Priorities plan on page 61. She said that consultation on specific projects is good but, she added, the aim of the consultation in the scheme of the overall planning process should be considered. She asked why a public consultation was not part of the development of the Road Network Priorities Plan.

Mr. French referred to an additional supplementary report that provides more detail in this area. He indicated that the road network improvements were approved earlier and are tied to the growth plan. He indicated that it is staff's position that if we accept the growth plan it will not be helpful to rethink the road network at this point.

Councillor Watts commented that consultation on the Road Network Priorities would encompass discussions that have not yet taken place and that many residents feel are important. She added that consultation on specific projects doesn't generate the same insights as broader conversations.



Councillor Mason expressed support for Councillor Watts' comment. He pointed out that new emphases in priorities relating to single occupancy vehicles have been introduced since 2006. He commented that the Road Network Functional Plan needs to be rewritten with input based on a broad consultation. He stated that the language in the plan's priorities and goals doesn't go far enough. He complimented staff on their work so far, but said that there is more to do. He stated also that it would more efficient and cost effective to do a major consultation on a plan than consult on individual projects.

Councillor McCluskey noted the lack of consultation for certain projects in Dartmouth that have added much more traffic to areas in Woodlawn, Portland Street, areas near Dartmouth Crossing.

The Chair indicated that there seems to be a consensus on the need for consultation on elements of the plan dealing with roads and mobility.

Councillor Nicoll asked for clarification on how provincial highway projects relate to HRM road networks. Mr. McCusker explained that the province's projects are in the regional plan.

Mr. Book commented that since consultation will happen for individual projects, and since funding for the programmed plans is already approved in the budget, he does not take issue with the inclusion of the road network priorities in the plan.

Mr. Labreque explained staff's position on the relationship between land use and transportation in the plan. He stated that if the growth elements are approved then the transportation projects should accompany them.

Councillor Watts reiterated her position, emphasizing the importance of generating understanding of sustainable transportation planning among members of the public. She noted also that the Strategic Joint Transportation Review Committee makes decisions on which Council has no oversight. She suggested that HRM's poor performance on transportation options in the outer suburbs could be improved.

Mr. Burchill pointed out that land use is central and related to transport and services but that this relationship is not well understood among members of the public. Their frustration is due in part to a lack of understanding about transportation needs relative to land use planning. Mr. French stated that staff understand this point and have added an explanation for each of the projects.

The Chair pointed out that when individual projects reach the consultation stage, the people that choose to participate in the consultation have already taken a position on the matter. She reiterated the point that there is a lack of understanding of the relationship between transport and land use. She indicated that a consultation on a project isn't the place to explain this relationship, but rather an open dialogue is needed.

Councillor McCluskey pointed out that traffic from growth areas often impacts residents in pre-existing areas and suggested that this should be taken into consideration.

Mr. French said that future development in growth areas is still subject to these types of discussions and that growth is not permitted in some areas due to congestion.

Mr. Book noted that active transportation and transit ridership are high in the regional centre and pointed out that the planned improvements are needed in order to maintain current levels of congestion.

Councillor Mason stated that the argument that the plans should be maintained because the projects were chosen in 2006 is good enough justification to revisit them. He reiterated that a lot has changed. He pointed out that the role of committee is to make substantial changes to the Regional Plan and that it can help create a plan that Council will be able to support. He stated that it is clear that people are not happy with the inclusion of the road network priorities and indicated that this list should be removed.

Councillor Nicoll provided as an illustrative example, the Mount Hope to Caldwell Road Connector where the road network doesn't provide adequate capacity for the traffic volumes. She asked for clarification about the role of the road networks in "Complete Communities."

Mr. French explained that the entire plan is about creating complete communities although this term isn't used throughout. He showed the generalized future land use map and explained how this map articulates complete communities by delineating boundaries around growth areas.

Councillor Nicoll asked about the difference between suburban and rural growth centres in context of complete communities. She also pointed out that Cole Harbour was once the centre of agricultural production for Halifax.

The Chair invited discussion on scheduling the next meeting. It was decided that continuing the conversation as soon as possible would be beneficial and a meeting was proposed for Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>.

The Chair invited a motion reflecting this discussion of the Committee's views on the Road Network Priorities.

**MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason, that the Road Network Priorities Plan be open to consultation. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**7. ADDED ITEMS – None**

**8. NEXT MEETING DATE – October 9, 2013.**

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p. m.

Lachlan Barber  
Legislative Support